

Success Despite Starting Out at a Disadvantage: What Helps Second-Generation Migrants in France and Germany?

by Ingrid Tucci, Ariane Jossin, Carsten Keller, and Olaf Groh-Samberg

The educational and employment trajectories of migrant children in France and Germany are extremely diverse. The few successful ones dominate the public eye. Yet successful biographies of young adults with a migration background are in no way a negligible exception. However, the picture is different in the two countries: while in France more migrants' descendants manage to reach their (secondary?) general qualification for university entrance, in Germany they are overrepresented particularly at the *Hauptschule* (general secondary school). It is, however, considerably more difficult for these young people in France to gain a long-term foothold in the labor market, while in Germany they often take the chance to acquire a vocational qualification and have better job opportunities.

As part of a three-year research project, the question examined was which social and institutional factors can stabilize educational attainment and professional orientation. On the basis of qualitative interviews, which were conducted with young adults with a migration background in four disadvantaged areas of Berlin and Paris, it is possible to name three factors that play an important role in the success and/or the stabilization of early educational and employment trajectories: the support provided by significant third parties, entry into milieus which are more socially and culturally diverse, and the prospect of a "second chance."

As countries with a high number of migrants, Germany and France are both faced with the task of integrating migrants and their children as well as possible. The civil unrest of November 2005 in the French suburbs showed how seriously the experience of social inequalities, discrimination, and segregation can jeopardize social cohesion. Now, it is essential on both sides of the Rhine to prevent ethnic and cultural differences from being reinforced.

Different Education Systems ...

Research conducted to date already shows that, on average, migrant children in both countries have lower qualifications than their peers without a migrant background.¹ At the same time, international comparative studies have proven that institutional frameworks have an impact on the opportunities for participation of the second-generation.² This can also be backed up by a comparison of the German and French education systems. In Germany, children do not normally go to school until the age of six and are placed in different school tracks relatively early—after the primary level. This institutional separation is frequently cited as a reason for the particularly pronounced educational inequalities between children with different social and ethnic backgrounds.³

¹ For an overview of the results of research for Germany, see Claus, S. and B. Nauck, "The Situation Among Children of Migrant Origin in Germany," Innocenti Working Papers 14 (2009). For France, see Kirszbaum, T., Y. Brinbaum, and P. Simon, "The Children of Immigrants in France: The Emergence of a Second Generation". Innocenti Working Papers 13 (2009).

² See, for example, Crul, M. and H. Vermeulen, "The second generation in Europe," *International Migration Review*, 37 (4), (2003): 965-986; Heckmann, F., H.W. Lederer, and S. Worbs: Effectiveness of national integration strategies towards second generation migrant youth in a comparative perspective (EFFNATIS). Final Report to the European Commission. Bamberg (2001).

³ See Tillmann, K.J., "Viel Selektion—wenig Leistung: Der PISA-Blick auf Erfolg und Scheitern in deutschen Schulen". K. Böllert. (ed.): Von der Delegation zur Kooperation. Bildung in Familie, Schule, Kinder- und Jugendhilfe. (Wiesbaden: 2008): 47-66.

Box 1

A Franco-German Research Project

The research project entitled "A Franco-German Comparison of Professional Strategies and Status Passages of Young Adults with a Migration Background"¹ explores what helps young people with a migration background to have successful educational and professional careers. What are the prerequisites for successful trajectories?²

In an attempt to answer these questions, studies were carried out on the life courses of young men and women of Turkish and Arab origin in Germany and of North African and Sub-Saharan origin in France. To date, this biographical perspective has been rare in the approaches and empirical work of migration and

integration research.³ The project is divided into two major parts: on the one hand, quantitative data from longitudinal studies on educational and employment trajectories were analyzed statistically. On the other hand, as part of a qualitative study in 2009 and 2010, a total of 175 young adults with a migration background in two disadvantaged areas in Berlin and two in Paris were interviewed—young men and women with successful as well as difficult life courses.

While the quantitative results presented here give an overview of typical patterns of educational and working careers of young people with a migration background, qualitative analyses can be used to determine major factors that have brought about a turning point in their lives, or had a positive impact on their life course.

