

# Intergenerational solidarity networks of instrumental and cultural transfers within migrant families in Turkey

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## **ABSTRACT**

Over the last fifty years, the pattern of family life in Turkey has been seriously affected by migration. Despite this, there remains a high degree of solidarity typified by transfers of income, material goods and cultural mores between and within family generations. This article is based on the life histories of fifteen migrant families living in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. In-depth interviews were used to collect information about at least three generations in each family. Information was collected about occupational, educational and migration histories, property ownership, care of dependents, and parent-child relations covering three generations.

**KEY WORDS** – intergenerational relations, family, migration, transfers, urban/rural.

## **Introduction**

In recent years, family life in Turkey has been changing as a result of a gradual shift towards living arrangements that are based on nuclear families, and of migration from rural to urban areas (IPS 1999). However, it is still common for the household of the nuclear family living in the urban setting to be composed not only of parents and their children, but also of kin being accommodated on a temporary basis (*e.g.* for a period of vocational or formal education, or until regular employment is found). Doğan found that the average family size in urban areas is about four persons, compared with six to seven persons in rural areas (1993: 215).

Patterns of marriage are also changing. Marriages at very young ages are becoming less common in Turkey. The age at marriage has significantly increased in the last two decades. In the 1999 Turkish

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Demographic Health Survey, it was estimated as 18.4 years for the 45–49 age group of women, and 20.4 for the 25–29 age group. The median age at first marriage for husbands is 23.6 years (TDHS 1998).

Doğan reports that 49 per cent of marriages are made according to both the legal code and religious rules (1993: 235). A marriage is officially recognised in Turkey only if the partners are married according to the civil code but, traditionally, people prefer to combine the official wedding with a religious ceremony conducted by an Imam, an officially appointed religious person. Doğan however found that 15 per cent, mostly people with rural backgrounds, preferred to be ‘married’ only through a religious ceremony, despite the fact that their marriage then remains legally unrecognised. As a consequence, the couple might suffer subsequently when enrolling their children at school, when applying for family support from the government, or when trying to get access to health services through the social security system. In addition, and especially for women, they may be disadvantaged within the family, should there be marital problems. In terms of the authority relations within families, men remain household heads. Although decreasing in number, marriages among kin are still widespread in Turkey. Doğan reports that marriages among kin constitute more than a quarter of all married couples (1993: 221).

Following the enactment of the new Social Security Law in September 1999, retirement age in Turkey, after 25 years of employment, is 58 for women and 60 for men. Many people who had obtained employment early in their adulthood, however, become pensioners at the age of 40. According to the SPO (1999), pensioners<sup>1</sup> in Turkey constitute 7.5 per cent of the total population. The elderly population in Turkey is understood as those persons over the age of 65 (Karsh 1982), and after this age people are eligible for some old age benefits. Life expectancy in Turkey is 70.3 years for women and 65.7 for men (SPO 1995). From these facts, it is clear that in Turkey the pensioner population is not the same as the elderly population: some elderly people have been receiving a pension for a considerable length of time; most, however, do not have any pension and are obliged to live on their own assets. It is important to take into consideration all these complexities, in understanding the position of the older generation in Turkish families.

Traditionally, families in Turkey are highly structured, with a dense pattern of kin relations. The extended family is a major unit for the socialisation of the individual as well as for determining the individual’s educational and occupational attainment. Although aiding the development of the individual, this structure to some extent restricts

opportunities for the young to express their feelings and opinions, especially within rural-based families. Although they may disagree with the opinions and decisions of the older generation, they cannot easily display this. Dense kinship relations and family loyalty mean that open conflict between the generations is not tolerated, even in the urban nuclear family.

#### *Migration over the last 50 years*

Since the 1950s, paralleling economic transformations in agriculture, Turkish society has experienced a period of massive rural to urban migration, with highly complex consequences. This has included the movement of labour, set free by the introduction of new technologies and mechanisation and the search for new means of survival in towns and cities.

The principal feature of the economic development of the 1950s was the post-war re-ordering of the international economic system under principles of market liberalism. At that time, Turkey was advised to abandon its industrialisation projects. The social impact of these had been limited, and attention was directed at a transformation of the agricultural sector. The introduction of mechanisation in agriculture led to a rapid increase in areas under cultivation and in agricultural output. It is misleading to argue, however, that mechanisation replaced labour and that former sharecroppers were driven by poverty to urban areas. Rather, it was general under-employment in agriculture that constituted the push factor. On the pull side, the growth of light manufacturing industries in the urban areas created improved prospects of employment. What determined the growth of migration however, may have been a general increase in social and physical mobility rather than specific factors classifiable as push or pull. What is certain, is that economic changes were instigated by the transformation of the countryside (Tekeli and Erder 1978).

