

## **Educational Development and Detachment Processes of Male Adolescents from Immigrant Families**

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**Abstract.** Social class, gender, and migration status notably influence social inequalities in the German educational system. Empirical studies reveal that especially male students from Turkish immigrant families belong to the most disadvantaged group with regard to educational opportunities. In order to identify causes for this we reconstruct and contrast biographies of successful and less successful educational careers of male adolescents from Turkish immigrant families. Our theoretical framework is based on the assumption that educational careers depend decisively on the way youths master the twofold challenge connected with adolescence and migration. Adolescent detachment processes are conceived as intergenerational occurrences (cf. King 2002), in which the quality of intergenerational family relationships as well as the biographical treatment of a particular migration project on the part of the parents play a significant role.

**Keywords:** *adolescence, male immigrants, education (bildung), intergenerational relations, qualitative research*

### **Introduction**

In recent years, empirical studies, partly applied internationally, such as the PISA study, have confirmed the existence of a shockingly high level of social inequality in the German educational system, which becomes apparent mainly in the strong correlation between school achievement, on one hand, and such factors as social class, migration status, and gender, on the other (cf. Baumert et al. 2001). Studies specifically examining the educational progress of children and youth from immigrant families have shown that students from immigrant families have fewer opportunities to complete their education than their native peers and that, moreover, on average male youths in this group perform worse than females. Young males from Turkish immigrant families form a particularly disadvantaged group.

Among immigrant groups in Germany, those with a Turkish background



represent the largest immigrant population, consisting of some three million people. Half of them were born in Germany, a higher percentage than in every other group. Compared to other immigrant groups, however, this group ranks far lower in education participation rates. By way of explanation, the group of immigrants of Turkish origin shows more people remaining without educational attainment (30 % vs. 1,4 % on the part of autochthonous Germans) and fewer people obtaining access to institutions of higher education (14 % vs. 38 % on the part of autochthonous Germans). Moreover, such educational deficits complicate their integration into Germany's labor market. Particularly alarming is the high youth unemployment rate, which at 28% is twice as high as that of native Germans (cf. Woellert et al. 2009, p. 49).

In order to explore reasons for these findings, which have thus far been the object of little research, qualitative studies are required which trace both successful and less successful educational careers and reconstruct circumstances that give rise to them. This marks the starting point of the research project, which is presented in the following.<sup>1</sup> Our research aim is to gain insight into the factors responsible for the developmental differences by means of comparative reconstruction of the biographical development in formally successful and less successful educational careers of male adolescents from Turkish immigrant families. For the purposes of our research, those educational careers are considered successful in which the young males attained the *Abitur*<sup>2</sup> and have recently begun their academic studies, whereas peers not in possession of the *Abitur*, because they either did not attend schools leading to this educational attainment or dropped out of such schools, are considered less successful.

### **School and family as key variables for educational success**

According to previous discussions on the reproduction of social inequalities in the educational system, the evident disadvantage faced by children from underprivileged and immigrant families is considerably influenced by the following two factors: school and family. These factors act as key variables and social filters

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<sup>2</sup> High school degree qualifying for access to institutions of higher education.

impacting the educational participation and educational success of subsequent generations. Institutional discrimination against children from immigrant families originating in the school, contributing, in turn, to the disadvantageous educational progress of children and youths with immigration history, could be pointed out empirically (cf. e.g. Baumert et al. 2001; Gomolla & Radtke 2002). It remains unclear, however, how exactly “the process of intergenerational transmission of educational opportunities” (Becker & Lauterbach 2004, p. 13) takes place. National as well as international studies on migration and education repeatedly emphasized that familial relationships play a significant role in the transmission or also transformation of educational inequalities (cf. e.g. Delcroix 2000; Gans 1992; Sayad 1991; Simon 2003; Soremski 2008; Terren & Carrasco 2007; Zhou 1996). It remains unclear, however, how “the process of intergenerational transmission of educational opportunities” takes place in particular with regard to school and especially the family of origin (Becker & Lauterbach 2004, p. 13).

