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2,000 Families: identifying the research potential of an origins-of-migration study

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ABSTRACT

Despite recent advances, critical areas in the analysis of European migration remain underdeveloped. We have only a limited understanding of the consequences of migration for migrants and their descendants, relative to staying behind; and our insights of intergenerational transmission is limited to two generations of those living in the destination countries. These limitations stem from a paucity of studies that incorporate comparison with non-migrants – and return migrants – in countries of origin and which trace processes of intergenerational transmission over multiple generations. This paper outlines the theoretical and methodological discussions in the field, design and data of the 2,000 Families study. The study comprises almost 50,000 members of migrant and non-migrant Turkish families across three family generations, living in Turkey and eight European countries. We provide indicative findings from the study, framed within a theoretical perspective of “dissimilation” from origins, and reflect on its potential for future migration research.

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Introduction

There have been impressive advances in the empirical and theoretical study of European immigration in the past few decades. The social, economic and cultural integration of first generation migrants and their children has been the focus of extensive studies, with a wide range of national and cross-national data collection efforts illuminating our understanding of processes of

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integration, exclusion and intergenerational transmission and change, and furthering theoretical development of these areas. Nevertheless, certain critical areas in the analysis of European migration remain underdeveloped. Specifically, we have only a limited understanding of the consequences of migration for migrants and their descendants, relative to staying behind in – or returning to – the country of origin. The key question about the impact of migration on migrants themselves remains, therefore, largely unanswered. Existing studies are dominated by analysis of migrants in destination countries who are compared with the non-migrant majority.

Similarly, insights into crucial processes of economic, social and cultural change, and the role of intergenerational transmission, are typically limited to cohort comparisons or to investigation of two family generations of those living in the same (destination) country, which limit our understanding of wider, and transnational, family influences. An increasing body of research in economics and sociology is concerned with identifying the extent to which migrants represent a selected sample of those in the country of origin (e.g. Dustmann, Fadlon, and Weiss 2011; Ichou 2014), yet empirical studies tend to lack precise comparators for the counterfactual non-migrant. These limitations stem from a paucity of studies that incorporate comparison with non-migrants and return migrants in countries of origin and which trace processes of intergenerational transmission across migrants over multiple generations.

Transnational studies covering sending areas and addressing the international dynamics of migration have been established in the US (e.g. Massey et al. [1987] 1990). They are less common in Europe (though for an exception see Beauchemin 2014), and are rare for Muslim migration groups, who are of particular interest in current research, and now form a substantial share of the populations of many European countries. Equally rare are studies that enable us to incorporate the influence of multiple (generations of) family members in studies of intergenerational transmission of social, cultural and economic resources, values and behaviours. This is despite the increasing interest in “grandparent effects” in contemporary sociology. There are therefore substantial analytical and theoretical payoffs for migration research in studies that (a) enable comparisons of migrants with a counterfactual group of non-migrants in their country of origin, and (b) reveal processes of intergenerational transmission across multiple generations as well as across national boundaries.

Recognition of such payoffs informed the funding and implementation of a largescale origins-of-migration study covering Turkish migration to and from Europe, the 2,000 Families study. By origins-of-migration study, we indicate a study that captures country of origin, family origins, and originating causes of migration and its outcomes. As a labour migration stream of an overwhelmingly Muslim population that reached numerous European countries and

which has persisted to the present, Turkish migration is numerically and theoretically the most significant post-war migration stream to Europe as a whole.

This paper describes the conception, design and implementation of the 2,000 Families study. The study comprises the direct families and descendants of nearly 2,000 men (1,583 migrants and a comparison sample of 409 non-migrants) who were living in five key “sending regions” in Turkey during the peak labour migration period of the 1960s and early 1970s. The study provides information on these men, their own socio-economic origins and family and migration histories, and those of their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, covering, in total, some 50,000 family members. We highlight the key features of the design and data, and some of the unique insights already emerging from research on the study. We conclude by reflecting on its future potential in addressing salient contemporary questions in migration research.