For individual families, the process of migration can be described as 'chain migration'. First one person, usually an unmarried male, moved as a 'pioneer' and then other members of the family, wider kin and village community followed. Although, the pioneer initiated the migration process, the decision to migrate was mostly taken at a household or family level. When sons decided to find employment in the cities, their fathers might protest at first, claiming that this would lead to family disintegration, or the loss of family norms and values. On the other hand, some fathers strongly encouraged their sons to migrate to the city to find a job or to get educated, seeing it as a way to leave

poverty behind. Older women usually opposed the migration decisions in their families. Most women moved to the cities through marriage, again mainly upon the decision of their husbands.

Upon arrival in the city, the pioneer first sought refuge in the house of a relative or village-mate. Often this was in the squatter housing areas (*gecekondu*) surrounding the urban centres. A place had to be found within this network given that the state had no policies for providing housing. The state institutions functioned as if there were no housing problem, since individuals seemed to be able to solve these themselves (Rittersberger-Tılıç and Kalaycıoğlu 1998). Almost all the squatter housing that migrants used, however, was illegal and built on land owned by the state or by private, absentee, land-owners.

The migrants' demands were first for shelter, then for a regular income and, finally, for a better share in health and educational opportunities. Due to a lack of resources, the Turkish welfare state was able to provide only limited social benefits, and the demand was too great to be easily met. Thus it was that individual strategies and family/kin networks of economic and social solidarity, became the primary sources of support.

About 70 per cent of the population of the metropolitan areas of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, 34 per cent of the whole urban population of Turkey, live in *gecekondu* areas (Alpar and Yener 1991; Keles 1996; Sönmez 1996). Of the total housing stock, 22 per cent is located in these areas (Sönmez 1996). They lack major infrastructure facilities such as drinking water, sanitation, public transportation, roads, electricity and gas pipelines. The resulting problems are immense and not easily solved through public investment. Therefore, following the decision to migrate, choosing a site for a house, buying building materials for its construction, and dealing with municipal authorities for the provision of electricity and water, are all accomplished through a complex network of mutual aid within the extended family network. Later on, this continues when migrants seek a job for the household head, schools for their children and, even later, jobs for their adult children.

Mutual aid networks had existed before the large-scale migration of the 1950s began. In the rural areas, all kinds of housework, cultivation, construction of roads and water pipelines, were undertaken through the involvement of all the households in the village. Furthermore, when integration into the market economy increased the family's need for cash, young men went to the towns as seasonal workers, and thus contributed to the survival of their households in the rural villages.

In the early 1960s, for a first-generation migrant to own a squatter home meant occupying a plot on the outskirts of the city, without

having title deeds and without any infrastructural facilities (water, electricity, sewage, etc.). The only costs were the expense of buying cheap construction materials to build a simple, one or two room house. Labour requirements were provided by themselves and their relatives. In time, they got the title deeds and thus legal recognition.

In the process of urbanisation, the plots of their houses have risen in value because of the increasing scarcity of urban land. In this situation, first-generation migrants are often willing to exchange their plots with contractors, in return for two or three flats in the apartment house to be built on the plot. These reconstructed areas usually became high-rent areas catering for the needs of the upper-middle classes. In this case, the migrants might have decided to sell their flats and, in return, they might have bought more flats in a lower rent area of the city. In this way many were eventually able to provide a flat for each of their children.

In areas of the city in which this urban transition did not materialise, the squatter house would be inherited by the eldest son. If the plot was large enough, the other married sons might have constructed additional rooms or houses on the same plot. Those who had a large plot could keep their family together, forming a 'family community', looking after elderly parents and children, cooking and shopping together. If the plot was not large enough, however, only the eldest married son stayed in the house and cared for his parents. The other sons then had to rent another place, usually a squatter house, probably in the same neighbourhood. If their father was economically well off, they would expect help in finding a house to rent, furnishing it and paying the rent. However, if the value of the plot were then to increase and a contractor to show interest, then all the sons would get their share of the flats.

Socially, rural migrants living in the *gecekondu* areas suffered, and still suffer from exclusion, segregation and discrimination. However, by developing survival strategies, such as clientelism and family pooling, they have become a distinct part of the culture of the larger cities.