While we can assume that connections between the lower educational success of children from immigrant families and their social background exist, this neither represents a mere consequence of class-specific capital resources (in Bourdieu’s sense) nor, in a narrower sense, a class - or immigration-specific lack of educational aspiration (cf. Birnbaum 2007). Statistical surveys clearly indicate that the educational aspirations of immigrant parents are significantly higher than those of autochthonous parents with comparable socio-economic status (cf. Kurz & Paulus 2008, p. 5501). It appears that approaches attempting to provide explanations focusing on capital resources and the degree of educational aspirations need to be differentiated by incorporating additional factors. This includes the quality of intergenerational relationships within a family (cf. Diewald & Schupp 2004), which affects not only the family’s capital resources in various ways, but also – and this constitutes the focus of our project – *the way in which, in the process of adolescent detachment, experiences in the family of origin are processed and handed down, and the way family- or milieu-specific structures of meaning and practice can be modified.*

Adolescent detachment processes in this context describe the potential transformation of the parent-child relationship towards more emotional and cognitive space, as well as providing behavioral leeway (in terms of Steinberg 1996), which includes negotiating and remodeling familial experiences. Here, the detachment process is not to be understood as a one-sided developmental task,

but as an intergenerational and intersubjective process. The conditions arising thereby which facilitate detachment processes and self-positioning also vary according to the generative competencies of parents and the quality of parent-child relationships. It is necessary for the adult generations to allow and support the individuation processes of adolescents (cf. Schubert 2005). The opportunities that adolescents are granted “for the exploration of the outer world as well as for exhaustive self-exploration” (King 2002, p. 93) are very important. With regard to adolescent detachment processes, it is crucial that both parents and children mutually acknowledge the differences in their particular patterns of interpretation, behavior, and perception and simultaneously preserve relatedness as well as proximity. Consequently, our study considers both young men and their parents and therefore incorporates perspectives of both parents and sons on the familial relationships.

### **The doubled transformation challenge of adolescence and migration**

Adolescence constitutes a doubled challenge under conditions of immigration (cf. Koller 2009). On the one hand, youths with immigration history are confronted with a shift from child to adult just as all youths in modernized societies. Likewise, they deal with experiences of individuation accompanying this shift which relate to the mode of their parents’ own detachment processes. On the other hand, migration and the associated necessity of separation and reorganization within the immigrated family and its members create specific conditions for the processes of separation and restructuring in the adolescent descendants (cf. Akthar 1999). Moreover, youths with immigration history experience such processes under special conditions insofar as within entities such as peer groups, school, or public life, which are becoming more important in the course of adolescence, they are usually labeled “outsiders” as opposed to the “established” (in the sense of Elias & Scotson 1965; cf. Juhasz & Mey 2003). Thus, youths with immigration history have to deal with the additional experience of otherness. It is worth examining how the educational success of youths with immigration history is influenced by this twofold, interrelated challenge of adolescence under conditions of migration. Similarly, it needs to be clarified in what way the competency of self-positioning within social space is connected with the quality and outcomes of the adolescent detachment process.

Summarizing the viewpoints outlined thus far, we can assume that

socialization at home represents one of the central factors in the reproduction of educational inequality. First of all, however, we need to concretize and shed more light on the specific functional mechanisms operating here. In so doing, it is precisely the transitional areas between familial and extra-familial experiences which become especially important during adolescence, that need to be taken into account.

It is these adolescent developmental and detachment processes which appear to be the missing link, as they are greatly influenced by the family of origin and, at the same time, represent a transitional zone between family and school, as well as other extra-familial social fields.

A detailed qualitative analysis will help to reveal the complexity and subtleness of the connections sketched out above. Our study is therefore based on biographical interviews (cf. Schütze 1977) with twenty young men from Turkish immigrant families and their parents, interviews which will be evaluated by means of narrative analysis (cf. Schütze 1983) and objective hermeneutical methodology (cf. Oevermann 1979). In addition, the work on each case is discussed in detail among the members of staff and processed according to the reflexive loop. The composition of the project's staff, consisting of scholars with immigration history and without, proved very effective in that it created specific constellations of proximity and distance to the material under examination (cf. Merriam et al. 2001).