New developments in migration research

The origin perspectives

The national-level focus of the majority of migration studies has recently faced challenges from across the social sciences. There have been calls for new theoretical and methodological perspectives in international migration studies to supplement existing research and thereby better capture the complex nature of the migration phenomenon. Specifically, this literature advocates multi-site and cross-border approaches that include both origin and destination sites (FitzGerald 2012; Beauchemin 2014), undocumented international migrants (FitzGerald 2012) and longer time spans (Telles and Ortiz 2009) to unravel the complexities of international and internal migration. Amelina and Faist (2012, 1708) warn against the dominance of “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Schiller 2003) that primarily explains migration processes using terminologies and categories of destination nations and is driven by the policy concerns of these nations. They propose a greater focus on understanding the causal mechanisms of migration processes, which necessarily involves clarifying the relationship between those living in and moving between origin societies.

Decisions to move, stay and return, alongside tied and chain migration have been extensively analysed in the US (Massey 1987; Massey et al. 1987); and there is increasing interest in studying migrants returning from Europe (e.g. Dustmann 2008). Return migrants are not covered in surveys of destination societies and, except for some notable studies, they are rarely studied in origin countries (Abadan-Unat et al. 1975). Hence, there have been few attempts to clarify the sociological mechanisms that influence how individual, household and family networks are implicated in migration and remigration

processes (Schoorl et al. 2000). An origin-oriented perspective can explore the characteristics of return migrants, since the majority of labour migrants do in fact return (Castles, De Haas, and Miller 2014). It can also illuminate the role of migration networks as they exist across families and within families across generations on subsequent migration and remigration.

A perspective that links origin and destination countries also requires an expanded theoretical framework to complement the current dominant paradigm of the new assimilation theory (Alba and Nee 1997; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Furthermore, as Schneider and Crul (2010) state, assimilation and segmented assimilation theories were developed in the US and have chiefly been useful in explaining the economic and cultural dynamics of migrants to North America. Europe comprises multiple destination countries with a range of institutional features and contextual diversity that are consequential for migrant integration (Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel 2012).

From an ethnographic perspective, FitzGerald (2012) offers the concept of “dissimilation” as providing understanding of migrants’ position in economic, social and cultural domains relative to those in their origin country. Unlike “assimilation” where the reference population is the country of destination, dissimilation is its counterpart, which highlights how migrants become different from people who stayed in the origin country. This framework facilitates interrogation of the mechanisms behind key features of particular migrations and migrant populations and enables an alternative evaluation of the “gains” and “losses” of migrants and their descendants. This focus on the country of origin allows a greater sensitivity to the historical circumstances of migration (Vermeulen 2010). It enables the embedding of migrants in their pre-migration experience or that of their parents and grandparents, and the consequent implications for their post-migration trajectories.

The first key feature of the 2,000 Families study is, then, to take an origin-country perspective, locating labour migrants in their origin regions in Turkey and including the counterfactual of non-migrants from the same regions and same age cohort. Family migration patterns of both the migrants and the non-migrants and their children and grandchildren are tracked. Building the counterfactual in the research design allows it to reveal the impact of migration on migrants. It can also enable assessment of migration selectivity. Collecting information about migration patterns provides the opportunity to study return migration and the role of other family members’ migration experience in migration decisions.

The multi-generational family perspectives

Families are usually considered the primary agents of socialization, ensuring some perpetuation of both their socio-economic position and their values over generations (Hitlin 2006). While most research to date on family

transmission of economic status, values and attitudes has focussed on parent–child relations, multiple-generation transmission, in particular the role of grandparents, transmission across the life-course, and reciprocal influences of children on parents are increasingly topics of study in social-psychological and sociological research, as well as among gerontologists and in life-course research (Glass, Bengtson, and Chorn Dunham 1986; Chan and Boliver 2013). The specific influence of grandparents in transmission processes has been argued to be both direct, for example, when they are involved in childcare, and indirect, for example through support for parents (Hagestad 2006). Grandparents are argued to hold a certain cultural-normative power and to be the “cultural window” into the family’s history (Bengtson et al. 2009, 328).