### **Welfare and social transfers**

In most societies, social welfare is a transfer system through which goods and services are allocated to individuals and groups through a specific unit of social organisation, such as the family, state or a religious institution. Transfers are arranged under a set of rules such as reciprocity (Chatterjee 1985). In addition, collective organisations or voluntary associations may be formed to perform certain types of

welfare transfers. In the family, transfers (usually of income, wealth, and property holdings) typically pass from wealthier and economically active members to other members, including children and other dependents. Transfers within the family take place between those who are attached to the labour force and those who are not, and between those who are healthy and those who are ill or disabled. Within-family transfers may be centric (through a central agent like a patriarch or matriarch) or non-centric (between two neighbouring family members, for example).

In most industrial societies, besides the state and other institutions, the family is well recognised as having a significant welfare role as a first-line provider of transfers to individuals in need. In contrast, in Africa and Asia, the family often emerges as the sole provider of welfare, since welfare from the state or other institutions is rarely functioning adequately. Research in urban South Africa, for example, has shown that the practice of pension sharing between older people and their kin provides older Africans with an easily available means through which they can gain self-respect and exercise some power (Sagner and Mtati 1999). Pension sharing is an instrumental act rooted in the perceived under-development of the state social security system. Pension sharing cannot be explained, however, without reference to cultural values and, in particular, norms regarding family relations. A different understanding is presented by the theory of wealth-flow proposed by Caldwell (1978). Placing the family, cultural and social organisational issues at the centre of demographic transition theory, he claims that in pre-transitional and post-transitional societies, wealth-flows take different directions. In pre-transitional societies, net wealth-flow is from the younger to the older generations, whereas in post-transitional societies the wealth flows in the opposite direction. Turke (1989), however, challenges Caldwell's theory on the basis of his experience in Micronesia. His findings show that wealth-flows in traditional societies might also flow from older to younger generations.

In this article, two major forms of transfers in migrant families are discussed. First, there are instrumental transfers that mainly include the passing over of economic assets. Parents, for example, may be responsible for paying the wedding costs of newly-married children, buying or renting a house or flat, and furnishing it for them. The grandparents may finance the schooling expenses of the grandchildren, or some of the durable household goods for their children. This practice may continue both among generations in the same family and also among a larger network of family members, whether living in the same area or elsewhere. Hence, uncles, aunts, and in-laws, may enter this

network of mutual solidarity. Secondly, there are moral transfers that include advice and emotional support.

These two forms of transfers may take place on a basis of reciprocity. Parents with enough assets (property, pension money, earnings) may be assumed to provide for the needs (housing/accommodation, expenses for daily spending, schooling and provision of capital for starting a work place, etc.) of their children. This expected responsibility may continue into later stages of the lifecycle. The parents' expectations, on the other hand, may be that their children will take care of them in their old age, even if this is not openly declared in all families. Moral advice and support (child care, selection of spouses for grandchildren, choice of profession, upbringing and religious training, transfer of values and norms, etc.) may also be passed from the parents to their married children.

Instrumental transfer from the children to their parents, may take the form of caring for the ill or disabled or helping with household work, such as cleaning, cooking and shopping. The parents may stay in their children's homes for long periods of rest or rehabilitation after an illness. Some parents may take rotational monthly stays in the houses of their children all through the year, not particularly because of illness, but to enjoy the pleasures of family life with their grandchildren. If the parents choose to stay in their own homes, the children may undertake to pay their bills, dealing with bank accounts, as well as organising cleaning, cooking, shopping, and catering for visitors. If one of the parents dies or if they divorce, the usual pattern may be that the widowed/divorced parent moves to the house of a child. In the case of moral support given from children to parents, showing affection and love may be the major demand of the older generation. In terms of cultural aid, the children may be expected to give moral support to their parents and not to leave them alone and isolated in the home.

The instrumental transfer may also be in the form of a *common fund* from which the allocation of resources are arranged according to the needs of the members of the family. In this practice, all members, old or young, are responsible for contributing to the savings pool. Then, those savings are generally distributed according to the decisions of the family head, usually an older male such as the father, grandfather or elder brother, giving priority to the members of the family who are most in need.

For the purposes of this study, the concept of intergenerational solidarity networks within families is defined, first, as the practice of mutual accumulation and allocation of family resources among the members and, secondly, as the transfer of family norms, values and

traditions to the younger members. In this way it forms a *family-pool* in an economic, cultural and moral sense. In fact, pooling practice can take place in a wide network, extending over the household, neighbourhood, village or town, even including kin living in other countries. Family-pool should not be understood simply as family solidarity or mutual support between grandparents, parents and children. It is rather the redistribution and sharing of economic and social-cultural assets between at least two or three generations, *i.e.* the exchange of instrumental aid. The exchange may be within a generation, among brothers and sisters for example, and it may include the transfer of social, cultural, and moral capital. In order to achieve, maintain, or improve the standard of family life, it may be thought crucial that, besides supplying financial aid and exchanging services or goods, a moral and psychological frame is provided for the younger members of the family.

