

Network Development in the Host Country: Bridging and Bonding Ties Revisited

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Background

- Compared with the attention researchers paid to the immigrants' use of social capital in different areas of integration, such as economic and political (e.g. Nakhaie and Kazemipur 2013; Tillie 2004), relatively few studies have addressed how immigrants develop social networks (Eve 2010).
- Much of the migration literature utilizes Putnam's (2000) theorizing of social capital (i.e., bonding and bridging networks) and neglects the differences and power dynamics existing within and across groups.
- Majority of research within the social capital and migration literature uses quantitative methods, and gives a limited voice to the immigrants to express their feelings and emotions in their own way and on their own terms.
- While there are numerous studies on immigrants from Turkey in European countries, particularly in Germany and Netherlands, very little sociological research has examined experiences of immigrants in Canada despite their growing population (Statistics Canada 2011).

Objectives

- To examine how immigrants from Turkey to Canada access and develop social networks in their host country.
- To go beyond a simplistic binary between bridging networks (i.e., ties with broader society) and bonding networks (i.e., ethnic ties), and to apply Bourdieu's (1984, 1977) theoretical perspectives to focus on the intra- and inter-group differences and hierarchies and their impact on the access and development of social networks in the host country.

Research Questions

- How do immigrants from Turkey access and develop social networks in Canada?
 - What role does social class play in the social network development processes of those immigrants in a diverse Canadian society?
 - With regard to networks among those immigrants, does national and/or ethnic identity or social class determine the character of networks?
 - In a multicultural society, what factors other than social class play a role in developing social networks with other immigrant groups and with native-born Canadians?

Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 78 immigrants from Turkey who live in Toronto and London, Ontario; and, work either in professional or non-professional jobs.

	Professional	Non-professional	Total
Toronto	30	30	60
London	8	10	18
Total	38	40	78

- Participants were diverse in relation to age, gender, ethnicity (i.e., Turkish and Kurdish), entry status and duration of residence, however they were all either a permanent resident or a citizen of Canada at the time of interview.



Findings

The nature of bonding networks is not homogenous and intra-immigrant group differences in the form of social class are reflected in the social network development process.

"There are some Turkish people here working in blue-collar jobs, and their culture and life style are different. So, I can't be with them. I wasn't with them in Turkey and can't be with them here either" (Caner, M, 40, professional).

Participants with non-professional jobs were mostly confined within their classed enclaves and unaware of the existence of immigrants from Turkey in different labour market sectors.

"I saw first class Turks there (the Ball organized by Turkish associations). It was so interesting! I always say that Turks that I have seen here are different than those I saw there ... How can I say? ... Well, their clothing, their posture, the way that they speak; they were more educated and cultured than people here. Then I said, well there had been those type of Turks in Toronto. We hadn't seen them. I mean, I had never seen them before" (Hamdi, M, 37, non-professional).

The development of bridging networks is as complex as the development of bonding networks. While immigrants with professional jobs have developed networks with both Canadians and immigrants who are in the same or higher locations of the labour market, the bridging networks of immigrants with non-professional jobs has been mostly composed of immigrants who are in similar segments of the labour market.

"When I went to Toronto, I was planning to work in a factory. People were telling me that there were many jobs available in Toronto. Even if you found a job, you still spent time with other Turks. Unless you have a good job, you can't be part of Canadian's circles" (Toygar, M, 35, non-professional).

"I've a lot of immigrant friends. They're mostly from Asian countries, like Philippine, Sri Lanka, Iran. They're all immigrants. Otherwise how can we meet? People at my work place are Sri Lankan, Asian, I mean, South Asian, North Asian, also Chinese. They're all immigrants" (Vural, M, 47, non-professional).

The development of bridging networks with immigrants, particularly with those who have similar cultural practices, is easier compared to Canadians.

"But it is easier to connect with immigrants than Canadians, yet I choose my immigrant friends from countries whose culture is similar to ours. Or rather, it naturally happens in this way, because we get along. For instance, with people from Lebanon, Iran, or Eastern European countries" (Hamide, F, 28, professional).

"It is easier to have contact with immigrants because they've also gone through several troubles so they understand us. For that reasons it is easier" (Gurbuz, M, 33, non-professional).

Conclusion

- The development of both bonding and bridging networks depends on the unique nature of spatial and socio-economic separations. Therefore, an analysis of social capital should take into account the social distinctions and class structure within an immigrant group and in the host society.
- Assumptions about a homogenous ethnic/immigrant community conceal an unequal distribution of different forms of social capital. Bonding networks cannot simply defined through ethnicity.
- Differences in cultural capital and labour market positions are crucial to mark distinction and to draw boundaries when immigrants develop bonding and bridging networks in the host society.
- Shared cultural practices and identity-being an immigrant-facilitate the development of bridging networks with immigrants.
- Bourdieu's theoretical perspectives enables us to understand how immigrants located in different structural positions are able or not able to access and accumulate networks that can be utilized in different ways and in different contexts.

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