Self- and family-conceptions of Turkish migrant, native German, and native Turkish children: A comparison of children's drawings[☆]

Ariane Gernhardt[*], Hartmut Rübeling, Heidi Keller

Department of Culture and Development, University of Osnabrueck, Germany

ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to investigate the cultural conception of self and family held by Turkish migrant preschool children in comparison with native German and native Turkish children by the assessment of self- and family-drawings. The final sample consisted of 40 Turkish migrant children, 56 German urban middle-class children, 47 German rural children, 61 Turkish urban middle-class children, and 21 Turkish rural children. The children of the five cultural milieus did not differ in age, gender distribution, or human figure drawing ability. Besides the drawings, the mothers' sociocultural orientation was assessed, as well as migrant mothers' involvement in the German and Turkish cultures. The results revealed similarities between Turkish migrant children's self- and family-depictions with those of children from their culture of origin, particularly in some categorical features such as gender-specific characteristics, torso type, and neighbors. On the other hand, however, the drawings differed from those of Turkish rural children in the size of the depicted self. These findings are in line with the specific ecocultural context and the cultural orientation of Turkish migrant families toward psychological autonomy and hierarchical relatedness. It can therefore be concluded that Turkish migrant children's drawings are influenced by both their culture of origin, probably mediated by their familial socialization, and their social experiences in Germany.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Migration is a global phenomenon with an increasing relevance also for Western European societies. In Germany, 28% of families (BMFSFJ, 2010) and every third child under 6 years of age (34.9%) has a migrant background (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2011a). Families with a Turkish background account for 21% of the migrant population and constitute the largest ethnic minority group in Germany (BMFSFJ, 2010). For a long time, Turkish migrants have attracted the interest of researchers in Germany as well as in other Western European countries mainly with respect to problems that may be related to migration (e.g., Leavey et al., 2004; Murad, Joung, van Lenthe, Bengi-Arslan, & Crijnen, 2003; Stevens et al., 2003). Recently, the study of parental socialization strategies in terms of socialization goals, childrearing beliefs, and parenting behaviors has also been emphasized (Citlak, Leyendecker, Schölmerich, Driessen, & Harwood, 2008; Daglar, Melhuish, & Barnes, 2011;

Durgel, Leyendecker, Yagmurlu, & Harwood, 2009; Nijsten, 2006). This line of research has been motivated greatly by the perception of discrepancies between German mainstream socialization ideology and the values and practices of Turkish migrant families. Yet, there is little knowledge to date about the consequences of diverging socialization experiences on migrant children's conceptions of self and family. Thus, the aim of the present study is to examine the conceptions of self and family held by migrant Turkish preschool children, as expressed in their drawings of themselves and their families. The comparison of these drawings with those of native German and native Turkish children from different ecocultural contexts contributes to our knowledge about the consequences of different socialization environments upon self-related and social perceptions.

1.1. Cultural conceptions of self and family

It is widely acknowledged that self- and family-conceptions are notably influenced by culture (e.g., Kağitçibaşi, 1996; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Emerging during ontogenetic development, they develop as co-constructions between personal predispositions and environmentally shaped socialization experiences (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003). The central constituents and organizers underlying self- and family conceptions are two basic human needs, which are equally essential to every individual and in every cultural environment: the need for autonomy and the need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kağitçibaşi, 2007). However, the manifestation of these two needs is broadly shaped by contextual demands, such as population parameters (Berry, 1976; LeVine, 1977; Whiting, 1963) and socio-demographic variables (Kağitçibaşi, 2007; Keller, 2007). Three specific ecocultural contexts have been described in previous research, namely (1) middle- and upper-class families, living in urban cities of post-modern Western societies, with high degrees of formal education, a small number of children, and a nuclear family organization, (2) families living in non-Western subsistence-based farming compounds, where low levels of formal education, a large number of children, and multigenerational households are prevalent, and (3) middle- and upper-class families with high levels of formal education, living in urban cities of non-Western societies, who have their roots in traditionally organized villages. Depending on the respective ecocultural context, different modes of autonomy and relatedness form different cultural milieus, with consequences for children's emerging self- and family-conception.

In the cultural milieu of Western urban middle-class families (1), family members conceptualize themselves as separate individuals with their own feelings, cognitions, and preferences, thus, focusing on mental states and personal traits. They strive for economic and emotional independence from family members and others (Keller, 2007; Keller & Otto, 2011). Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1994) pointed out that individuals within this cultural context are most successful if they are self-contained, competitive, separate, self-reliant, assertive, unique, and able to express their own opinions. Correspondingly, the socialization can be described as child centered, endorsing these aspects by responding to the child's wishes and preferences from early on (Demuth, Keller, & Yovsi, 2011). Relationships are understood as noncommittal engagements between independent persons. Thus, autonomy and relatedness are represented as individual psychological conceptions (Keller, 2012).

In the cultural milieu of non-Western subsistence-based farming compounds (2), families are conceptualized as inseparable social units, whose members are economically and socially interdependent. Members of this milieu are expected to be most successful if they are cooperative, share their resources, subordinate themselves into the hierarchical structure, and actively fulfill their roles and obligations (Greenfield et al., 2003). Socialization in this group focuses on children's adaptation to these norms and values and their development toward being a supportive family member (Nsamenang & Lamb, 1994; Yovsi, 2003). Therefore, apprenticeship-based education methods such as training and controlling, multiple caring situations, and role modeling are predominant behavioral strategies (Keller, 2007; Keller, Lohaus, et al., 2004; Rogoff, 1990). Thus, hierarchical relatedness, embodying relational adaptation, social responsibility, and an action-based construction of autonomy, is the prevalent cultural conception (Keller, 2012).

In the cultural milieu of non-Western middle-class families (3), the Western-oriented education and economic system enhances the importance of constituents of psychological autonomy (LeVine, Miller, Richman, & LeVine, 1996), whereas simultaneously traditional social relational patterns within the family are still highly appreciated and therefore persist (Chaudhary, 2004; Kağitçibaşi, 2007).

Apart from these three cultural milieus, migration processes may lead to the formation of further cultural milieus, influenced by the change from one ecocultural context into another.

1.2. The Turkish migration context in Germany

In Germany, the first generation of Turkish migrants arrived in the 1960s as labor migrants. Since then, the vast majority has come from rural regions and had low levels of formal education (Uslucan, 2011). However, as a consequence of the changing conditions of immigration (e.g., the recruitment ban in 1973), the group of Turkish migrants has become more heterogeneous in respect to their geographical origin and their level of education. There are different ideas about how the change from one ecocultural environment to another influences cultural beliefs and values (e.g., Ward, Fox, Wilson, Stuart, & Kus, 2010). Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver (2003) proposed a distinction between public and private domains. These authors found that Turkish migrants in the Netherlands endorse statements about acceptance of the new environment in public domains such as educational and work related situations (Kağitçibaşi, 2003). On the other hand, with respect to private