### **Method**

The families recruited to this study were drawn from a nationwide survey of 4,000 families, conducted in 1997 for a large private bank. The aim was to identify the determinants of social mobility in Turkey<sup>2</sup>.

Based on this initial database, a more qualitative study was undertaken to explore, in more detail, the effects of migration and family networks on social mobility. Thirty families were randomly chosen from among the 115 families living in Ankara, who had been ranked in the middle group in the survey<sup>3</sup>. In undertaking life-history interviews, 30 was considered a manageable number, given that several visits would be needed in order to include and interview separately both the husband and the wife of the selected families. Fifteen families were willing to co-operate and give us full details. Often, despite our assurances of confidentiality, promises for appointments were not kept, and the need to get the agreement of all members of the families above the age of 18 (the age of legal maturity) complicated the research.

The cases presented in this article are all from the lower-middle class. All are aged between 25 and 40 years. Typically, a family in this category:

- has at least one member employed by the state and another employed in the informal sector;
- has at least one member who is a high school student or graduate, others have had elementary education;
- does not own a car or personal computer, and rarely an automatic washing machine;



- owns or rents a squatter house or a low standard small apartment flat in a lower rent area of the city.

### **Examples of instrumental transfer**

An example of instrumental aid from our study is provided by the *Pürlü* family<sup>4</sup>. This is a household consisting of four persons. İdris and his wife were both raised in the same rural village in Central Anatolia. His wife, an orphan since she was three years old, grew up with her elder brother. Her husband works as a technician in Ankara. İdris migrated to Ankara in 1974 as a student, and settled with his father's sister. His wife migrated through marriage. They have one 14-year-old daughter and a son of 20 years. She has never had an opportunity to work in waged employment, although she had wanted to work in the ready-to-wear garment industry.

When İdris was 10 years of age, his father left to work in Germany and he is still working there in a municipality. His mother and İdris' five siblings were left in the village. His father insisted that they should stay in Turkey, not to lose their roots. The only financial support of the family was provided by the remittances sent by his father. His mother raised all her children alone and joined her husband in Germany only when all of them were married. She works there as a cleaner. Since then, remittances have continued to be sent, and are allocated among the siblings according to the choices of their father. In this way, flats have been bought and furnished for all the siblings and a local grocery shop has been bought for İdris' elder brother. Additionally, İdris' father sends money for the education of İdris' son who studies in a university out of Ankara. He also guarantees that, after his grandson graduates from the university, he will provide the capital to start a work place.

His father helped to resolve the educational and housing problems of İdris and his siblings. This support had a significant effect on their lives, rendering the *Pürlü* family relatively well off. The family-pool is only supported by the father in Germany, but it is İdris who mediates the allocation of family resources for his father. As can be seen, the support system continues even into his father's late adulthood, including and determining the future of the grandchildren. In this case, the young couple happily agree to the arrangement and co-operate willingly. İdris commented:

Actually I am still trying to understand why my father did not take us to Germany together with him, when we were young. In Germany, I could have a better education and job. In a sense, he prevented us, me and my brothers, from such achievements. He did not want us to lose our religious and Turkish

traditions. But he worked hard during all the years. He is still taking care of us. He bought this squatter house and most of the durable goods ... When he retires, he will come back to Turkey to live with us. Then, we will provide him a decent living.

For individual members, the family itself is a crucial social resource, a form of capital, which provides them with a socio-economic frame within which they can develop viable life plans. Family resources are of major importance in conceiving and achieving individual life projects. In some cases the family directly instigates, for others the family serves as a source for inspiration. The context of the family network might even determine the future of following generations.

Another significant example of instrumental transfer is provided by the *Kılıç* family. Hülya, was also born in Ankara, one of five daughters. When she was five years of age, her father went to Germany taking his family with him. She completed her primary education in Germany and her secondary education in Turkey. After nine years, her family returned to Turkey, where her father became a well-off owner of a furniture shop. She has never been employed since her father does not allow it because of religious views.

Abdullah was born in Ankara in 1963, the younger of two sons of a worker who came from a village in the province of Ankara and who had moved to the city 35 years previously. He graduated from a vocational school in carpentry, and his first job was working for Hülya's father. Having met, Hülya and Abdullah then married, but Abdullah had to leave the work because of ideological differences with his wife's father. He tried a couple of jobs in the informal sector, and then found regular employment as a carpenter in the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation. They now have a daughter, aged five years. Hülya's father no longer supports or visits them.

