

Are Migrants' Children like their Parents, their Cousins, or their Neighbors?

The Case of Largest Foreign Population in France*

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Abstract: A way to look at a migrant's child's assimilation is to compare his/her educational attainment to that of natives of the same age cohort (Neighbors). In doing so, the researcher tends to forget that assimilation is a pluri-generational process and that it is therefore useful to look also at the educational attainment of the previous generation (Parents) and the same generation who stayed in the home country (Cousins). Using data for the Portuguese in France and in Portugal, together with data for the French, we show that the educational attainment of the second generation in France is much closer to the educational attainment of the French than it is to those who remained in Portugal. If we control for the socio-economic status of the family, children who emigrated when they were young have an educational attainment very similar to that of the French from the same background. Differences are much smaller than the differences among French children of different social status. In this sense we can speak of assimilation.

Keywords: Assimilation, migration, education, second generation migrants.

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Introduction

In 1990, according to the French Census, 649,714 Portuguese were living in France, making them the largest foreign community. Its dimension is due to the massive migration that took place between the 1960s and mid-70s. It is estimated that 357,101 Portuguese arrived in the 1969-1971 period and that only after 1974 did values decrease to those similar to the ones in the beginning of the 60s.

The data from the “Education at a Glance: OCDE Indicators 1998” (Table A1. 2a. page 44) show the striking difference between the educational attainment in Portugal and in France. For the age group 25-64 the percentage of the population in 1996 that attained at least the upper secondary level was 20% and 60% in Portugal and France respectively. Even for younger cohorts the difference is large; figures for the 25-34 age group were 32% and 74% for Portugal and France respectively.

However, if we look at the percentage of those in the age group 25-64 who have at least attained University level education the difference is much lower; 7% in Portugal and 10% in France (11% and 12% respectively for the age group 25-34).

On the other hand, if we consider figures by gender, we see that for the 25-34 age cohort there is almost no difference in France between genders (74% of the males and 75% of the females had at least upper secondary education), while in Portugal young females are more educated than males (29% of the males and 36% of the females had at least upper secondary education).

We see that the main distinction between Portuguese and French figures is the percentage of individuals who obtain education at least at the upper secondary level.

Taking the above figures into consideration, we think that when studying the educational attainment of the Portuguese migrants in France (Migrants) it is useful not only to look at the French in the same age cohort (Neighbors) but also to look at the

educational attainment of the previous generation (Parents) and the same generation who stayed in the home country (Cousins).

In this sense, we use data from Portugal and France and forecast by multinomial logit the educational attainment of individuals who are 21 and 41³ as representative of two generations (Child and Parents – Father or Mother). We use forecasted values to avoid small numbers problems and disturbances that could affect a particular cohort. This technique allows us to create fictitious cohorts, as we will see below (e.g. someone who is 21 in 1995, migrating before 1975 when he was older than 10).

From the vast literature on children's educational attainment (see Haveman and Wolf 1995 or Gang and Zimmermann 1999 for references), we refer only to the influences in children's educational attainment for which we have information in the applied work.

The first influence is the individual's age as there has been a continuum increase of educational attainment due to parents' choices or minimum compulsory levels. The second influence is gender, as there seems to be a different pattern depending on gender. The third influence is the father's occupation and the social status of the family. The better paid fathers can choose more quality (more education) for their children and support them, while postponing their entrance into the labour market.

For the migrants, two other aspects have already been discussed and justified in the previous literature: age and date at which people migrated. Individuals who migrated younger enter the educational system in the host country and are more likely to be influenced by their classmates. Concerning the date of migration, in France there has been a clear change in the migration policy due to the consequences of the first oil

³ 41 years old is the average age of the Portuguese living in France in our sample.

shock, resulting in a dramatic reduction in the number of incoming migrants, where family reunion is the main exception in the slowdown of the flow.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section the datasets used and the estimation procedures are shown. This is followed by a section where we discuss the predicted values. We conclude in the last section.

Datasets and Estimation Procedure

We use the 1995 wave of the French Labor Force Survey (*Enquete de L' Emploi*) and a sample from the 1995 Portuguese Personnel Records (*Quadros do Pessoal*).

The French Labor Force Survey is a random sample from the French population containing 151,146 observations. Out of this dataset we selected a sub-sample of Portuguese or individuals born in Portugal (Migrants), which contained 1,958 observations. More than 98% of the Portuguese for which we had information on the country of birth, were born in Portugal. Another sub-sample was selected including all the French people (138,528 observations)(Neighbors).

The description of the Migrants sub-sample appears in Pereira and Tavares (2000).

The Neighbors sub-sample has characteristics similar to the French population.

The Portuguese Personnel Records (*Quadros de Pessoal*) results from a survey that the Portuguese Ministry of Employment collects annually from the firms. It covers all firms with wage earners (around 140,000 establishments and 2 million individuals).