1 The research project entitled "A Franco-German Comparison of Professional Strategies and Status Passages of Young Adults with a Migration Background" is jointly funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the French National Research Agency (ANR). Many thanks to Lisa Crinon, Florian Mönks, Wenke Niehues, Tim Sawert, Agnieszka Sommer, and Deniz Yildirim for their hard work on the analyses.

2 Trajectories are considered to be successful if the respondents themselves are satisfied with their life course, also in retrospect, because they have achieved a certain social stability (obtaining a qualification, entering gainful employment, etc.).

3 See Wingens, M., H. de Valk, M. Windzio, and C. Aybek, "The sociological life course approach and research on migration and integration," *ibid.* (eds.): A life-course perspective on migration and integration, (Dordrecht: 2011): 1-26.

In France, on the other hand, children normally start attending pre-school at a considerably younger age—at three at the latest—and not only go through elementary school together but also the subsequent *collège* right up until the age of 15. At the end of *collège*, an "orientation" takes place in France as well, and thus separation into different educational pathways. Some of the students follow the general educational trajectory and others the vocational one. After their first year at grammar school, those who follow the general trajectory will prepare either for the general higher education entrance qualification or the technical high-school diploma.⁴ In the vocational trajectory, short practical training courses are provided, as well as a vocational school-leaving certificate. In contrast to the vocational training in Germany, the

short professional training courses in France are however considered to be for "dropouts" and seen as inferior. This debasement was further reinforced through the political objective that 80 percent of all students should obtain the *baccalauréat* (secondary-school leaving certificate), which has led to different forms of the French *baccalauréat*, ranging from the general one (*bac général*) to the technical one (*bac technologique*) and the vocational one (*bac professionnel*).

Despite the above-mentioned differences in the education systems, in both countries there is a similarly sized share of less than 15 percent of young adults who have obtained no school or vocational qualifications at all.⁵ Young people in Germany can obtain some of the qualifications they did not manage to acquire at school within the framework of the "transition system" or training schemes run by the employment office. Numerous schemes and programs are targeted at young people with a migration background in particular.

4 When studying for the technical high-school diploma, the grammar school students acquire practical knowledge as well as theoretical knowledge. The *baccalauréat technologique* is comparable to the German Fachabitur (technical high-school diploma which serves as a qualification for entrance to universities of applied sciences) but this *baccalauréat* theoretically opens all doors to university education. However, graduates often have difficulty advancing, (see Blöss, T. and V. Erlich, "Les nouveaux acteurs de la sélection universitaire: Les bacheliers technologiques en question." *Revue française de sociologie*, 41 (4) (2000): 747-775.

5 See Autorengroupe Bildungsberichterstattung: Bildung in Deutschland 2010. Bertelsmann Verlag. 2010.

This opportunity does not exist in France, or only to a very limited extent, partly because the egalitarian principle of the French Republic precludes special schemes to support migrants and qualification schemes provided by what are known as *missions locales*⁶ have a more limited range.

... Unequal Educational Opportunities

The education systems and social policy frameworks are different in both countries. Indeed, they also lead to different educational trajectories. Using longitudinal data and pattern recognition processes, it is possible to study and group educational trajectories and initial career paths with regard to typical patterns. Tables 1 and 2 show how the groups from the different countries of origin studied are distributed along the different trajectories.⁷

France: Many Children of Immigrants Heading Towards Their School-Leaving Certificate

As can be seen from Table 1, children of North African and Sub-Saharan migrants in France are overrepresented in the less prestigious vocational trajectories of the education system (Trajectory 5). They themselves often perceive this career path as frustrating or forced upon them.⁸ They are just as frequently represented in the technological trajectory of the general educational trajectory (Trajectory 3), which gives some of them access to university. In the more prestigious trajectory, which leads directly to university via the *baccalauréat général*, however, they are somewhat underrepresented (Trajectory 1): while one-fifth of them follow this educational trajectory, almost 40 percent of young people without a migration background achieve the *baccalauréat général*.

⁶ Missions locales are state-run centers that promote the social and professional integration of young people.