Siblings and cousins are also of interest for both substantive and methodological reasons in family research. Sibling influences are important not so much for “transmission” but rather to elucidate “spill-over” mechanisms, where the actions of one child influences the subsequent behaviours of their sibling. Sibling models can, moreover, provide unbiased estimates of transmission, since they can identify unobserved family effects (Kalmijn et al. 2006; Huijnk and Liefbroer 2012).

It is recognized in life-course research that key moments in one generation’s life-course can have long-term consequences not only for future generations but also for preceding ones (Hagan, MacMillan, and Wheaton 1996). One such major event or “interruption” that constitutes a breakpoint in the individual and family life-course is migration. Following migration, cultural, economic or social capital of (grand)parents may be devalued or lost; and intergenerational transmission processes of (grand)parental resources to children may be hampered or at least challenged (Nauck 2001). Migration may also have specific relevance to spill-over effects as siblings’ migration trajectories influence each other.

In existing migration research there are few studies of sibling, cousin or grandparent effects. Instead, analysis of family migration has typically focussed on comparisons between two migrant generations, exploring divergence between migrants and the “second-generation” (see, e.g. Borjas 1992; Guveli and Platt 2011). For example, segmented assimilation theory is mainly developed for and overwhelmingly tested on the second-generation relative to the first generation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In such analyses migrant generation and family generation are equivalent, with the first (migrant) generation representing the first (family) generation, even if there is no direct family link between the two migrant generations. As Telles and Ortiz (2009) have pointed out, however, the conclusions derived from comparisons across unrelated migrant generations and those derived from family transmission can differ.

Other studies have investigated transmission directly between parents and children (e.g. Phalet and Schonpflug 2001; Platt 2007; Maliepaard and Lubbers

2013; Carol 2014), but have only considered two generations and those residing in the same (destination country) context. Again, this means that transnational influences and those from extended family are not accounted for. Some early papers address the “three-generations hypothesis” (Lazerwitz and Rowitz 1964), but third generation members are only rarely included in contemporary analyses (see e.g. Montero 1981; Alba et al. 2002). This is largely due to data constraints since a multiple-generational approach is implicit in assimilation theory (Alba et al. 2002). A significant exception is Telles and Ortiz (2009)’s study, which reveals the limits to assimilation theory when considered over four decades and multiple generations, and the relevance of historical-institutional factors to patterns of (non)-assimilation.

The second key contribution of the 2,000 Families study is to offer a multi-generational approach, enabling analysis of the reciprocal influences of family members over three or more generations and between siblings and cousins and across national borders. This allows the assessment of the extent to which intergenerational transmission persists or is disrupted by migration, and how this is similar for socio-economic, cultural and attitudinal domains, as well as facilitating purchase on spill-over effects.

Developing an origins-of-migration research: the 2,000 Families study

Over an extended period, scholars have debated the challenges in developing research designs to accommodate key questions for migration research (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918; Massey 1987). A number of origin-country projects emerged. The most influential is the classic Mexican Migration Project (Massey 1987) and a more recent study is the *Migration between Africa and Europe* (MAFE) project (Obucina 2013). Multi-generational migration studies are even rarer. There are a few examples of innovative surveys which have included three- to four-generational data on migrants but all of these are based in destination countries (Markides 1986; Telles and Ortiz 2009).

A research design which includes not only multiple generations, but also covers migrants, return migrants and non-migrants in the country of origin alongside multiple destinations of migrants is an important research desideratum. A sample comprising predominantly Muslim migrants also has the potential to speak to the contemporary focus in immigration research on integration and outcomes of Muslim migrants: none of the existing migration and multi-generational studies can offer this.

In response to this research imperative, in 2008 an international team of migration scholars developed a research design able to integrate origin effects, destination variation and multi-generational perspectives, and hence likely to offer rich rewards for empirical analysis. The key features of the design were threefold.