Since Abdullah has obtained a regular job only quite recently, they do not have the same wealth accumulation and standing as others in the sample. However, his father, now a retired worker, has provided and furnished the house in which he lives at present. His parents live with them from time to time. They have developed a cycle of moving between their two sons and the village they come from. When Abdullah's parents come to them, they bring the 'family' car. They also cover all household expenses for the period of their stay.

Although Abdullah and his wife dislike their situation, they have to co-operate with his parents. Hülya comments:

It is difficult to live together, although my in-laws are very helpful. When they are living with us, all the arrangements in the house change. A lot of visitors come to visit the old ones and I have to serve the guests. To ease my work load,

they bought the washing machine and dishwasher, but I am not very happy because I am afraid of using electrical goods. I cannot help get excited when the machines are working inside.... I wish, we could have a place on our own.

Abdullah comments:

In our family nobody is independent. My parents and siblings, we all put our savings together as a common fund to be spend for the needs of the family members. This is a good arrangement but it forces me to do what my father says. It is my duty at the moment since this house and everything inside, except my computer, belongs to him. The only time when I am happy is, when I work with my computer. When they are living with us, my wife has to take care of my mother as well, because she has problems with her legs. This is extra work for my wife.

Abdullah has a vision for his future, when he will be free to open a workplace of his own, where he will develop his own designs for furniture using computer technology. Exceptionally in this sample, he had a multi-media personal computer at home, where he is trying to develop his furniture designs in his free time.

The example of the Kılıç family shows clearly how the support of the family of origin can transform the life and standing of a young family by providing new opportunities. Despite this, the young couple are not happy with this imposed situation (in contrast to the Pürlü family) and live with the dream of independence in the future.

The forms of transfers vary greatly between families. It is not always between generations. When parents oppose migration to town, a family-pool may develop between siblings. In one family, brothers supported each other on a mutual basis, even across international borders. In another family, however, the eldest brother sacrificed his wellbeing for the other two.

The *Yılmaz* family provide an example of instrumental transfer between brothers. This is an extended family of three brothers, two of them married, living in the same squatter house with two rooms. The married brothers each have two young children. Nurettin, the eldest brother works as a cleaner in a hotel, the middle as a waiter in a well-established restaurant, and the youngest as a cleaner in a firm, besides going to secondary school. Their wives have never been employed and migrated to town through marriage.

Nurettin, moved to town, when he was 18 years old. His elder step-sister found his present job and she also provided him with his first accommodation. Then, from his step-sister's husband, he bought the squatter house (in which he still lives). After military service, the middle brother came to live with him and Nurettin found him a job. Nurettin married a second cousin from his home village, aged 15.

Finally, the youngest brother was called from the village to continue his education and to find a job. When all of them were settled in town, they saved money by living in the same house. His brothers have since bought two apartment flats. At present, they are saving money to furnish these flats. Nurettin, although he was the first to settle in town, states that the two flats belong to his younger brothers and that he will wait for his turn. This can be considered an altruistic example of family-pool between siblings. Nurettin says:

In the village my parents were not well off. So they could not help us. Also they did not push us to get education. I myself, came to the town next to my sister who found me a job. I had to stand on my own feet since then and I also had to support my younger brothers. I did not have the luck to get any support from my parents. My parents and my wife's parents, they all live in the village and are not interested in coming to the city. This gives us a problem, because especially in summer months and harvest time, they expect us to go to help. We cannot easily take leave from our jobs, so we send our wives. But then the wives complain that they are tired .... In times of illness, they come to us and we take them to the hospital. But I am worried about how we can cope, when they get older and cannot look after themselves?

Unlike his own parents, Nurettin's parents-in-law hold some fertile land and are able to send food as support.

Besides financial help, services such as child care are sometimes performed by the older generation for their adult children. This is especially important for daughters. Due to a lack of nurseries and other public facilities for child care, the employment of women outside the home is strictly limited. When the grandparents – especially the grandmothers – can take over the day care (and even night care) of their grandchildren, the women are able to go out for employment and this provides further direct financial support for the family. In rare cases, a father has decided to send his daughter abroad to work as a foreign worker (Abadan-Unat 1977; 1982). The reason behind such decisions is that, during certain periods, the European labour market has been in need of cheap, unskilled, female labour.

The *Küçük* family is an example of a family in which the older generation has provided such services. Cabbar's grandparents were comparatively wealthy but his parents, along with three uncles, migrated to Germany in 1972 when he was seven years old. He learned carpentry skills at a vocational school in Germany. He returned to Turkey with his parents in 1984. His father bought a house but after two years sold it and then disappeared. Hülya's parents are both from poor rural families. Her father came to Ankara in 1962 with his two brothers. He worked as an apprentice in a car repair shop and then met

and married Hülya's mother and they had four children. He opened a grocery shop in a district where they rented a house. Gradually he built a four-floor house in the same district. Hülya worked as a secretary and cashier in different firms before marrying Cabbar. They have been married two years and have a newborn baby.

