

A3.7 Ethnic Networks and Educational Achievement over the Life Course



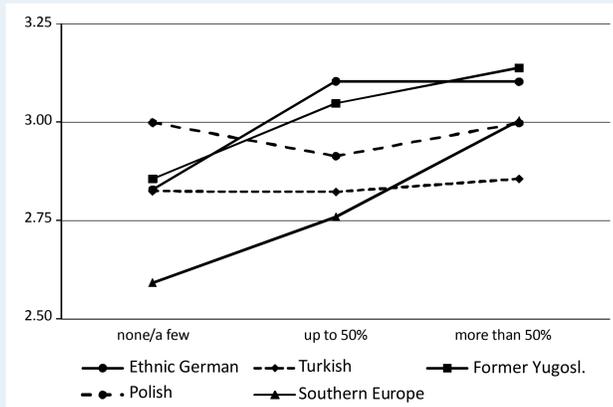
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Education as a Lifelong Process

Ethnic networks and integration

Background

Immigrant's social contacts and their ethnic composition is related to a variety of integrational dimensions and outcomes in the educational system and the labour market.



The positive relation between high shares of native friends and immigrant's identification with the host country (NEPS cohort 4). Put differently, a high share of ethnic friends decreases identification with the host country.
 Figure in Schulz and Leszczensky, 2016. "Native Friends and Host Country Identification among Adolescent Immigrants in Germany: The Role of Ethnic Boundaries." IMR 50(1):163-196.

Social contacts and labour market outcomes

Social contacts can influence labour market success, and individual social capital is a helpful means for social mobility and structural integration. The role of ethnic contacts, however, is less clear. Most large-scale studies use imprecise proxies to measure respondent's social and ethnic networks. By applying comprehensive social capital data provided by the National Educational Panel Study in Germany (NEPS), we gain more insight into this topic.

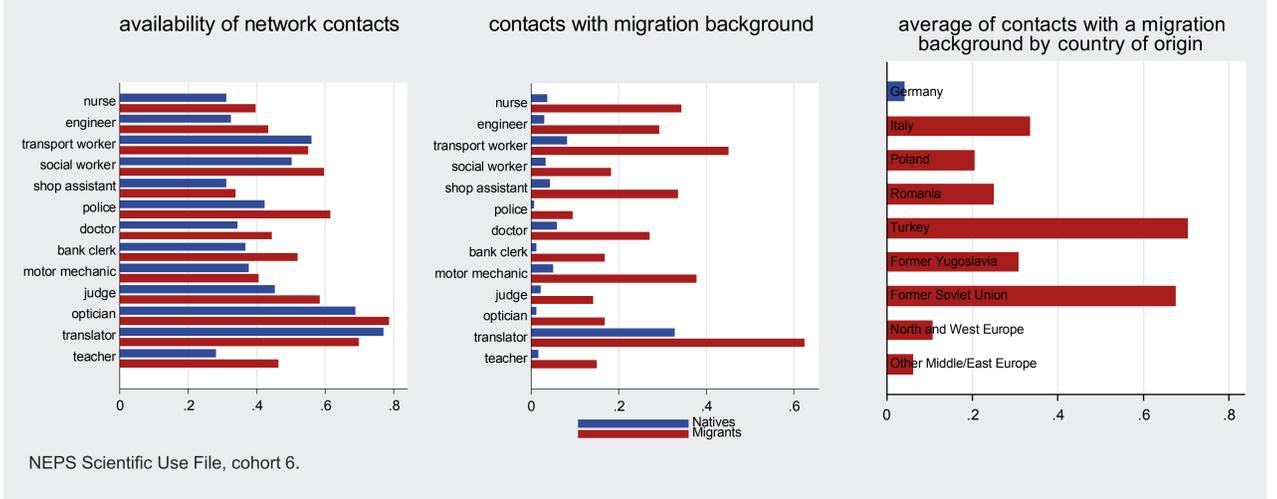
We make use of related social capital data of different NEPS cohorts to study the role of social networks for job advancement and leaving unemployment. Different measures of social capital are examined:

- Prospective and retrospective network contacts for labour market information and support
- A resource generator that captures what kind of support respondents can get from their networks

Social resources and ethnic networks

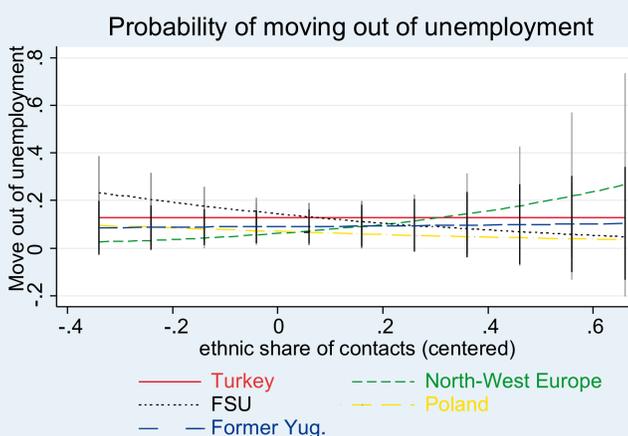
Previous analyses have shown that actors refer to their weak ties to gather information about job openings and their usefulness for finding a new job. For migrants, it is disputed whether social contacts with a migration background are *helpful* or whether they *constrain* structural integration.

Here, we use data from a position generator in NEPS cohort 6 (adults). Respondents stated whether they have persons with a variety of occupations among their personal contacts. Results show that migrants do *not* lack social contacts overall but that the share of ethnic contacts differs vastly. Here again, there are considerable differences between ethnic groups in the ethnic composition of their networks.



Ethnic networks and labour market success

How do these social resources translate into labour market success? In the following graph we show how the share of ethnic network contacts in wave 1 (2009) increases their chances of moving out of unemployment in wave 2 to and 4 (2010 to 2013).



Probability of moving out of unemployment for different countries of origin
 NEPS Scientific Use File, cohort 6, immigrants only (N=1070), under control of number of contacts.

Results

- Statistically significant effect of ethnic share on average but opposite directions for different ethnic groups. Having a high share of immigrants among social contacts helps some immigrant groups but has a negative effect for others.
- Additional analyses comparing prestige scores of previous and later occupations reveal a weak, negative effect of a high share of immigrant network contacts on average. Again, differences between groups exist.
- Ethnic networks may therefore indeed be beneficial in some circumstances, e.g. in getting employment at a lower level, but may not be helpful for further advancing immigrant's careers.

Outlook

- Examine contextual effects. Social contacts are heavily influenced by opportunities and looking into their interplay promises further insights.
- Compare the social resources shown here with other measures of social capital.
- Expand analyses to other NEPS start cohorts, students at the end of secondary education, and within vocational training in particular.