### **Typology of the link between educational careers and adolescent detachment processes**

After evaluating the first interviews, we summarized the results of the case analyses in the form of a preliminary typology. This was done by means of contrastive case comparison between the families according to the principle of maximum variation (cf. Kelle & Kluge 1999). The main focus of typification lies on the links between (successful and less successful) educational careers and adolescent detachment processes, which were analyzed under the aspect of generational relationships as well as the processing of the familial immigration history. Thus far, four types have been established, consisting of two successful and two less successful educational careers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Concerning the parents, the quality of the transmission of educational aspirations from parent to child, as well as parental support, serve as differentiation categories for typification. Here, the way in which the educational aspirations and delegations of the parents are conveyed to the adolescent child is closely connected with the sons' respective personal



It is characteristic for Type 1, termed *Appropriation of Parental Educational Objectives* and consisting of young men with successful educational achievements, that during the period of adolescence sons manage to view advancement as their own project, even if their educational career is burdened with the heavy weight of parental expectations. This indicates that, despite restrictive educational objectives, the intergenerational relationships within the family allow the sons enough space for independent development. A stable relationship between parent and child is an equally important factor: it ensures support in the execution of decisions, it lessens social distance that may possibly arise between parent and child due to the child's educational success, and it provides space for adolescent development.

Type 2, termed *Adaptation to Parental Objectives*, is characterized, in contrast, by the tendency of the young men to take on the high educational aspirations of their parents without internalizing them in a way comparable to Type 1. Parental educational aspirations are mediated through high (psychological) pressure exerted by the parents on the child. Conspicuously for Type 2 subjects, spaces for adolescent development are highly constricted. Potential failure, which would negate the parents' hopes and efforts, may cause great emotional stress on these adolescents, since they have a very close relationship with their parents and an adolescent detachment process could not take place. Thus the sons take on their parents' educational objectives and try to achieve them.

Two further types can be differentiated among those young men whose educational careers are less successful: Characteristic for Type 3, termed *Failure In Fulfillment of Parental Objectives*, is that here, too, the parents entrust their hopes of educational advancement to their sons who, however, do not manage to fulfill this goal or who refuse, in the sense of an act of adolescent rebellion, to do so. In the interviews the parents assigned to this type depict themselves as being highly engaged. Rather than supporting their sons constructively, however, they urge their sons to achieve an aim which they (the parents) have predetermined. But if the sons do not succeed in achieving this aim, these parents react with strong and

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immigration histories, whose processing, again, is connected with familial relationships and parental support. This creates various conditions and spaces for development for the child, available for both the realization of their educational aspirations and for the processes of adolescent detachment. Hence, individuation is a central feature for the sons in this process and the ability to deal with parental aspirations, delegations, and relationships. With regard to the links between the features more types emerge.

pressing disappointment, whilst the sons' ideas and feelings remain unconsidered. In addition, the space for adolescent development is limited. A central factor for explaining the sons' failure is, that the sons do not deal constructively with the expectations and pressure of their parents, which makes adolescent detachment impossible and, likewise, blocks possibilities on the way to a successful educational career.

Type 4 is marked by the sons' ever-increasing *lack of direction* in the course of adolescence, which results from problematic familial relationships. These young men are on their own, whether in matters of setting goals or the implementation of their education. The lack of direction, which causes failure, is mainly triggered by unresolved problems within familial relationships. These lead to a forced and desperate quest for stability, orientation, and recognition, with the adolescents swaying back and forth in regard to their aims. The adolescents' persistent quest further weaken their commitment to their own educational projects, which disperse and fade into the background, until finally educational careers are abandoned altogether.