⁷ The results given in this report are descriptive. For multivariate analyses that take social background into account, see the following article: Groh-Samberg, O., A. Jossin, C. Keller, and I. Tucci, "Biografische Drift und zweite Chance. Zur institutionellen Strukturierung der Bildungs- und Berufsverläufe von Migrantennachkommen in Deutschland und Frankreich". (submitted manuscript, 2011). For Germany, we do not have any longitudinal data about young adults of Arab origin.

⁸ See Caille, J.-P., "Perception du système éducatif et projets d'avenir des enfants d'immigrés". *Éducation et formations* 74 (2007): 117-142 and Silberman, R. and I. Fournier, (1999): "Les enfants d'immigrés sur le marché du travail: les mécanismes d'une discrimination sélective" *Formation emploi*, 65, 31-55.

Table 1

Educational Trajectories between the Ages of 11 and 18—France

		France	Maghreb	Sub-Sahara
Trajectory no.	Brief description of the trajectory	N = 12911	N = 1165	N = 256
1	General maturity certificate and university	38.5	20.3	19.1
2	Technical high-school diploma and university	7.5	6.7	7.4
3	Technical high-school diploma	12.4	16.6	16.4
4	Short vocational training course	15.6	16.7	12.1
5	Deferred vocational training course	21.4	31.7	28.5
6	Early school leaver	4.5	8.1	16.4
	Total	100	100	100

Sources: Panel des élèves du second degré, 1995; DEPP; calculations by DIW Berlin.

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In France, only half as many descendants of immigrants as young people without a migration background manage to obtain the general higher education entrance certificate and then go directly to university.

Table 2

Educational Trajectories between the Ages of 11 and 18—Germany

		Germany	Turkey
Trajectory no.	Brief description of the trajectory	N = 2091	N = 282
1	Attendance of grammar school	22.3	5.3
2	Transfer to grammar school	12.0	6.4
3	Transfer from grammar school to intermediate school (Realschule)	4.7	0.7
4	Attendance of intermediate school	18.3	11.7
5	Transfer from general secondary school to intermediate school	14.1	9.6
6	General secondary school followed by vocational training	7.2	8.2
7	General secondary school with transitional problems	14.7	50.7
8	Attendance of comprehensive school	6.9	7.5
	Total	100	100

Sources: SOEP 1984–2009; calculations by DIW Berlin.

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In Germany, over half of all students of Turkish origin end up in the general secondary school and subsequently struggle with transitional problems.

Germany: A High Number at General Secondary Schools, Few Gaining University Entrance Qualifications

As far as educational trajectories in Germany are concerned, what stands out is the strong overrepresentation of children of Turkish migrants in the general second-

ry school tracks with subsequent problems entering vocational training and the labor market (Trajectory 7): for children of Turkish migrants, the share is around 50 percent, compared to only around 15 percent among young people without a migration background. For the tracks of the *Hauptschule* (general secondary school) or the *Gesamtschule* (comprehensive school) followed by vocational training (Trajectories 6 and 8), young people of Turkish origin are proportionally represented. But only around 5 percent of them are on the *Gymnasium* (grammar school) track—for children without migration background, this figure is 22 percent. Nevertheless, 6 percent (as opposed to 12 percent of young adults without a migration background) switch to a grammar school during the course of their education. Overall, it is apparent that children of Turkish migrants are represented in educational trajectories with a move to a different type of school (regardless of whether this is to a higher or lower level) considerably less often than children without a migration background.

Overall, a high degree of ethnic segregation can be seen in the German education system. The French education system offers the chance of an academic education with the *baccalauréat technologique*. At the same time, in France, there is however, also a strong overrepresentation of young people of North African and Sub-Saharan origin in the trajectory “Early school leaver”⁹ (Trajectory 6), which indicates that in the French education system, it is difficult to catch early school leavers and to give them a second chance.

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The Transitions into the Labor Market of the Descendants of Immigrants Also Vary

While the ethnic segregation is significantly greater in the German education system than in France, this difference can surprisingly no longer be seen with regard to entry into the labor market. At least two important differences between the countries are clear from the results in Tables 3 and 4.