The survey contains detailed information on firms' and workers' characteristics (see Pereira and Lima 1999). Out of the 1995 sample a random sub-sample of 46,992 observations was generated.

There are two main differences between the datasets used: 1) the French dataset is a random sample of the population resident in France, while the Portuguese dataset is a

random sample of employed people, excluding military and civil servants and 2) in the French dataset there is information concerning the individual's father work, while in the Portuguese dataset there is not.

We use as dependent variable the level of education the individual attained and as explanatory variables age (AGE), sex (SEX), a dummy variable (FQ) equal to one if the father is a qualified blue collar worker (zero otherwise), a dummy variable (AM10) equal to one if age at time of migration was less than or equal to 10 years old (zero otherwise) and a dummy variable (DM75) equal to one if the date of migration was 1975 or later (zero otherwise).

After clearing our sample of individuals who did not answer any of the relevant questions, we obtained the descriptive statistics which appear in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. French Labor Force Survey

	Migrants	Migrants knowing age at migration	Neighbors
n. of observations	1902	672	130,084
Dependent Variable			
Education Level (%)			
1- Others +Elementary	55.3	54.4	24.9
2 - Lower Second.	15.5	17.4	13.0
less than or equal to 9 years (1+2)	70.8	71.8	37.9
3 - CAP-BEP after 5 eme ⁴	12.2	11.8	15.9
4 - CAP-BEP after 3 eme ⁵	7.1	7.6	10.4
5 - Upper Secondary	6.2	6.1	16.2
9-12 years (3+4+5)	25.5	25.5	42.5
BAC+2 ⁶ & University	3.7	2.7	19.6
Explanatory Variables			
AGE (years)	40.8	39.8	445.2
SEX (%)	48.3	49.6	52.8
FQ (%)	35.2	35.7	21.4
AM10 (%)		29.0	
DM75 (%)		33.6	

⁴ Vocational degrees taking at least 10 years to accomplish.

⁵ Vocational degrees taking at least 12 years to accomplish.

⁶ BAC – exam taken to enter third level education. BAC+ 2 – fourteen years of education.

For the Portuguese dataset we use the educational levels in minimum number of years needed to obtain them.

Table 2. Portuguese Personnel Records

Cousins	
n. of observations	37,577
Dependent Variable	
Education Level (%)	
1) 4 or less years	49.7
2) 6 years.	18.2
3) 9 years	14
less than or equal to 9 years (1+2+3)	81.9
11-12 years	12.5
14 or more years	5.6
Explanatory Variables	
AGE (years)	39.0
SEX (%)	39.1

The level of education is an unordered variable, so we use a multinomial logit estimation (Greene 1997, p. 914). As the coefficients of the regressions have no direct interpretation, they are not shown in this article (they are available from the authors upon request).

In the Cousins case we only considered ages between 25 and 65, as the dataset contains only employed people, and therefore considering younger ages would bias the estimates towards shorter educational cycles. Older ages would equate to people past the retirement age and also could lead to bias.

All the estimations were done using the maximum likelihood procedure. For all the estimations, the hypothesis that all the coefficients were equal to zero was rejected at the 1% significance level by the likelihood ratio test.

Estimation Results

In this section we start by showing the forecasted percentages for people who were 21 and 41 years old and for the following educational levels: less than or equal to 9 years of education; 9 – 12 years of education, more than 12 years of education.

We start with the results from the estimation where the explanatory variables were AGE, SEX (and FQ for the French dataset).

Aged 21 years old					
	Migrants		Neighbors		Cousins
	FQ=1	FQ=0	FQ=1	FQ=0	
9 or less	30.0	39.2	18.3	13.8	70.3
9-12	62.6	51.9	66.0	54.4	23.4
More than 12	7.4	8.9	15.7	31.8	6.3

Aged 41 years old (Parents)					
	Migrants		Neighbors		Cousins
	FQ=1	FQ=0	FQ=1	FQ=0	
9 or less	61.9	77.8	27	22.6	85.0
9-12	35.5	20.1	61.6	51.8	9.4
More than 12	2.6	2.1	11.4	25.6	5.6

Aged 21 years old					
	Migrants		Neighbors		Cousins
	FQ=1	FQ=0	FQ=1	FQ=0	
9 or less	36.3	45.4	24.2	17.3	66.4
9-12	54	43.3	58.4	49.3	27.5
More than 12	9.7	11.3	17.4	33.4	6.1

Aged 41 years old (Parents)					
	Migrants		Neighbors		Cousins
	FQ=1	FQ=0	FQ=1	FQ=0	
9 or less	69.9	83	36.3	28.6	83.2
9-12	26.6	14.3	50.7	43.9	11.2
More than 12	3.5	2.7	13	27.5	5.6

The most striking feature of the above tables is the comparison of the numbers for the Portuguese who stayed in their homeland (Cousins) and the Portuguese in France, in particular in the young cohort.