### **Contrastive case analysis**

To provide a more detailed discussion of the significance of these preliminary results in light of our initial question, we would like to identify the contrasts between exemplary cases corresponding to Types 1 and 3 discussed above.

#### *Engin – Appropriation of parental educational objectives*

The first case concerns the biography of Engin, a 25-year-old law student describing his uncommonly successful educational career. He grew up as the son of a metal worker and a kindergarten teacher in a so-called "problem quarter" in a German city. Due to his good marks, Engin was the only migrant child in his class to be recommended for *gymnasium* [the college preparatory secondary school] at the end of primary school. Initially he received good marks at gymnasium, too, but around the seventh grade they began to slide. After finishing secondary school with a relatively low final grade-point average, he completed his law studies much quicker than is usual and passed the first state examination with excellent grades.

In order to shed light on the circumstances of Engin's successful educational career, we examine the educational aspirations, parental support, and

the parents' migration experiences, and interpret them in terms of their interrelatedness.

Mr. and Mrs. Güngör's<sup>4</sup> stated aim as parents is the educational success of both their sons. In this context, Mr. Güngör's phrase "That is where we want to go!" sounds as if he were talking about a conjoint project. This project is not (merely) about the sons' wishes and their individual life paths, but rather about a group as a whole ("we" – the family), sharing the aim. Hence, the desired success takes on the character of an order, entrusted to the children by their parents. This influences parental support, especially because the parents view educational advancement as a family project, one to which they commit themselves intensely. So Mrs. Güngör buys her son new books ceaselessly and her husband gets involved with Engin's school as a member of the parent-teacher association. He has a share in Engin's recommendation for gymnasium too.

The analysis of the interviews with the parents shows that this strong will to succeed on the part of the parents should also be considered in the context of the parents' respective handling of the migration experience. Mr. Güngör *has not gained* what he expected through migration. With regard to his wife, we can observe that her successful career was brought to an end as a result of leaving her native country; in other words, she *lost something through migration*. In both cases the narratives dealing with migration clearly contrast with the parents' usual speech style in the other interview sections; these differences are made apparent through difficulties with verbalization and broken speech, which reinforce the impression that migration is a problematic issue for them. When he immigrated to Germany, Engin's father hoped for the possibility to study at university, but these hopes did not materialize. Instead, he works as a skilled worker to this day, far removed from the academic studies of which he had dreamt. Because he could not attend university, the mission is now passed on to his sons: his ultimate ambitions were "that at least, they have a good education, right?" Mrs. Güngör married her husband in the belief that he would stay in Turkey, but shortly after marriage he returned to Germany. She followed him to Germany with a heavy heart, even though, as she says, her hopes for study at university in Turkey were shattered. In Germany the young woman, whose plan was to start academic studies, was unable to do so, because of various hindrances, e.g. language, accreditation. After working in several simple jobs which, as she puts it, she had to quit due to allergy, she trained as a preschool teacher. She has worked in this profession ever since. In the

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<sup>4</sup> Engin's parents, who also have another son.



interview Mrs. Güngör states that she had had a difficult path with many struggles. Discrimination experiences play a central role in her narration. Robbed of her chance to study at university she became unhappy. Now, at least her sons shall pursue the pathway to higher education in her place.

At this point the dual transformational challenge for subsequent generations, namely “the transformations of adolescence, embedded in the mastering and regeneration of migration” (King 2005, p. 73) becomes especially obvious. As they consider that their migration project did not succeed, the parents convey the following message to their children: “Live my dreams!” (cf. Rottacker & Akdeniz 2002). But this message can be burdening and confining for subsequent generations and, as King (2005) has already demonstrated, may cause problematic developments in educational careers accordingly in various constellations.