Descendants of Immigrants in Germany are More Successful at Entering the Labor Market than in France

In France, a particularly precarious career path (Trajectory 6) becomes clearly evident, characterized in the long term through repeated phases of unemployment and precarious employment: around 23 percent of young adults of North African origin and 16 percent of young adults of Sub-Saharan origin end up on this path. For young adults of French origin, this figure is 14 percent. Furthermore, children of North-African and Sub-Saharan immigrants in France frequently end up in conti-

⁹ Young people in this trajectory leave school at the age of around 14 or 15, that is, without any qualifications.

Table 3

Entry into the Labor Market between the Ages of 18 and 25—France

Trajectory no.	Brief description of the trajectory	France	Maghreb	Sub-Sahara
		N = 11086	N = 854	N = 103
1	Grammar school attendance followed by university studies	26.4	24.6	16.5
2	Longer educational trajectory followed by entry into the higher the labor market segment	22.6	14.7	22.3
3	Short educational trajectory followed by entry into the higher labor market segment	5.7	3.9	3.9
4	Longer educational trajectory followed by entry into the precarious labor market segment	9.9	9.8	12.6
5	Short educational trajectory followed by entry into the precarious labor market segment	21.2	23.4	28.2
6	Short educational trajectory with long periods of unemployment and positions in the precarious labor market segment	14.2	23.5	16.5
	Total	100	100	100

Sources: Panel des élèves du second degré, 1995, DEPP; calculations by DIW Berlin.

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In France, significantly more young people with Maghreb or Sub-Saharan roots end up in the precarious labor market segment or unemployed after a short educational trajectory than do young French people without a migration background.

nuously precarious employment (Trajectory 4) even after a longer educational trajectory.

In Germany, around 40 percent of young adults of Turkish origin initially end up in the precarious labor market segment (Trajectory 4) after vocational training as well. For young adults without a migration background, this figure is approximately one-third. However, 15 percent of migrant children still manage to advance into the higher labor market segment (Trajectory 3), as opposed to 22 percent of their peers of German origin. Furthermore, 11 percent of the second-generation migrants choose the longer educational trajectory with university studies (Trajectory 1).

Therefore, an ethnic disadvantage can be seen in both countries—albeit at different points in young people’s lives. While it does not clearly emerge in France until the transition into the labor market, ethnic segregation in Germany becomes apparent at an early point in the education system. Vocational training in Germany facilitates the transition into the labor market: here, too, no precarious, significant pattern can be seen like in France. There is, however, a cluster of young adults not in employment (Trajectory 5) in Germany only, comprising mainly of women, who neither had work nor were looking for work throughout most of the period under study.

Young Women of Turkish Origin Cannot Draw on Their Workforce Potential in Germany

In the cluster of inactive persons, women of Turkish origin in particular are overrepresented. Specific gender stereotypes might play a role here, as well as individual orientations with regard to starting a family.

This result points to the particular difficulties faced by many young women of Turkish origin and to the consequent unused workforce potential.

The quantitative results clearly show that although successful educational and employment trajectories for the descendants of migrants in both countries are rarer than for their French or German peers, these are still not a negligible exception. The qualitative view of the biographies of young adults with a migration background who have completed a relatively successful educational or labor market career makes it possible to identify what factors in their lives have played a role here.

Table 4

Entry into the Labor Market between the Ages of 18 and 25—Germany

Trajectory no.	Brief description of the trajectory	Germany	Turkey
		N = 1759	N = 281
1	Grammar school attendance followed by university studies	25.1	11.4
2	Grammar school attendance followed by vocational training and entry into the labor market	14.7	6.4
3	Vocational training followed by entry into the higher labor market segment	21.8	15.3
4	Vocational training followed by entry into the precarious labor market segment	32.6	42.3
5	Short educational trajectory followed by inactivity	5.8	24.6
	Total	100	100

Sources: SOEP 1984–2009; calculations by DIW Berlin.

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Around a quarter of young adults of Turkish origin are out of work between the ages of 18 and 25.

