

Gender-Role Attitudes of Immigrant and Native Children in Germany: The Role of Education

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While many Western societies are experiencing a shift from more traditional to more egalitarian gender roles (e.g., Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Lee et al. 2007), many ethnic minorities are originally from countries that are still on average more traditional (Inglehart & Norris 2003). Even though previous studies have found that a large part of ethnic minorities integrate into Western European societies across time and generations in terms of gender roles and their attitudes, others still remain less egalitarian (e.g., Röder 2014; Röder & Mühlau 2014; Spierings 2015; Malipaard & Alba 2016). Previous studies have underlined that education is one important factor for the explanation of gender-related attitudes among both natives and ethnic minorities (Davis & Greenstein 2009; Malipaard & Alba 2016; Kretschmer 2018). The classic hypothesis is that the exposure to education can have a liberalizing effect on various attitudes and values (*Hypothesis 1*) (e.g., Hyman & Wright 1979; Bolzendahl & Myers 2004), yields to higher psychological security (Stubager 2008) and cognitive sophistication (Bobo & Licari 1989), which in turn boosts individuals to think “out of the box” and adopt new ideas. In line with the assimilation theory, we assume that the effect of education is the same for immigrants and native children who both received schooling in the same country of residence.

Over the last years, a vast amount of studies has observed an assimilation in subsequent generations (Alba et al. 2011; Drouhot & Nee 2019). Yet, immigrant children still face educational inequalities (Heath et al. 2008) and are sometimes confronted with cultural discrepancies between the country they grew up in and their parents’ culture where perhaps less egalitarian values are promoted (Inglehart & Norris 2003). On top of that, they might also face discrimination in various areas (Skrobanek 2009) in the stage of adolescence where they are very vulnerable, which can threaten the formation of their identity. All of those factors might constrain the supposedly liberalizing effect of education. As students pass through the education system, the conflict and discrimination they are facing might lead them to retreat back into communities that spread values associated with their parents’ country of origin. This leads us to hypothesize that the attendance of the education system leads to less egalitarian attitudes among minorities but not natives (*Hypothesis 2*). The question links up to two concepts that provide explanations for different effects of education among immigrant and native children. We translate those explanations to the study of gender values. Both concepts – reactive ethnicity (Portes & Rumbaut 2006: 96) and the integration paradox (Verkuyten 2016) – see the root of a feeling of exclusion and subsequent potential withdrawal into ethnic communities, identities and values in heightened sensitivity as a byproduct of intergroup contact. Immigrant children who attend higher educational tracks are exposed to a stronger presence of native students in those tracks and therefore face a greater risk of experiencing exclusion, which in turn leads to a potential withdrawal into ethnic communities.

Moreover, higher levels of education might raise immigrant children's consciousness of group boundaries leading them to demarcate themselves from native children, as for instance, through gender-role attitudes. Their greater cognitive and reflective skills will allow them to become more aware of exclusion potentially leading to frustration over unequal opportunities and unfulfilled expectations (Van Doorn et al. 2013; Verkuyten 2016). This should lead to differences between native and immigrant children in the impact of education on gender-role attitudes.

Moreover, we expect gender differences. Generally, girls have an interest in more egalitarian values (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004) and should therefore show greater support for gender equality. Indeed, previous studies have shown that women tend to have more egalitarian gender-role attitudes (e.g., Röder & Mühlau 2014). However, only few studies have looked at girls (e.g., Fan & Marini 2000). We therefore assume that girls should also be more egalitarian in their gender-role attitudes (*Hypothesis 3*). With respect to education, the situation is likely to differ between boys and girls as their achievements vary, particularly among ethnic minorities in Germany (Salikutluk & Heyne 2014; Salikutluk & Heyne 2017). Girls are outperforming boys in school and achieve higher educational degrees (Buchmann et al. 2008). Higher educated girls are more empowered, assert their rights and combat gender inequality, which is even more pronounced for women than for men (Shu 2004). Education might be particularly important for girls to secure their interest in an egalitarian gender-role distribution, leading us to expect that education and gender-role attitudes are more positively linked for them (*Hypothesis 4*). Lastly, girls belonging to an ethnic minority that hold on average less egalitarian values have an even greater interest in gender equality. Hence, we hypothesize that education has a stronger effect on gender-role attitudes among girls belonging to an ethnic minority (*Hypothesis 5*).