- *Comparative at origin.* It covered multiple sending sites in a single country of origin (Turkey), sampling both “migrant” and “non-migrant” families deriving from a labour migrant ancestor, or his non-migrant comparator, from a period of peak migration. To account for who migrated, who stayed and who returned, and to map out the consequences of the migration decision on both the migrants and those left behind, it is necessary to start from the population of origin. Most migrants move with the aim of improving their life chances and those of their families. To assess whether this has occurred calls for a causal analysis of migration in a counterfactual framework.
- *Family and generational.* It covered three or more generations, enabling comparison between both proximate (parent–child) and more distant (e.g. grandparent–grandchild) generations within families, and between siblings and cousins within generations. This also enables the complex patterns of migration, staying and returning among the descendants of both migrant and non-migrant ancestors to be tracked across the generations. The inclusion of three or more family generations in the research design covers entry into adulthood over a 50-year period. This facilitates investigation of individual and societal change in origin and destination societies.
- *Multiple destination countries.* The design followed migrants from their multiple sites of origin to different local and institutional contexts across multiple countries of destination.

The design utilized *multiple instruments* to capture not only detailed demographic and family migration histories and trajectories, but to provide extensive information on areas of respondents’ lives central to current concerns in migration research including: education, employment, cultural and value orientations, religion, family support networks, friends and social networks, health and well-being, and identities.

The study was framed within the dissimilation perspective that positioned migrant outcomes and trajectories relative to those of non-migrants in the origin country, estimating divergence from the counterfactual of never having migrated. It also extended this dissimilation perspective to intergenerational trajectories (“dissimilation from family origins”).

Why Turkish migration?

The significance of Turkish migration for new theoretical directions in migration research derives from four key features.

- Theoretical and empirical research shows that the size of a migrant group and the numbers of co-ethnics matter for migrant incorporation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), and Turkish migrants constitute the largest migrant

population in Europe. It is estimated that between 1961 (when the first labour agreement was concluded between Germany and Turkey) and 1974 (when the official recruitment ended), almost one million Turks had migrated to Western Europe (Akgunduz 2008). These migrants were expected to be temporary (Castles, De Haas, and Miller 2014), and substantial numbers returned; but many stayed in Europe. After 1974, migration often occurred through family reunion, but employment, education and political protection were also important motivations. Including dual citizens and the naturalized, an estimated five million people of Turkish *descent* live in Western Europe: around 3.5 million in Germany, close to half a million in each of the Netherlands, France and Austria, smaller but significant groups in Sweden, Denmark and Belgium, and small numbers in Norway and the UK.¹

- The original, “pioneer” Turkish migration occurred at a time when mass migration to Europe was a relatively new phenomenon. Tracing these original migrant flows provides insight into migrant processes when migrant integration policies were nascent, and when migrant restrictions were much lower than those faced by subsequent first generation migrants.
- Turkish migrants and their descendants are spread over various Western European countries, which enables research to shed light on the importance of different contexts, policies and societal structures, for immediate and longer term, intergenerational outcomes (Crul and Schneider 2010).
- Together with other groups migrating to Europe in the 1960s, Turkish migrants introduced Islam to the European Christian destination countries. Religion has been considered an important building block for migrant communities (Guveli 2015); but our scientific knowledge so far relates almost exclusively to earlier migration movements from Europe to America (Herberg 1955), comprising Catholic, Protestant and Jewish migrants. Turkish migrants and their descendants, as the largest Muslim group in Europe, can shed particularly light on the impact of affiliation to Islam on the settlement, community building and value transmission of its incumbents.

Thus, the Turkish case provides not only a *particular* study of interest, but also offers the potential to develop *general* propositions on migration processes and trajectories that complement and advance those informed by the recent growth in European migration studies and the long-standing influence of North American migration theories.

Implementing the 2,000 Families study

The “2000 Families: Migration Histories of Turks in Europe” study is the first survey to collect three-generational migrant family data on a large scale in Europe. Funded by the NORFACE (New Opportunities for Research Funding

Agency Co-operation in Europe) migration programme, the 2,000 Families study went into the field in 2010/12. This origin-oriented, multi-generational and multi-site research design identified relevant sampling areas in Turkey. This sample selection enabled comparison of migrants and non-migrants. The survey instruments provided rich information about family histories and migration trajectories as well as individual characteristics, values, resources and attitudes across the three generations.

Geographical origins

Five districts (*ilçe*) within five Turkish provinces were selected as the origin points for the identification of the migrant and non-migrant families, namely *Akçaabat*, *Şarkışla*, *Kulu*, *Emirdağ* and *Acıpayam* (see [Figure 1](#)). The choice of region was based on four criteria.