Engin, however, manages to become extraordinarily successful in his education and, at the same time, declare it to be a project of his own. When we attempt to grasp the complex conditions surrounding his educational success a particular passage in the beginning of the interview with Engin catches our attention. In this passage he relates the deterioration of his school performance at *gymnasium* in the following way:

“Well, my parents uh, especially my father was also a member of the parents’ council and so on, he was definitely very committed and uh, he often thinks that my success is his work. At least I have that feeling, but they know nothing about what’s going on in my head, they thought I had lost my way, because I had such bad marks and whatever. But basically I had everything under control. To me school was, from grade eight to thirteen, really just: I want my *Abitur*, so that I can study and then I’m really going to get started.”

Engin emphasizes that it is not his father but himself who is the *father of his success*. He asserts that his school career, significantly shaped by his parents’ supportive efforts, meant no more than a pre-stage for his law study at which point he finally “got started.” Relating to this study he explicitly speaks of a plan which *he* had himself, namely not only to pass but to do it excellently and to stand out from the crowd of other students. Engin tries to make clear that he pursued his own strategies to attain the *Abitur* already during his school days. But it appears that most of all during his years of study it becomes increasingly possible for Engin not only to fulfill his parents’ expectations but to allow himself more space for his own. His independence is ensured by the fact that he does not only meet his parents’ expectations but even surpasses them.

The emphasis Engin puts on the description of his educational success as an independent and single-minded pursuit can be understood as the appropriation of parental objectives. This means that social advancement is achieved on behalf of the family through education, which remained inaccessible to the parents because of their immigration. Engin's career can also be considered as successful detachment from the parents and as successful individuation to the extent that Engin manages to turn his parents' mission into a project of his own, accordingly moving outside the sphere of his parents' influence.

In light of our initial query the prominent question to ask at this point concerns the conditions leading to the success of such individuation processes. In Engin's case, the parents' behavior facilitated adolescent detachment on various levels. Upon obtaining his degree [*Abitur*], Engin received more space for independent development. Both of his parents report that from that time on they interfered less with his life, partly because they began to view him as an adult, and partly because their options to support their son were limited: the university milieu was completely foreign to them. However, the son's growing independence cannot be ascribed only to the parents' exclusion from the academic sphere but also to a reflective-generative attitude, chiefly observable in Engin's mother. Mrs. Güngör argues that parents should not interfere too much in order not to raise "sissies" and allow children to make their own experiences. Beyond that, she makes clear that she does not regard the parent-child relationship as being absolutely hierarchical, by underscoring the importance of the parents' own further development as well and their ability to recognize their own mistakes. On the subject of "puberty" she relates that it was the task of the generation of adults to accept "new human beings" even if it is not always easy. By means of a concrete example relating to Engin, she gives the example of smoking. Engin started smoking during puberty. Mrs. Güngör says that even though she disliked it, she finally accepted it. Her attitude can be summarized as follows: she accepts deviations, but still maintains her closeness to her son. This attitude enabled their son to create the space necessary for his adolescent development which – as we have seen – he managed to use productively.

#### *Berk – Failure to fulfill parental objectives*

The interview with Berk, 19 years old at the time of the interview, provides a contrast to that with Engin. Berk's school career is characterized by numerous failures and interruptions. After having to repeat a school year twice, he broke off

*Realschule* (the intermediate of three possible forms of secondary schools in Germany). He then obtained a *Hauptschule* diploma (the lowest possible degree to be obtained at one of these three forms). Following that he attended a vocational school, but left before completing his studies. At the time of the interview he was finishing up training as a retailer.

In the interview with his mother (in this case the father was not available for an interview) the explanations of the parents' high aspirations for their son's career are essential. Mrs. Dikmen stands out as a very committed mother. But instead of supporting her son unconditionally, she pushes him towards a goal she has chosen for him. The basically well-intentioned wish for her son to be better off than his parents becomes a form of pressure. Berk not only should but *must* be better off, because for him it is about fulfilling the parents' "purpose" rather than his own wishes. Thereby the exact aim of these ambitions remains diffuse. Mrs. Dikmen lists multiple professions, which she would prefer for her son, ranging from insurance clerk to doctor. She strongly emphasizes how Berk's repeated failures at school burdened her not only psychologically but physically as well. It is remarkable that her speech is solely about her own wishes and disappointments, leaving no room for her son's desires and feelings.