Factors Leading to Successful Careers

In both the English-speaking and German-speaking worlds, a number of studies on educational climbers with a migration background have been published over the past few years.¹⁰ These studies verify the particular role of higher educational aspirations in migrant families,¹¹ as well as the significance of social capital in the form of social control, discipline and normative expectations. On the basis of the results of our qualitative study conducted in Berlin and Paris (box 2), at least three factors for the successful educational and employment trajectories of second-generation migrants can be named:

- support provided by “third parties” who take on the function of a mentor,

¹⁰ See Portes, A. and P. Fernández-Kelly, “No Margin for Error: Educational and Occupational Achievement among Disadvantaged Children of Immigrants” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 620 (1), (2008): 12–36; Apitzsch, U. and M.M. Jansen, (ed.), *Migration, Biographie und Geschlechterverhältnisse*; (Münster: 2003); Raiser, U. *Erfolgreiche Migranten im deutschen Bildungssystem - Es gibt sie doch*, (Münster: 2007); Koller H.C. (ed.) (2009): *Adoleszenz—Migration—Bildung*, Wiesbaden; Tepecik, E. *Bildungserfolge mit Migrationshintergrund: Biographien bildungserfolgreicher MigrantInnen türkischer Herkunft*. (Wiesbaden: 2011).

¹¹ One study based on quantitative data verifies the high aspirations with regard to migrant families in Germany. See Becker, B., “Bildungsaspirationen von Migranten. Determinanten und Umsetzung in Bildungsergebnisse” *MZES Arbeitspapiere* 137 (Mannheim: 2010).

Box 2

Quantitative Analyses: Data and Methods

The analyses for Germany are based on the data of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP). The SOEP is a longitudinal study that has been conducted annually since 1984 and carried out on behalf of DIW Berlin by the fieldwork organization TNS Infratest Sozialforschung in Munich. The most recent SOEP data used for the project are from 2009.

For France, the basis for analysis of educational pathways was the panel des élèves du second degré 1995 (DEPP¹), and the Enquête Génération 1998 conducted by Céreq² was used for processes of entering the labor market. The studies went up to 2002 and 2005, respectively. Second-generation migrants were either born in Germany or France and their parents migrated, or they themselves migrated before the age of 12. A qualitative survey was conducted in addition (see box 3). Respondents were from the same generation also observed in the quantitative studies.

While the educational trajectories take into consideration the sequence between the different educational

pathways from the age of 11 to 18 (inclusive), for the labor market pathways a distinction is drawn between phases of education/training, time not in gainful employment, unemployment, and employment between the ages of 18 and 25 (inclusive). As far as employment is concerned, the labor market segment is taken into consideration by taking information on employment status, pay level, and qualifications required (the latter applying only to Germany) into account. The trajectories were calculated on a monthly basis. The method of sequence analysis³ is used to examine the trajectories. This method, used for example for analyzing DNA, makes it possible to determine the similarity of individual trajectories. The resulting matrix, indicating the distance between the individual trajectories, is subsequently subject to a hierarchical cluster analysis on the basis of Ward's algorithm. Similar patterns are grouped using this process, and thus typical trajectories identified.

1 Direction de l'Evaluation, de la Prospective et de la Performance.
 2 Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Qualifications.

3 On the method used, see Lesnard, L., "Schedules as sequences," *Electronic International Journal of Time Use Research* 1 (1) (2004): 67-91; Brüderl, J. and S. Scherer, "Methoden zur Analyse von Sequenzdaten," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, Sonderheft 44* (2004): 330-347; Aisenbrey S. and A. Fasang, "New life for old ideas: The "Second Wave" of Sequence Analysis Bringing the "Course" Back into the Life Course," *Sociological Methods and Research*, 38 (3) (2010): 420-462.

- a move associated with a change of school or change of address from the original social milieu to a more mixed milieu, and
- the prospect of a "second chance" through the relevant institutional schemes for acquiring qualifications or entering the labor market at a later stage.

What these three factors have in common is that they can lead to change in difficult and crucial phases in the lives of young people and prevent "negative" drifting.