In a 20-year period the percentage of Migrants that had 9 or less years of education decreased to half (an absolute decrease of more than 30 points). The decrease is much

higher than the one for the Cousins, and for young male migrants the percentage is almost half the percentage of the Cousins.

The decrease in the lower level of education is compensated by an increase mainly at the intermediary level of education, where the percentages for the young are almost as high as for the French (Neighbors).

At the upper level of education there is still some catching up to do for the young Migrants but the percentage they showed is higher than that of the Cousins.

As we have information for the age and date of migration we run a new estimation where the explanatory variables were AGE, SEX, FQ, AM10 and DM75.

In the case of FQ=1 (having a father who is/was a qualified worker) we can assume that the social status is similar for both Neighbors and Migrants. We therefore show the results for this particular case only.

Table 5. Males 21 years old with FQ=1

	Migrants, AM10=1		Migrants, AM10=0		Neighbors
	DM75=1	DM75=0	DM75=1	DM75=0 ⁷	
9 or less	23.4	21.5	63.2	54.2	18.3
9-12	71.4	75.2	34	43.9	66.0
More than 12	5.2	3.3	2.8	1.8	15.7

Table 6. Females 21 years old with FQ=1

	Migrants, AM10=1		Migrants, AM10=0		Neighbors
	DM75=1	DM75=0	DM75=1	DM75=0	
9 or less	37.3	37.9	76.2	72.9	24.2
9-12	52.8	55.2	19.4	24	58.4
More than 12	9.9	6.9	4.4	3.1	17.4

In table 5 we see that the education of the young male Migrants is very close to that of the Neighbors (native) if they migrated when they were young, independently of whether they did it before or after 1975. The difference remains in the percentage of individuals having more than 12 years of education where the Migrants are behind the natives. Notice that in Table 3 the difference in the same level of education between

⁷ This is a fictitious individual and it is used to see the effect of the dummy variable DM75.

Neighbors with father a qualified blue collar worker and the others is higher than the difference we obtain for the Migrants and their Neighbors.

The females show that they are still more apart from their neighbors, but we should not forget that the starting point (Table 4 – age 41) is much worse than the one for males.

It is important to retain the difference that the age of migration makes in the educational attainment of the young Migrants. If they migrate before they are 10, the educational attainment is close to that of their neighbors, while if they migrate at later ages their educational attainment looks more like that the one of their cousins. These results validate our methodology of using data from the source country as a benchmark.

Another interesting figure is the increase of percentage of Migrants going into the higher level of education if they migrated after 1975, meaning that the more recent migrants seem to value education more.

This is the case, as we will see in Table 7, where we show the predicted percentages for the less aggregated levels of education.

Table 7. Males 21 years old with FQ=1

	Migrants, AM10=1		Neighbors
	DM75=1	DM75=0	
1- Others +Elementary	2.0	.9	2.1
2 - Lower Second.	21.4	20.6	16.2
less than or equal to 9 years (1+2)	23.4	21.5	18.3
3 - CAP-BEP after 5 eme	19.9	36.8	24.1
4 - CAP-BEP after 3 eme	19.7	30.5	21.6
5 - Upper Secondary	31.8	7.9	20.3
9-12 years (3+4+5)	71.4	75.2	66.0
BAC+2 & Univ.	5.2	3.3	15.7

Having arrived after 1975 significantly decreases the choice of professional courses. For this type of education, the percentages for the Migrants are even smaller than that for their neighbors and almost half of that had they migrated before 1975.

Conclusions

Educational attainment can be seen as an indicator of young immigrants' assimilation. The closer their educational attainment is to that of the natives' the more assimilated they are.

We show that in the case of the largest foreign population in France (the Portuguese), there is a huge difference in educational attainment between foreigners and natives (see Table 1).

However if we control for age, we see that the difference for young cohorts is much smaller than for older cohorts. If we control for age, social status, age at time of migration and date of migration we conclude that the difference between the Portuguese migrants and the French natives is rather small and much smaller than the one existing among natives of different social status.

This result has nothing to do with the evolution of the educational attainment in the home country, as differences between young migrants and those who stayed is very large. Moreover, if migration took place after the age of ten years, the education attainment is close to that of those staying, whereas if it took place before that age, it is similar to that of the French.

People who migrated more recently seem to prefer more academic educational paths in contrast with those migrating before, who preferred more vocational education. In that aspect they became closer to the natives.

Studies using other datasets and methodologies are for certainly needed. If our results are confirmed, the assimilation of young Portuguese in the French society is a success story.

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