- The selected regions sent high numbers of “guest workers” to Western European countries between 1961 and 1974. As shown in [Figure 1](#), middle Anatolia is the highest sending area and the south east sent the smallest number of migrants. This enabled the identification of the “typical” labour migrant, even though the sample did not set out to be representative of all migrants from Turkey during this period. Specifically, we did not select urbanized regions. While metropolizes such as Ankara,

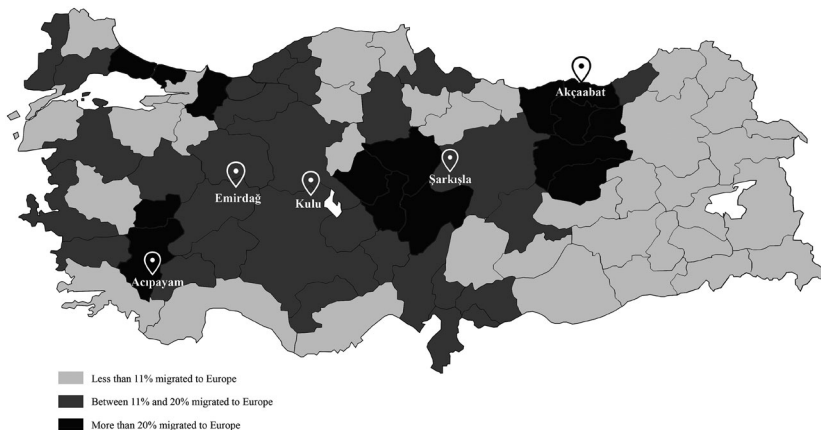


Figure 1. Map of Turkey illustrating low, medium and high migration sending provinces between 1961 and 1974, including five selected regions (*Akçaabat*, *Şarkışla*, *Kulu*, *Emirdağ* and *Acıpayam*) for the 2,000 Families Study. Sources: (1) Appendix 2 of [Akgunduz \(2008\)](#); (2) Census Turkey 1970 (TUIK – Turkish Statistical Institute).

Note: To create the map, we used the total number of migrants from each province of Turkey between 1961 and 1973 sent by the IIBK ([Akgunduz 2008](#): Appendix 2). We derived the migrant percentage using the population of men aged 20–45 for each province from the Turkish 1970 Census (Turkish Employment Office) as the denominator.

Istanbul and Izmir sent high numbers of migrants to Europe, these were predominantly internal migrants who had first moved to the larger cities from rural regions and then moved on to Europe (Akgunduz 2008). It is pertinent that only thirty-four per cent of the Turkish population were living in urban areas in 1965 whereas this figure had risen to seventy-one per cent in 2010, at the start of the study. This rapid urbanization implies that city-dwellers were much less representative of the Turkish population in our period of interest.

- The specific regions selected incorporated diversity in destination countries. According to the Turkish Ministry of Development, Germany, France and the Netherlands are home to eighty-five per cent of those of Turkish descent in Western Europe. While migrants from our sample regions predominantly migrated to Germany, we selected regions in such a way as to provide coverage of all main destination countries in our sample: migrants to Belgium from Emirdağ, to Austria from Şarkışla and Akçaabat, to Denmark and Sweden from Kulu, and to France and Switzerland from Acıpayam.
- Religious and ethnic diversity was incorporated through the selection of Şarkışla, which had a relatively high proportion of Alevi, who were intentionally oversampled. Ethnic diversity was achieved by including Kurds, who were prevalent in Kulu.
- The selected regions were all rural and semi-rural in character with a low to medium level of development (Akgunduz 2008), but beyond that they show some variation. *Akçaabat* from the Black Sea region is a mountainous region with a scarcity of fruitful land, causing frequent seasonal internal and international migration. *Kulu* and *Şarkışla* are from middle Anatolia with plentiful arable land; and *Emirdağ* and *Acıpayam* are from west Anatolia – the Aegean region – situated in the most developed part of Turkey.