Support from Third Parties Increases Motivation

Migration researchers have discovered that individual commitment and support provided by the family is often not enough for success at school and professional

success. It is also important for people outside their family to intervene in the life course of young people with a migration background.¹² Our study confirms this result: many of the young adults we interviewed who have a higher qualification mention the support provided by a mentor when they were at school, or later, when speaking about their professional orientation. For example, this is what a 30-year-old man of Algerian origin from La Goutte d'Or (Paris) says:

"I took my *baccalauréat* later by going to night school and at the same time I carried on doing a lot of sport [...] and also suffered an injury. And then I met an extraordinary man, an incredible osteopath. Someone with a big heart, who said to me that I had tremendous abilities and he thought I could make a good osteopath. As I had passed my *baccalauréat*, I

12 See Portes, A. and Fernández-Kelly, P., "No Margin for Error" (2008) and Raiser, U. *Erfolgreiche Migranten im deutschen Bildungssystem* (2007).

started training to be an osteopath. It takes a very long time, five years. [...] I'm sticking at it and battling on, so I'll have a better future!"

On the other hand, young people who are stuck in a problematic career frequently complain that they never had a teacher who paid them any attention.

A mentor gives young people personal backing and makes them more self-confident and motivated. For instance, a young woman of Palestinian origin (21 years old) from Gropiusstadt (Berlin) is quoted here:

"So, I have to say, to begin with, we're new here—so I was really on my own, isolated. But because of my teacher, who noticed, okay, so my teacher was really [said with emphasis] lovely, you know. I love her [laughs]. And she noticed I had problems and then she sent me on this course, where I also made some friends [...] Then when I broke my arm and my leg, too, I saw her. And I went ice skating with her, too [laughs] and I saw her there. [...] She really helped me loads. Gave me a lot of personal support. She also went to the hospital with me, visited me, gave me books to read and stuff. So I felt like I was getting a lot of support. You know, because she was the only one who noticed, 'Okay, this girl needs help'. But mainly she was my class teacher."

This young woman of Turkish origin (aged 20) from Nord-Neukölln (Berlin) reports on a similar experience with a teacher:

"So, as I said, just before I left school [...], at that time, I wasn't exactly the type that teachers would like (laughs). But when I was in elementary school, there was this one teacher I had. I'm still in touch with her. I still see her. And I still use things she taught me. Still some words... so, when I use it, I think: 'Ah, I got that from her!' She's just great. [...] I often argued with her. Well, not really argued but we had differences of opinion. But now I know she's worth her weight in gold. I know how much she's taught me. And that maybe I wouldn't be the same person if it wasn't for her. She taught me a lot and, um... She was a teacher and we talked a lot about my future. And she just said 'You could do this, you could do that'. I think I've got it from her this, this interest in cultures. I've got it from her, I think, because she traveled a lot. And just—she's a very important person for me. A very important teacher."

What is particularly interesting here is that such supportive people frequently come from another social and

geographical environment and open doors to another world for young people.

The Experience of Other Social Milieus in Districts and Schools Has a Positive Impact

The neighborhoods in which the interviews with the young adults were conducted are characterized by an above-average share of migrants and features indicative of problems such as higher unemployment and poverty.¹³ Although the socio-spatial segregation in France is more pronounced than in Germany, leaving their neighborhood is a striking experience for many of the young adults in both countries. In many cases, this just means short trips to other districts, but what is more formative is the move to schools with a higher social and cultural mix, which are also normally in the relevant districts. This change of school may be associated with a change of address or a transition to another form of school at secondary level, in France often when students decide to take different subjects. Here, too, the influence of third parties is frequently observed. This is what a young man of Lebanese origin (20 years old) from Gropiusstadt (Berlin) says:

"[My fiancée] helped me write my applications. She always motivated me. She said to me, 'If you go to school in Neukölln again, where there are really only foreigners, you won't make anything of yourself.' She was right as well because I wanted to go to one really, too. What I wanted myself, was to go to a school where I didn't know anybody, so I could do my own thing. I don't go to school to make friends. I go to school to get a qualification. Yes. And, well, then she took me there and that was very good—very good for me. Because I'm easily distracted from school."

Surprisingly, many of the young adults interviewed report a very restricted geographic mobility over a long period of time—which sometimes continues—and that it was not until later that they discovered the world outside their neighborhood. Frequently, they did not dare to go anywhere else, it did not occur to them to do so, or they simply did not have the opportunity. This phenomenon of late discovery of a world outside their own environment, which is more pronounced in France, is expressed vividly as a 19-year-old Algerian man from La Goutte d'Or recalls an almost caricature-like trip to Disneyland:

¹³ See Keller, C.: "Strategien und Faktoren der Partizipation von Jugendlichen mit Migrationshintergrund im Blickfeld von Sozialexpert(inn)en," *Revue d'Allemagne*, 41 (3) (2009): 409–431.

