Transitions to residential independence among young second generation migrants in the UK: The role of ethnic identity

Ann Berrington, ESRC Centre for Population Change, University of Southampton

Motivation

Historically, leaving home in the UK has been at relatively early age as compared with many other developed countries (Holdsworth & Morgan, 2005; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010). Furthermore, the destinations upon leaving home have become more diverse with increasing numbers of young adults living outside of a family, either sharing with others or living alone (Stone et al. 2011). Recently research has suggested that increasing housing costs, labour market insecurity and reductions in welfare support on the ability of young adults to achieve residential independence from their parents (Jones et al. 2006; Berrington et al. 2009). However, current debates on structure versus agency in youth transitions in the UK have paid little attention to the role of international migration and ethnicity. This paper fills a gap in our knowledge by focusing on pathways out of the parental home for second generation migrants in the UK.

The UK experienced significant immigration in the second half of the 20th century, particularly from former colonies. Migrants from the Caribbean, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who arrived in the 1960s, 70s and 80s produced a second generation of young adults now in their twenties and early thirties. Previous research has identified very different patterns of family and household formation according to ethnicity (Berrington, 1994; Berthoud, 2000; Shaw, 2004). An earlier age at entry into marriage and parenthood has been found among women south Asians, especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi women (Robson & Berthoud, 2006). This has been linked to their lower levels of paid employment outside the home and the greater gender based division of childcare for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women (Dale et al. 2006; Dale & Ahmed, 2011). At the same time an increased propensity to live as lone parents has been identified for Caribbean women (Berrington, 1994; Shaw, 2004) which has sometimes been linked to a tradition of “visiting relationships” in Caribbean culture and a response to the shortage of suitably qualified men to fulfil the role of husband (Phoenix, 1987).

The present paper moves beyond existing UK research in a number of ways. First, we focus explicitly on the second generation of young adults who have an ethnic minority background but who were born in the UK. We identify whether this group have similarly distinct patterns of family and household formation as compared to the majority white population, or whether, as a result of increased education and participation in the labour force they have become more similar. Secondly we examine the household formation patterns of men as well as women. Finally, we focus on a specific life course stage – establishing residential independence from the parental home, and specifically pathways out of the parental home. Previous research for the Netherlands (Bolt, 2002; de Valk, 2011; Zorlu & Mulder, 2011) and Canada (Boyd, 2000; Mitchell, 2004) has found contrasting patterns of home leaving between the host population and second generation migrants, but there is a lack of evidence regarding the UK situation. In part this relates to the lack of representativeness of non-white groups in national data. Newly available data from the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Panel (UKHLS) provides a new opportunity to look at youth transitions of BME groups from a life course perspective.
**Theoretical background and analytical framework**

Many migrants to the UK bring with them different cultural beliefs and attitudes towards the family and household formation. Among the first generation of migrants, the more traditional family values of South Asian groups resulted in higher marriage rates and an earlier age at marriage, especially for those from Pakistan and Bangladesh. To some extent these early family formation patterns are related to the low labour force attachment of South Asian migrants to the UK (Dale & Ahmed, 2011). Given the much greater levels of education and labour market participation of second generation Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, we expect to see a delay in family formation to later ages, more consistent with the white population. However, there remain important ethnic differences in the way in which young adults are geographically mobile (Finney 2011) with much greater proportions of students of Pakistani (61%) and Bangladeshi (66%) ethnic origin remaining in the family home during their first year of higher education, compared their white counterparts (17%) (HEFCE, 2009). Thus, south Asians will be much less likely to leave home at an early age to live alone or to share with others. There are also likely to be significant gender differences in patterns of home leaving among South Asian men and women. Pakistani men in particular may be less likely to leave home upon marriage since traditionally the bride joins the husbands family (Shaw & Charsley, 2006).