Mrs. Dikmen's strong desire for Berk's educational success and social advancement is to be viewed within the context of her own educational background and her immigration history. From her narration we learn that even though she was very eager to learn and particularly fond of books as a child, external circumstances hindered her from gaining access to higher education. Later, after marriage, she followed her husband to Germany, where the young couple initially lived together with Mrs. Dikmen's parents-in-law, which lead to a dependence on the grandparent generation. Mrs. Dikmen gave birth to her son at the age of eighteen, whereupon she faced strong interference from the grandparents. Kürşat (2007) shows that this family constellation is quite common, because the lower a woman's age at marriage and at birth of her first child, the lower the scope of influence which the young mother is allowed, that is, both her status and degree of autonomy deteriorate by their young age at marriage and childbirth" (p. 325). Mrs. Dikmen had not yet managed the process of detachment from the previous generation, despite already being a mother herself. Additionally, she tells us, she and her husband had been illiterate, thus Berk "grew up blindly." She blames her parents-in-law for this situation as well. According to her, these



circumstances were the reason why Berk was “a very naughty child,” crying incessantly, until “he finally got what he wanted, he was that obstinate.”

The inner and outer lack of independence being described clearly contrasts with the way in which Mrs. Dikmen portrays herself now: a competent young woman, who is modern, eager to learn (sports, sauna, shopping), and who is willing to pass on her knowledge to others. She describes moving out of her parents-in-law’s apartment after the birth of her daughter as an event triggering a turning point in her self-awareness. After this, she says, she received helpful tips on education from a well-informed neighbor and “step by step learned quite a few things” owing to her work as a housekeeper.

Mrs. Dikmen’s educational aspirations for Berk should be seen within the context of this process of becoming independent. Inasmuch as she defines her son’s unwanted behavior as a result of his grandparents’ (ill)-raising, it becomes a display of her early lack of independence, her near complete dependency and ignorance, caused by her early marriage and subsequent migration, with became a very negative experience for her. After the move from the parents-in-law’s apartment she declares her children’s educational advancement her *own* project. This appears to be an attempt to leave the years as a childlike mother behind and demonstrate, in regard to her children’s educational success, that she has grown up and gained competence in educational matters. At the same time, the secure incomes an education would provide are to protect the children from becoming dependent.

Berk’s mission to achieve what his mother was denied and thereby compensate her dependency limits his space for adolescent development considerably. Although Mrs. Dikmen says that her son should detach from his family of origin, she has a clear idea about how Berk should achieve this goal and lead an independent life. Differing life concepts are rejected, differences not admitted, whereby Berk’s space for the development of his own objectives is restricted. Because of her negative view of her son, the component of closeness is only rudimentary.

The interview with the son makes it very clear that the pressure on Berk even increases through the relationship between father and son. The father represents a central figure for Berk, something which manifests itself in the fact that he begins his story not by talking about himself but about his father. The latter came to Germany as a child, finished *Hauptschule* and then started an

apprenticeship as a barber. At the age of 18 he became engaged, brought his wife to Germany and “when they were 19 uh, and that was in 1989, then I came along.” At that point his father broke off his apprenticeship and “began to work as a machine operator at a company – actually, at first as a, how shall I put it, as a servant. But he got some training later and now he’s a machine operator.” Berk seems to lay the blame for his father’s breaking off of the apprenticeship and the associated acceptance of a subordinate position upon his birth. Later his father was able to move up by force of will. In this context there is a noteworthy passage, in which Berk responds to a question concerning how his parents evaluate his failure in school:

“B: Yes, I thought my father was a bit angry and stuff like that. **And he really was.**<sup>5</sup>  
In the beginning. [...]

I: But then it was ok okay for him later?