They and Hülya's brother live in flats in the four-storey house of Hülya's parents. Hülya and Cabbar own a workshop producing decorative parts for furniture and they employ nine female workers. To establish this, they borrowed money from Hülya's parents. In the workshop, they work together on equal terms, while Hülya's mother takes care of the baby. In contrast, Cabbar's mother is too ill and depressed to be able to help. They also get the benefit of the family car, which belongs to Hülya's father. Most of their domestic household needs are met through Hülya's father's shop located on the ground floor of the house.

Cabbar, though benefiting greatly from his in-laws, is determined to stand on his own feet in future. He sees the current situation as a temporary period of guaranteeing savings, so that he can become a self-employed businessman. He is angry with his father and irritated by being dependent on Hülya's parents. In Turkey, such support is relatively unusual and accepted by men only on a temporary basis. Cabbar, despite his irritation, is full of admiration for his father-in-law:

I hate my own father, because he did not take any responsibility. He took all the money and disappeared, leaving me as a very young man without any job and my ill mother homeless. He did not behave like a real father would, whereas my father-in-law is very different. After he migrated to town, he worked hard in all kinds of jobs, but he never neglected his family. He built this house in which we live. His life became easier when he opened the grocery shop which is the oldest in the neighbourhood. He is a clever man who makes good use of his money, not like my father. We are obliged to him, he gave us the house, they look after our baby, and gave us the money to rent and start the workshop ... Of course, although he has a son as well, I also feel responsible for my in-laws who helped us that much....

### **Examples of moral and cultural transfer**

Moral and cultural transfers are directed both ways from grandparents and parents to children, and vice versa. They mainly include general advice, emotional support and caring during times of crises or stress in the families. This kind of exchange does not necessarily require close proximity of network members where telephone contacts can replace spatial proximity.

Transfer of norms, values and mores, related to the social status of the family, and advice concerning the education, love and marriage relations of grandchildren, constitute a major cultural and moral transfer between grandparents, parents, and children. In the examples, the grandparents' and parents' attitudes towards the marriage of younger members are that they should marry partners who share the same traditions, norms and values as those of their own family. They have negative views about pre-marital sexual relations. The younger generation shares these views to a great extent.

Another example of cultural transfer concerns women working outside the house. Generally, elderly family members of both sides do not approve of wives being employed away from their home. Similarly most husbands declare that they would not let their wives out to work even if they were in financial difficulties. In some cases this may lead to disputes in the family. An example is *Zöhre's* family. She is 28 years old, legally married for 10 years, and from a village in the Ankara province. Her husband is disabled and so she has to work as a low-paid cleaner. After they married, they lived with his widowed father and a married brother. The house belonged to her father-in-law and *Zöhre* complained of many disputes. She and her two sons suffered from such discrimination as not being given the same food. Because she started work she was punished by her in-laws. This left her and her family without any help, financial or otherwise. They were only allowed to live in a very low standard one-room squatter house. Her in-laws complained that she liked to make friends and was easy-going in her social relations, and that she 'polluted' the family honour in the close neighbourhood. The family justified these accusations on the grounds of her husband being disabled and not capable of controlling his wife. She even ended up being beaten by her father-in-law. *Zöhre* was very critical:

My father-in-law is a bastard. He has all the means, two houses, a pension and savings. He gives everything to his other sons but nothing to us, whereas my husband is more in need, because he is almost blind and cannot find a job. My two sons are also his grandsons. He does not even give a penny to them. He can go to hell, I will not look after him when he needs care ... His sons, those who take the money should look after him ... We lived together with my mother and father-in-law for a while, after marriage, in this house. After the death of my mother-in-law, he realised he cannot stay with us and went to live in his other house, which is much better built, with his other son. When he visits occasionally, I complain to him, but he does not care...

Child-raising practices are also mostly influenced by the parents. These include protecting the babies from the 'evil eye' by putting small

beads on dresses and by celebrating every significant stage (show as first teeth) with a special ceremony. The grandparents in most families enforce the religious upbringing of the grandchildren, which is widely agreed upon by the mothers and fathers. In times of certain illnesses the grandparents are again influential. They may urge their children to take their ill babies to a health healer rather than to a doctor.