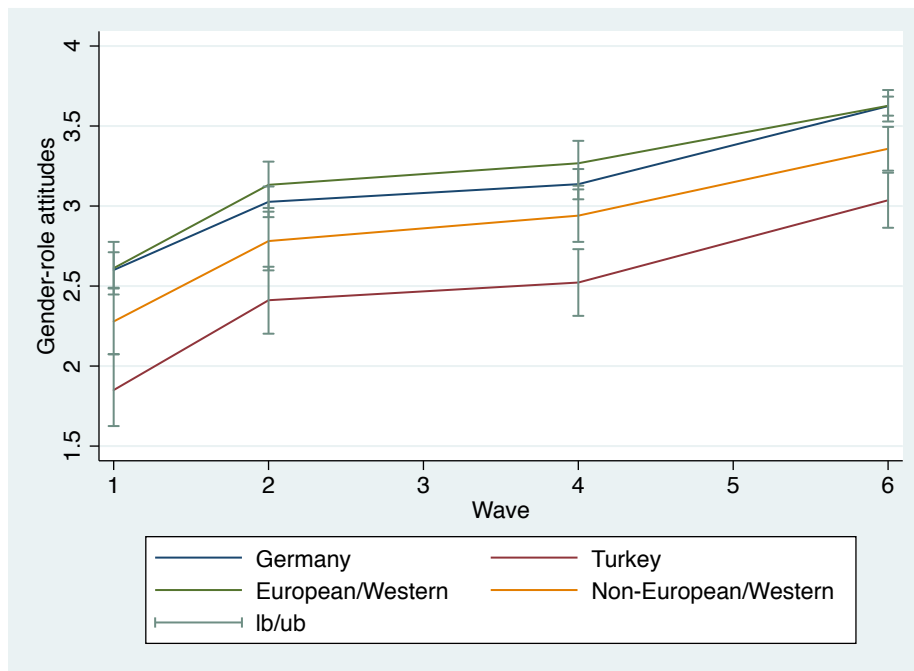
While there have been abundant studies on gender-role attitudes among ethnic minorities (e.g., Diehl et al. 2009; Röder 2014; Röder & Mühlau 2014; Spierings 2015; Malipaard & Alba 2016; Kretschmer 2018), none of those studies looked at temporal variation in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. We attempt to fill this gap by drawing on the German data of the *Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries – CILS4EU-DE* (Kalter et al. 2016a, 2016b; Kalter et al. 2019). Initially, the survey has started in 2010/11 in four European countries and surveyed minority and majority children. Since the German subsample contains the dependent variable in four waves (2010/11, 2011/12, 2014, 2016), we will only refer to the German subsample. The analytical sample consists of 1,240 adolescents (628 natives and 612 ethnic minorities) that are between 13 and 22 years old across all four waves. This range covers the very important transitions in the German education system. We estimate random-effects (RE) models and additionally fixed-effects (FE) models, which account for within variation and unobserved heterogeneity (Brüderl 2010).

The dependent variable is gender-role attitudes. It was asked "*In a family, who should do the following?*" with respect to *take care of the children, cook, earn money and clean the house*. Possible answers were *mostly the man/both about the same* and *mostly the woman*. These four items were

used as an additive index, with zero (more traditional) to four (more egalitarian). The Cronbach's alpha is 0.71. The main independent variable is secondary school degree, which is either upper secondary degree (A-Level, highest possible secondary educational degree in Germany) or all lower level educational degrees.

Figure 1 illustrates the mean gender-role attitudes of adolescents with different ethnic backgrounds across all panel waves. It clearly shows that youth with Turkish and Non-European/Non-Western background have on average less egalitarian gender-role attitudes compared to European/Western and German youth. At the same time, there is a significant increase of more egalitarian gender-related attitudes over time for all ethnic groups. Hence, the descriptive statistics suggest a liberalizing trend during adolescence for all groups. Since youth at that age spend most of their times at school, this trend could indicate the consequences of education on gender-role attitudes.