Identifying migrant and non-migrant families

The selection of families comprised a two-stage screening process involving screening a random sample of addresses for a target migrant or non-migrant “ancestor”. A clustered probability sample was drawn for each region, using the Turkish Statistical Institute’s (TÜİK) address register to identify 100 primary sampling points. From the primary sampling point onwards, the sample was selected through random walk of two interviewer groups in opposite directions. Random walk was chosen over drawing a probability sample of specific addresses because there were inaccuracies in the TUIK address register, which would have created problems for locating the addresses and potentially skewed the sample. We worked on the basis that random walk, if carried out rigorously, would deliver a similarly representative

sample to a probability sample drawn from address registers as it is based on similar principles of random start and equal intervals.

At each selected address, a screening question was asked to identify the key migrant/non-migrant ancestor for our target families. This question took the form: Amongst your, or your partner's close or distant relatives, is there a man who is alive or dead, is (would have been) between 65 and 90 years old, grew up in [REGION] (i.e. lived here until he was at least sixteen), who migrated to Europe between the years 1960 and 1974 and stayed in Europe for at least five years? The screening question was the same for identifying the non-migrant ancestor except it asked who did not migrate to Europe between the years 1960 and 1974 in the last part of the question. In order to construct a sample that was stratified to comprise eighty per cent migrant ancestor families and a twenty per cent comparison group of non-migrant ancestors, the non-migrant screening question was asked after four migrants had been identified. The random walk within a sampling point was stopped when sixty households were screened, or when eight families were recruited, whichever occurred first.

Fieldwork took place in the summers of 2010 (in Şarkışla, as a pilot area) and 2011 (the other four regions). Overall, nearly 21,000 addresses were screened in order to reach our target sample of 400 families in each area (300 in Şarkışla), with a strike rate of around one in every twelve households providing an eligible family. The final sample comprised 1,992 participating families (1,580 migrant families and 412 non-migrant families). Following screening, data collection was carried out during the Summer-Autumn of 2010/11 and Spring 2011/12 using three main instruments: family, proxy and personal questionnaires (see later). Data collection took place face-to-face where eligible respondents could be identified in the locality during screening, and otherwise by phone follow-up, using the information provided in the initial interview. Additionally, a three-month tracing procedure was put in place to establish contact and conduct interviews with hard-to reach family members to maximize coverage and representativeness of the sample.

Survey instruments

The *family tree* questionnaire was designed to obtain a complete genealogy of all the male ancestor (G1)'s children (G2), grandchildren (G3) and great grandchildren (G4), as shown in [Figure 2](#). It recorded their names, sexes and ages/years of birth, and included questions about the destination country of the male ancestor and the duration of his stay, along with the gender and migration status of his siblings. In addition, the family tree questionnaire required the contact details of at least two family members to be collected to enable the remaining instruments to be completed. Family tree questionnaires were administered following screening of the family, with a well-informed member or relative of the family as a respondent. Partial information

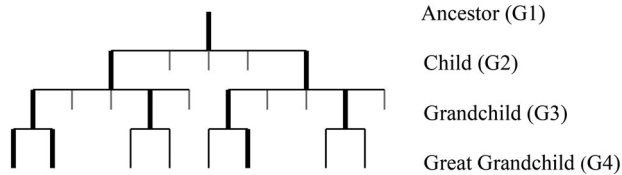


Figure 2. Family tree structure.

Note: Bold lines represent family members included in the personal interview sample.

was supplemented through telephone interviews. In total, 1,992 family tree questionnaires were completed, generating information about 48,978 individual family members (Table 1) spread over four generations.

The *proxy questionnaire* was developed to generate basic demographic and socio-economic information about all adult (18+) lineage members, including the migration history of each adult, his/her marital status, religion and educational and occupational background. The proxy interviews were carried out with a nominated “informant” from the family, typically one of the ancestor’s children. Fifty-four per cent of these interviews were carried out face-to-face, with the remainder being carried out over the phone. Questionnaires were completed for 1,544 of the 1,992 families (77.5 per cent response rate in Table 1), providing information about 19,666 adults. The proxy data provide a demographic database on Turkish migration of unprecedented size and with multiple generations within families.