B: Yes, once I found **the training program**. Otherwise he would, I don’t know, he wouldn’t speak to me anymore and whatever and would be angry with me, and that would be disappointing for him, because uh I was born here in Germany and so on and because I went to school and he didn’t even go to school, *I mean he did go to school but*<sup>6</sup> uh, not much, and he couldn’t speak German so well and whatever and all the same uh he’s become a machine operator and actually has a good position. And he didn’t want his son, **although** I was born here and whatever, to be worse than him. *Although I actually am now.*”

Berk compares his own school career with his father’s development and recognizes that his father has managed to become a machine operator, despite starting under inferior conditions, while he himself has failed twice despite having had better chances. The argumentation “I was better off than my father and therefore have to attain a higher position” explains the high expectations of the parents, as well as the pressure weighing on the son due to the father’s withholding of recognition. In general, too, the interviews with the son and mother point to a range of unspoken conflicts in the familial relations. Consequently, Berk’s educational career and detachment processes merge, while his parents limit his space for developmental possibilities by the pressure of their “determining” educational objectives. In addition to Mrs. Dikmen’s negative view of Berk, there

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<sup>5</sup> Printed in bold: strong emphasis

<sup>6</sup> Printed in italics: fast



also clearly exists a considerable potential for conflict in Berk's relationship with his younger sister, on whom now the family's hopes for a better education are pinned.

Furthermore, the career objectives Berk has developed under the influence of paternal expectations appear to be rather vague. Consequently, by choosing a traineeship, he followed the advice of a teacher and, acting against his own interests, decided to seek training as a retail trade salesman in order to fulfill his parents' wishes "that I get some training." Since he has no desire to become a retail trade salesman, he plans on "seeing what (...) happens" after completing training; he thinks he really has to "get started" then. The very same words, which express individuation on the part of Engin, signal the continuing pressure of parental expectations, combined with the son's own vague hopes in this case. Since Berk makes future plans according to parental expectations for the most part, and is neither informed about the options available to him after his training program nor articulates any interests of his own, his future prospects remain precarious. Whether or not he will actually finish his training at all appears uncertain, since he reports that he does not enjoy practical activities and at the same time studies little for the classroom component of the training. Apparently Berk avoids confronting his own aspirations and the pressure of his parents; instead, he emphasizes that his parents have always supported him and would even now still "do everything for [him]." This can be understood as an attempt to avoid dealing with the parental expectations and the parents' negative opinion about their son directly. This avoidance along with Berk's hesitation to cope with his parent's objectives actively and to dissociate himself from them, prevents Berk's detachment from his parents; individuation in the sense of the creation and pursuance of life concepts of one's own is not taking place. As a result possibilities of gaining successful educational careers of one's own are reduced.

## Conclusions

Inquiring into the conditions underlying the process of Berk's educational career, we can point out that, in this case, the quality of the relationships between the generations in the family differs significantly from those described in Engin's family. The two families, initially, share high educational aspirations: both parental couples wish their sons to obtain the *Abitur* before leaving school. Yet, while Engin's parents allowed him opportunities for independent development at various levels, in Berk's case the generational relationship is characterized by the

combination of high expectations with a lack of space for autonomous development.

Doubtlessly the difference between these two families also arises from the way they deal with their immigration experience and how they integrate it into their life histories. Although the project to move up the social ladder is passed down to the next generation in both families, the outcome of the immigration experience differs considerably, to the extent that this can be reconstructed from the interviews with the parents. While Engin's parents' immigration is connected with a denial of their own educational aspirations, it also represents an attempt to assert their independence from their own families of origin; in the case of Berk's parents' the immigration led to dependence on the grandparental generation.

Our preliminary conclusions, to be analyzed and extended through further case study comparisons, indicate that the educational careers in both cases presented here are closely related to adolescent detachment processes, which can be understood as successful or unsuccessful attempts at individuation. According to our findings, a key factor in successful individuation consists in the quality of generational relationships within the family, reflected above all in the space provided to sons for the development of their own goals and influenced strongly by the history of the family's immigration project and the parents' processing of it within their own biographies.

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