Figure 1: Mean Gender-Role Attitudes of Different Ethnic Groups across Waves



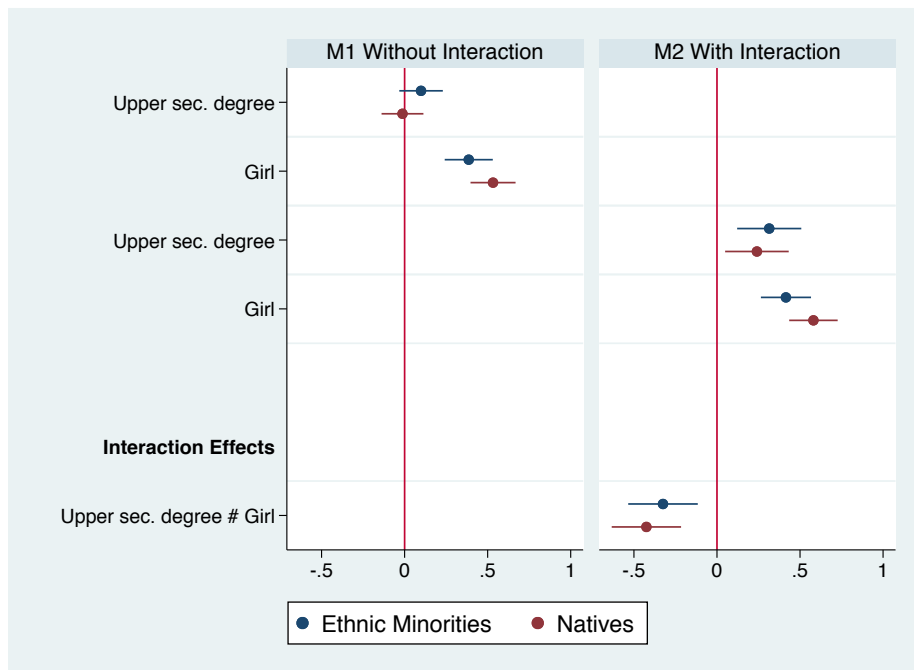
Source: CILS4EU-DE, own calculations.

However, controlling for a range of variables in the RE and FE models (Figure 2 [Model 1], only RE models are shown here), the temporal changes become insignificant; an upper secondary degree does not have a significant effect on gender-role attitudes for both immigrant and native children. Thus, there remains neither a general liberalization effect nor a negative effect – emphasized in the integration paradox – of education on egalitarian gender-related attitudes. Instead, the lack of ethnic differences attests to assimilation theory assuming a convergence in the effect of education on attitudes between immigrant and native children.

Testing gendered effects, we first of all observe that girls hold more liberal attitudes than boys. We further add an interaction term between secondary school degree and gender to the

models in order to test whether having an upper secondary degree has a gendered effect on attitudes (Figure 2 [Model 2], only RE models are shown here). Interestingly, completing upper secondary education seems to have different effects for boys and girls. The interaction is negative and significant in both RE and FE models but in the opposite direction than hypothesized. Achieving an upper secondary degree has a positive effect on more egalitarian gender-role attitudes among boys. Accordingly, there is no positive effect of education on more egalitarian attitudes for girls. Interestingly, the gendered effect of education does not vary between ethnic minorities and natives.

Figure 2: Gender-Role Attitudes Separated by Ethnic Background (RE Models)



Source: CILS4EU-DE, own calculations; control variables are not shown.

We therefore draw the tentative conclusion that obtaining upper secondary education is potentially important for the liberalization of males' gender-role attitudes. This is also likely to play a role in the division of housework as attitudes can be transformed into actual gender-role behavior (e.g., Huscsek et al. 2011). Our results are also interesting from the assimilation perspective. We observe similar patterns for ethnic minorities and natives, which suggests that ethnic differences among immigrant children are not as salient as among adults and implies that subsequent generations of immigrants and natives might be more alike.

However, there is one caveat to keep in mind. Previous studies have emphasized that the liberalizing effect of education can also be due to selection into education (Lancee & Sarrasin 2015). Thus, it is not education per se that affects values, but the selection into specific school types conditional e.g. on parental socio-economic status (e.g., Darmody & Smyth 2018). As we control for parental education in the RE models and estimate FE models, this difficulty should be controlled for to a certain degree.

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