The *personal questionnaire* was a more detailed, individual-level questionnaire. The use of a family tree provided a sample frame for the random selection of family members. Eligibility for *personal* interview comprised all living migrant/non-migrant ancestors and randomly selected adult members of their family lineages (see Figure 2). Specifically, those selected for interview from the second and third family generations included two of the ancestor’s

Table 1. Response rates for family tree, proxy and personal questionnaires.

Instrument and coverage	Mainstage ^a	Pilot	Total	Eligible for interview	Overall response rate (%)
Family tree questionnaire	1,683	309	1,992	1,992	100
Migrant families	1,344	236	1,580	–	–
Non-migrant families	339	73	412	–	–
Individuals covered in family tree	42,168	6,810	48,978	–	–
Proxy questionnaire	1,306	238	1,544	1,992	77.5
Individuals covered by proxy questionnaire	16,782	2,884	19,666	–	–
Personal questionnaire	5,195	785	5,980	9,787	61
Completed families ^b	640	119	759	1,992	38

^a Includes tracing outcomes.

^b Refers to families that provided a fully constructed family tree, proxy interview and personal interviews with all selected adult members.

children and two of each of their children. They were selected using randomization based on the A–Z rule, that is, those siblings whose first initial was closest to A and Z respectively. The questionnaires were translated into the relevant European languages (English, German, Dutch, French, Danish and Swedish), though the vast majority were nevertheless conducted in Turkish and a few in Kurdish. The interview lasted for around an hour and covered demographic, socio-economic and family characteristics of the respondents, along with their social networks, values, religiosity and national and political identity. Of 9,787 eligible respondents, an interview was achieved with sixty-one per cent, yielding a total of 5,980 personal interviews across the three generations (Table 1). Eighty-one per cent of the personal interviews were performed over the telephone as respondents were widely dispersed across Turkey and Europe.

Since the aim was to collect complete lineages data as far as possible, the number for “completed families” in Table 1 identifies those families for which we obtained a fully constructed family tree, a complete proxy interview about the family and personal interviews with all eligible family members. We have such complete family data for 759 out of our total of 1,992 families, a rate of thirty-eight per cent (Table 1). Overall, as shown in Table 1, the response rates for family, proxy and personal questionnaires were high. Key to such success was a committed field force, which was not only trained by but also closely monitored and supported by the research team in the regions and in the telephone follow-up phase.

Limitations

The 2,000 Families study has its limitations. The most obvious one is the under-representation of Turkish families who had entirely left the region of origin and abandoned their family properties by the time of the fieldwork. Research shows that snowball sampling of migrants in the origin countries results in a selection bias over-representing migrants with stronger links to their origin societies (Beauchemin and González-Ferrer 2011). To avoid this bias, we asked doorstep informants about migrant relatives rather than close family members. Therefore, our sample differs from snowball samples in that it also includes first generation ancestors and their children who are not (strongly) connected to Turkey. Nevertheless, our design is biased towards (larger) families with relatively strong ties to their families and regions of origin. These ties also mean that there are likely to be reciprocal influences between migrants and non-migrants in the regions of origin, potentially affecting the pure non-migrant counterfactual. However, such origin-destination country linkages reflect the realities of transnational lives, and global communications.

Three further limitations to note are, first, that our emphasis on male labour migrants limits our sample to the families of male rather than female migrants;

and we only have limited information about the ancestor's wife. Second, since our sample is not longitudinal, it will not always be possible to distinguish migration effects from migrant selectivity. Nevertheless, we can use information on date of migration and to evaluate migrant selectivity in terms of education and occupation (Guveli et al. 2015), and comparisons with return migrants as well as with non-migrants allows us additional purchase on the issue. Finally, while we have good coverage across the main destination countries for Turkish migrants, and therefore the capacity to explore contextual influences on, for example, educational attainment (Guveli et al. 2015); in some of the eight destination countries sample sizes are rather small for estimating specific institutional effects.