Black men and women are less likely to continue on into higher education, and are significantly more likely to suffer from higher unemployment levels. For example, estimates of the percentage unemployed for 2011 for those aged 16-24 in Britain range from 44% among Black youth to 33% for Pakistani and Bangladeshi youth, 24% for Indians and 20% for White youth (DWP, 2012). Given the financial costs associated with maintaining residential independence from the parental home we might expect Black men and women to be more likely than their white counterparts to be co-resident with their parents, especially at younger ages. At the same time we expect significant gender differences in the housing careers of Black men and women given the tendency of Black mothers not to be co-resident with the father of their child(ren). Welfare benefits and access to social housing for lone parents in the UK might mean that young black mothers are able to maintain residential independence from the parental home to the same degree as white women. Non-resident fathers however, since they are not recorded as living with their children, do not have access to additional welfare benefits or access to social housing based on their children’s needs and so will be more likely to be living at home.

We utilize a life course perspective which views young adults’ living arrangements as being shaped by parental and early life course experiences and current family and individual resources. Cultural beliefs and preferences for family and household formation operate within structural constraints such as the lack of affordable housing. We argue that adherence to traditional family formation patterns will be stronger amongst those second generation young adults who identify more strongly with their parents ethnicity. We test this explicitly within our analytical framework (Figure 1) where we include a large number of parental and individual factors which can affect the likelihood of achieving residential independence and the particular route out of the parental home that is taken. These include parental income, parental family structure, the young adults’ educational qualifications, their employment status and income. We include two indicators to identify the extent to which the young adult identifies themselves with their ethnic group – strength of identity and the importance of being British.
Data and Methods

We use new data from the first two waves of the UKHLS, a longitudinal prospective survey following up all members of around 40,000 households annually. Individuals are followed up when they leave the original households to form new households (or join existing ones). The sample contains an ethnic minority boost of an additional 1000 households of each of the following groups: Indian; Pakistani; Bangladesh; Caribbean; African (for details see www.understandingsociety.org.uk). We focus on the experience of men and women aged 16-34 at wave 1 in 2009/10. Second generation migrants are identified as those who were born in the UK, but who have at least one parent born outside the UK. Respondents are asked to identify their ethnic group, and also provide details of the countries of birth and ethnic group of their mother and father. Those living in the same household as at least one natural or step-parent are deemed to be living in the parental home. “Living as a couple” identifies those with a cohabiting or marital partner. Those without a partner but who have a child are classified as lone parents. Those living outside of a family are divided further into those who are living alone and those who are sharing with others. In the first part of the paper we use cross-sectional data from wave 1 to describe how the living arrangements of second generation migrants differ by age and ethnicity. In the subsequent section we focus on the sample of young adults living in the parental home in wave 1. We estimate a competing risk multinomial logistic regression...
models to examine the parental and individual level variables associated with movement by wave 2 out of the parental home into a new family, or to live alone or to share with others. Interaction effects are tested to examine the moderating effect of strength of ethnic identity. This approach is similar to that taken by Zorlu and Mulder (2011). The statistical models take account of the clustering of young adults within households and primary sampling units.

**Preliminary Findings**

In comparison with the white majority, all BME groups are more likely to be living with a parent. This is especially the case for Indian men and women and men from a Pakistani and Bangladeshi background (Figure 1). Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are similar to white women in their propensity to be living outside the parental home in a couple, whilst Black Caribbean and Black African women are far more likely to be living without a partner but to have children. Black men are the most likely to be living away from the parental home alone or sharing with others.

Figure 2: Living arrangements among UK-born men and women by ethnicity, aged 25-34.

Our next steps will be to finish our multinomial regression analyses of routes out of the parental home. We will discuss the extent to which these divergent patterns relate to ethnic differences in parental and individual resources. For example, we expect the larger number of UK-born Indian women living with their parents to be related to a high uptake of higher education. We will also highlight whether there are differences in young adults’ household formation behaviour according to the strength of their identity with their parents ethnic group. In so doing we will provide new insights into the transition to adulthood for second generation migrants in the UK.
References


http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_20/