Box 3

Overview of the Qualitative Study

The qualitative sample consists of 175 semi-biographical interviews conducted on young adults in 2009 and 2010. The parents of these young adults, or they themselves, immigrated to France from the Maghreb (North Africa) and Sub-Saharan Africa or to Germany from Turkey and the Middle East when they were still of school age. They were aged between 18 and 35 at the time of the interviews. The objective of the qualitative sample was to conduct contrasting interviews on young adults whose biographies, measured in terms of their educational pathways and professional experience to date and also of their own needs and aspirations, may be classified as biographically successful or unsuccessful.

Moreover, the aim was to interview the same share of young men and women who live in an urban and peripheral district of the cities of Paris and Berlin, respectively: La Goutte d'Or and Clichy-Montfermeil (Paris region) and Nord-Neukölln and Gropiusstadt (Berlin).

In the final analysis, 139 interviews were analyzed which met all the required criteria, while the other

interviews were used for purposes of comparison. The interviews were comprised of an open biographical and a semi-open topic-related part, as well as a concluding questionnaire. The topics covered were migration biography/family, school/profession and networks/district. The interviews were studied using qualitative processes of content, type and life course analysis. The interviews, lasting one and a half hours on average, were transcribed in full, coded and condensed into types along central criteria.¹ Descriptive quantitative processes were also used. The fieldwork on the young adults was preceded by an exploratory study in the four districts in which a qualitative survey was conducted on 62 experts.²

¹ For the qualitative content and life course analysis, we refer in particular to the processes described by Glaser, B., A. Strauss is that right? *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research.* New York: 1967; Rosenthal, G., *Biographisch-narrative Gespräche mit Jugendlichen.* Opladen: 2006; Przyborski, A. and M. Wohlrab-Sahr, *Qualitative Sozialforschung.* Munich: 2010.

² See Groh-Samberg, O., A. Juhasz, C. Keller, and I. Tucci, "Handlungsstrategien junger Erwachsener mit Migrationshintergrund," Soeffner, H.-G. (ed.), *Unsichere Zeiten.* Wiesbaden: 2010.

"We weren't used to it. We were just used to fighting or to problems, and so on. That's why everything seemed strange to us when we got to Disney. It was like another world, a parallel world ... We were amazed. People were so well behaved. If someone brushed against you by accident, they said 'Sorry'. I don't know ... It was like another world to us. We were surprised and we didn't want to go home. [...] A friend of mine was there—he's violence incarnate. For the first time in my life, I heard him keep saying, 'Sorry!'"

Young adults see this type of experience as important for their careers because it opens a new window to the world for them and makes them aware of new opportunities. Becoming immersed in a socially alien environment is not always without its problems, however: some of those interviewed report a feeling of alienation and of inferiority, when they get into grammar schools or universities outside their residential area. Nevertheless, in retrospect, most of them describe this widening of geographical and social horizons as very positive for their social development.

Gaining School and Vocational Qualifications at a Later Stage: a "Second Chance" Lacking in France

The comparison of the French and German systems has revealed an important mechanism in the life of young adults. The German transition system has no real equivalent in France, where vocational training is integrated into the school system. Partly because of this, young adults who are seen to be having difficulties along their educational pathway in France are relatively quickly left to their own devices.¹⁴ They then distance themselves as far as possible from state institutions, particularly school. This distancing is intensified through the memory of France's colonial past. Such an anti-institutio-

¹⁴ In France, young adults under 26 are not entitled to welfare benefits. Within the framework of training schemes provided by the missions locales, they can normally only receive a low level of financial support. At the same time, state measures to combat the high level of unemployment among young people are adopted regularly. The most recent of these measures is the CIVIS program (Contrat d'Insertion dans la Vie Sociale) which offers shorter training courses and is geared towards young adults under 26 years of age whose level of education is no higher than the school-leaving certificate.