Substantive contributions

A number of recent publications already highlight the potential of the 2,000 families study for illuminating questions of central interest to migration research. For example, Guveli et al. (2015) shed light on questions of selection. They show that Turkish labour- migrants were positively selected on their education but they had lower-status jobs than those who stayed in Turkey before 1975. However, Turks who moved after 1975 – mainly for family unification and formation reasons – were slightly less educated than their comparators in Turkey. Turning to educational attainment, we find that migrants' children achieved higher educational credentials in Europe compared to those in Turkey but these gains were not found in the third family generation mainly because of the education expansion that has been taking place in Turkey. There is substantial interest in and debate about the role of entrepreneurship and self-employment among migrants. Guveli et al. (2015) found that higher educated European Turks are far more likely to be self-employed than their comparators in Turkey, which is consistent with the argument that self-employment is used to avoid discrimination in the labour market in Europe.

Baykara-Krumme (2015, 2016) demonstrated that both kin marriage and arranged marriages among Turks declined in both Turkey and Europe across the generations. Speaking to debates on societal change and adaptation, as well as marriage preferences and opportunities, while arranged marriages tended to be less common in Europe than Turkey, kin marriage was more frequent.

The study can shed light on gender issues and the different experiences of women and men consequent on migration. Guveli et al. (2015) found that the friendship networks of Turkish women in Europe are more diverse than women back "home". In terms of gender role attitudes, Spierings (2015) identified that women-friendly attitudes were higher both for migrants and non-migrants across generations, a trend in line with increasing gender equality in the last half of century. A striking finding was that the least women-friendly

attitudes were among the Turkish-resident grandchildren of return migrants. These findings demonstrate both some attitudinal assimilation in European destination societies but also wider global trends.

Research potential and data access

By drawing parallel samples of migrant and non-migrant families from their starting points in Turkey, the 2,000 Families dataset fosters analysis from a “dissimilation” perspective to determine the extent to which migrants socially, economically and politically diverge from their origins. It also identifies the counterfactual, that is, what would have happened if migrants had made the decision not to migrate in socio-economic, cultural, religious, political behaviour and attitudes.

By tracing the family lineages of both migrants and non-migrants, the survey broadens the scope of research to include multi-generational transmission and the influence of grandparents on grandchildren. By covering early labour migrants and their descendants spread across eight host societies, it allows an exploration of the likely cross-country differences in the economic, social, cultural and/or political integration of a sizeable migrant Muslim group in Europe. Last but not least, the survey captures return migrants, providing a rare opportunity to shed light on an understudied area.

The previous section identified some studies and findings that illustrate emerging contributions made possible by the 2,000 Families study. However, this is only a small sample of its potential. The study offers rich opportunities for further research. For example, it can illuminate migrants’ connections to both the origin and destination society in terms of family processes (Glick 2010), by looking at how marriage, divorce, fertility, care giving and family support patterns of migrants and their descendants develop differently or similarly from those in the origin country. Additionally, origin and multi-generational perspectives can be combined to answer questions on religious, political, and cultural behaviour and attitudes. For example, how does migration as well as return-migration function as a transmission belt (Schönplflug 2001)? That is, how does migration influence the intergenerational transmission of attitudes and behaviour between grandparents, parents and their children? The data provide a unique opportunity to study return migrants’ characteristic and the impact of their migration decisions on their children’s and grandchildren’s life chances and lifestyles. Gender and migration are ripe for further research using these data, for example, more explicitly testing the classic hypothesis that migration renders women independent of patriarchal societal structures and relations (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992).

This list is by no means exhaustive. Researchers can now address these and many other under-researched questions in migration research using the 2,000 Families data, since they are now accessible from the GESIS data archive

(Guveli et al. 2016). The data documentation (Ganzeboom et al. 2015) includes detailed information about the research design, sampling, regions and destinations. More information about the study and publications can be found on www.2000families.org, along with podcasts and other materials. One can also follow the 2,000 Families study from its twitter account: @2000families. Future analysis of this significant study will illustrate further the strengths and insights that an origins-of-migration study can offer.

Note

1. According to our combined statistics on the basis of Turkish and Eurostat figures. The Turkish figures are from the Turkish Ministry of Development, consulted on 27 March 2014: <http://www.kalkinma.gov.tr/Pages/EkonomikSosyalGostergerler.aspx>.

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