Cultural aid from children to parents is strategic in the sense that, together with providing moral support, they take full responsibility for the mental health of their parents. For example, parents usually say that they would like their children to visit them during the *bayrams* (religious holidays) and to meet more frequently during the fasting period (*Ramadan*). Most young couples arrange family picnics at the weekends, which elderly parents also participate in and enjoy. Some children, mainly daughters, visit their parents almost every day just to chat and thus provide emotional support.

### **The risks of a lack of mutual aid**

Mutual aid helps family welfare as well as individual welfare, especially in cases of effective instrumental aid among parents and children. Many of our interviews, evident in the above examples, revealed the decisive role played by family networks in the achievement of family improvement. However, sometimes there are losers, due to the resistance of the younger generations or to disputes within the family. The absence of family ties sometimes leads to downward social mobility. This happens mostly when children resist or refuse the arrangements of their parents. It is also, possible that parents may be unwilling to support their children because of ideological, cultural, educational or personality differences. The consequences of a lack of instrumental aid may be seen in the following examples.

One such negative example is provided by the *Yıldırım* family. Ali and Zeynep have a son of 15 years and a mentally and physically handicapped daughter aged eight years. Both sets of parents migrated to Ankara with only elementary school education, found work, and then eventually retired back to their villages. Zeynep, born in Ankara, worked in the ready-to-wear garment industry before she married. Ali migrated to town with his family when he was five years old. Now he works as a cleaner and serves tea and coffee in a large factory. In fact he took over this job from his mother-in-law when she retired. So, exceptionally, this couple were raised in worker families and both their mothers were employed.

At present, Ali and Zeynep are living with their children in a rented squatter house. There are no remittances or help of any kind from their parents. Zeynep has to look after and support her daughter on her own and complains that, since she cannot leave the child, she has not been out of the house during the last eight years. In her experience, a family in Turkey with a handicapped child is left to cope alone. To sustain everyday routines, she says they need a car but they are dependent on Ali's meagre wage. This does not cover the costs of anything beyond subsistence.

Ali claims to be a skilled shoemaker and she has skills from her work in the ready-to-wear industry. However, both are unwilling to use these skills to earn extra income. He says he hates shoemaking, whereas she complains that, since the care of the handicapped child takes all her time, she is not able to undertake any additional work. Financial and moral support does not seem to be provided by either set of parents, even though they have enough economic resources to provide this. Neither Ali nor Zeynep complained about this lack of support. Thus, although family support is a widely accepted and practiced norm in Turkey, there are cases where this does not exist and support is expected from others.

The Yıldırım family represents a kind of resistance to family support that is characteristic of other young couples. In a society where the social security system works only in a very limited fashion, lowly skilled and lowly educated individuals can only hope to survive within a family network. As a result, individuals who enter into disputes with the larger family risk becoming losers.

The *Apaydın* family is such a case. Adnan's father migrated from Albania and opened a coffee shop in a village on the Aegean coast. There he met Adnan's mother. He inherited the coffee shop and they then moved to Ankara, where he became a partner in a transport firm. He bought this and then became wealthy through tourism.

The grandparents of Sultan, Adnan's wife, were from rural villages in the east of Turkey. Her father migrated to Ankara at 17 and had a series of marginal jobs before a more secure job in the garage of a bank. He married Sultan's mother when she was 14 and they had ten children. When Sultan was eight, her parents were divorced and, despite a court order, all the children chose to stay with their father.

Adnan's parents have both died. When his father died, the four brothers had to share the tourism business. When the eldest brother died, soon after the father, the other three quarrelled over the inheritance. The dispute resulted in one claiming it all, excluding the other two through various 'tricks'. Adnan, the youngest, did not want



TABLE 1. *State of relations with parents*

Family	Husband's parents:	Wife's parents:
<i>Pürlü</i>	Send support from Germany	Both dead
<i>Kılıç</i>	Returned to village; support and visit	Live in Ankara; estranged
<i>Yılmaz</i>	Live in village; provide no support	Live in village and provide limited support
<i>Küçük</i>	Father disappeared; mother dependent on son	Live in Ankara; provide accommodation and child care
<i>Şöhre</i>	Father lives in Ankara; is abusive; mother dead	Live in a small town close to Ankara; no support
<i>Yıldırım</i>	Returned to village; no support	Returned to village; no support
<i>Apaydın</i>	Both dead	Divorced; little contact

to continue his education and left to live on his own. It was then that he started his own translation firm with a partner, taking no help from the family. The income from the firm is limited and not comparable to what he would have received from his father's inheritance. Adnan and Sultan live in a rented house with their seven-year-old daughter. They have no social security and complain about their living conditions. Sultan has tried many jobs in the informal sector. Over the last two years she has stayed at home, looking after her child. They share a dream of opening a seaside hotel, but it remains unclear how they are ever going to finance it.