nal attitude could not be observed in Germany to anywhere near as great an extent. Although the German transition system does not lead to recognized vocational qualifications,¹⁵ it gives young people who have no or a low level of qualification the opportunity to obtain school qualifications at a later stage, i.e. it gives them a “second chance”. Thus, it stabilizes the life course in this sometimes difficult phase of self-discovery, as this example of a 19-year-old man of Lebanese origin from Berlin-Neukölln shows:

“Then I applied here. I applied to three schools, five schools, six schools, all over Berlin. Rejection, rejection. And then here, they didn’t want to take me here, either, because of how I behave. Then I said ‘I can’t get into any school. What are you doing with me? Give me a chance!’, and so on. Then they said ‘OK. You come study here—study textiles.’ I didn’t want to do textiles. I don’t like textiles. I wanted to do social services because—it’s something I can work with better later. But it doesn’t really matter now. When I get my MSA [intermediate school-leaving certificate], I think it’ll be better.” (Some details changed for privacy).

The interview passage also shows the ambivalence of the transition system and the training opportunities it offers:¹⁶ although the preferences of young people are not always met and frequently they also have no clear career prospects, it provides a considerably better alternative to them finding themselves on the street.

Conclusion

In both Germany and France, young people with a migration background more frequently follow precarious career paths than young adults without a migration background. Nevertheless, this report shows that the educational and employment trajectories of this population are diverse. There are advantages and disadvantages to be found in both education systems: it is easier for the descendants of immigrants to access academic education in France, while Germany is more successful at guaranteeing institutional ties for young people who are facing problems. They are given a second chance through the opportunity of obtaining school qualifications or acquiring professional skills at a later date.

The fact that—although they are pressured into the less prestigious educational pathways— young men and women of Turkish and Arabic origin in Germany do not develop a distance to school institutions, as is the case in France for men and women of North African or Sub-Saharan origin, should be seen as promising. Therefore, in Germany there is an urgent need for action to allow the children of immigrants to enter higher educational trajectories or, after passing through the transition system, to sandwich-course training and work experience, and there is a very good chance that they will also make the most of these opportunities.

Along with the institutional infrastructures, social networks also play a role that is not to be underestimated in setting the biographical course at an early stage of life. Through the help, for example, of a teacher or a mentor, or also through entering another social milieu and neighborhood—for educational purposes or also due to a change of address—young people who grow up in disadvantaged and ethnically segregated districts are motivated, and encouraged to have more confidence in their own abilities. It appears that the school system and teachers can have a great impact on the life course of second-generation migrants—even outside the classroom. What is of importance here is not so much the role of educator, but the attention which a student receives from a “mentor.” This attention does not necessarily have to come from a teacher.

Dr. Ingrid Tucci is a Research Associate at the Longitudinal Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) at DIW Berlin | itucci@diw.de

Ariane Jossin is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow of Political Science at the Centre Marc Bloch, Franco-German Research Center for Social Sciences | ja@cmb.hu-berlin.de

Carsten Keller is a Visiting Professor of Urban and Regional Sociology at the University of Kassel; Research Associate on the Centre Marc Bloch | c.keller@cmb.hu-berlin.de

Olaf Groh-Samberg is Junior Professor for Sociology at the University of Bremen and Scientific Coordinator of Welfare State and Social Integration at Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences and DIW Research Professor | ogrohsamberg@bigsss.uni-bremen.de

JEL: J15, I24, J21

Keywords: Migration, integration, second generation, education, labor market, trajectories

Article first published as “Was hilft Migrantennachkommen in Frankreich und Deutschland?”, in: DIW Wochenbericht Nr. 41/2011

¹⁵ The transition system in Germany has sometimes been criticized. See, for example, Baethge, M., H. Solga, and M. Wieck, *Berufsbildung im Umbruch. Signale eines überfälligen Aufbruchs* (2007). Our analysis focuses on comparing the French and German systems.

¹⁶ In our sample, the vocational training leads to qualifications such as cook, painter/varnisher, security agent or cleaner.



DIW Berlin—Deutsches Institut
für Wirtschaftsforschung e.V.
Mohrenstraße 58, 10117 Berlin
T +49 30 897 89 -0
F +49 30 897 89 -200

Volume 1, No 5
4 November, 2011
ISSN 2192-7219

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Renate Bogdanovic
Tel. +49-30-89789-249
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