In these two examples, the breakdown of family bonds has had a negative effect on the wellbeing of the family. Both the Yıldırım and Apaydın families could have enjoyed much better living standards if disputes had been avoided.

Finally, regarding the relations between these interviewees and their parents, Table 1 summarises the present state. This shows that in our study the instrumental aid comes mainly from the male members of the husband's family whereas cultural and emotional support seems to be understood more as a duty of the female members of the wife's family. This can be interpreted as a strong encouragement of patriarchal relations and patrilocal residences.

## Conclusion

The results of this study have three important implications. First, the welfare-providing role of the family of origin is significant, especially with migration. This is well demonstrated by the Pürlü family. In particular, it is clear that the role of the older members such as İdris's father is critical in decisions about migration. Patriarchal authority

directs the strategies for movements of the family or members of the family, whether it relates to rural and urban parts of Turkey or to families divided between Turkey and other countries such as Germany.

The implications of the types of instrumental and cultural aid, revealed in our study, are twofold. First, as in the case of the Yılmaz family, unity and solidarity are a principle defence against deteriorating wages or the worsening of the economic situation of migrant families. Here, the savings and income of the older family members generally play a greater role in the accumulation of income and property within a family pool, compared with members of younger generations; adult children also contribute to the family pools, but to a lesser degree. Thus, the offspring and the grandchildren benefit more in terms of their immediate welfare and education. It might be argued that the older generation in families are investing for their future care and affection, ensuring that they will be neither lonely nor neglected in their old age – note the moral anxieties expressed by Nurettin and Cabbar. All the family members, however, old and young, have a tendency to share and benefit jointly from family savings. Most choose to spend their savings during their lifetime rather than accumulate personal wealth to be left as an inheritance after death. Often this mechanism is needed for survival, a kind of built-in insurance to provide social security and care for the dependent and sick.

In Turkey, material wealth and moral support can flow in both directions between older and younger generations. White (1994) in her research in Istanbul, similarly found that people covered their expenses in part through various types of income pooling and that the family was expected to provide social security and care for the old and sick. In our sample, however, as illustrated by the examples of the Pürlü and the Kılıç families, support is mostly given by older to younger members of families.

Secondly, this kind of private insurance provided by inter-generational solidarity substantially relieves pressure on the public welfare institutions. White (1994) claims that it is a system of insurance that enables employers to avoid contributing to insurance, social security and pensions. Some might consider this an obstacle to the development of welfare provisions by the state. On occasions, however, as we have found in the case of Zöhre and the Yıldırım and Apaydın families, dependent people who are lacking mutual family aid are in urgent need of support if their wellbeing is not to suffer.

Thirdly, the solidarity that characterises most families leaves only a little space for individuals to gain in self-reliance and to make independent personal decisions on economic, social and cultural issues.

Several, such as Abdullah, Cabbar and Hülya felt oppressed by their dependence upon their families. Nevertheless, mutual aid greatly strengthens relations based on obligation and reciprocity, binding members of the family to each other as a close-knit group and excluding others: non-kin, members of different ethnic groups, and often their neighbours. Rather than creating inter-generational cleavages in society, this generates a strong family identity that is influenced and defined in large part by the authority of the older members.

## NOTES

- 1 Pensioners are defined as those in receipt of income from a retirement fund, social insurance, social security of tradesmen and self employed, or private funds.
- 2 The research was undertaken by a private research firm based in Istanbul. The aim was to study the socio-economic profiles of creditcard and bank service users. Hence, the large sample was compiled with all the addresses and the essential minimum information of all members of the households in a sample of towns having 100,000 or more inhabitants: individual incomes, levels of education, ages, sex, birth dates, places of residence, ownership of selected household goods (car, personal computer, full automatic washing machine, dish washer, video, music set, camera), house ownership, car ownership, quality of the living areas (the city is divided into five different zones according to levels of rent, land and tax values). After ranking the data, a scale was constructed which divided the original 12,000 individuals (members of 4,000 families) included in the survey into five socio-economic status groups. For further detail see Kalaycıoğlu *et al.* (1998).
- 3 In this survey, the *middle group* constituted one in four of the households. The decision to limit the qualitative study to the middle group, was based on the fact that interest in the middle class is dominant in literature on social mobility (Wright 1985; Crompton 1992; Bourdieu 1986; Poulantzas 1975; Abercrombie and Urry 1983). Within the middle group, families were ranked from top to bottom according to the total household income. Taking a random starting point on the ranking list, every fourth family was selected for life-history interviews.
- 4 All names are pseudonyms.

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