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## RECONCILING FAMILISM AND INDIVIDUALISM IN A CHANGING SOCIETY: A STUDY ON TURKISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### DEĞİŞEN BİR TOPLUMDA AİLECİLİK VE BİREYCİLİĞİ UZLAŞTIRMA: TÜRK ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

#### Abstract

In rapidly changing societies, young people do not only experience a transition from adolescence to adulthood at the micro scale; but they also experience a transition from traditional to modern ways of life at the macro scale. Hence their tendency toward familism or individualism is one of the major indicators of such a dual transition. The aim of this study is to find an answer to the question whether Turkish university students (n=165) display any tendency toward familism or individualism, or they reconcile both as a strategy to emancipate from the enmeshment of family. The findings revealed that there is a coexistence of familistic and individualistic tendencies in terms of intrafamilial relationships. The findings also evidently show that students who are female, relatively younger, from rural origins and children of parents with lower educational level are more subjected to familistic values.

**Keywords:** Familism, Individualism, Social Change, Turkish University Students.

#### Öz

Hızla değişen toplumlarda gençler, sadece mikro ölçekte ergenlikten yetişkinliğe geçişi tecrübe etmekle kalmamakta aynı zamanda makro ölçekte geleneksel yaşam biçimlerinden modern yaşam biçimlerine doğru bir geçişi de tecrübe etmektedirler. Böylece gençlerin ailecilik ya da bireyciliğe olan eğilimleri bu türden ikili geçişin en önemli belirteçlerinden biri olmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türk üniversite öğrencilerinin (n=165) ailecilik ya da bireyciliğe yönelik herhangi bir eğilim gösterip göstermedikleri ve ailenin kuşatmasından kurtulmaya yönelik bir strateji olarak bu ikisini uzlaştırıp uzlaştırmadıkları sorusuna yanıt bulmaktır. Araştırmanın bulguları, aile içi ilişkiler bakımından ailecilik ve bireycilik eğilimlerinin bir arada bulunduğunu

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göstermiştir. Yine araştırma bulguları, kırsal kökenden gelen, daha düşük eğitim seviyesindeki ebeveynlerin çocukları olan, daha genç ve kadın öğrencilerin ailecilik değerlerine daha çok tabi olduklarını ortaya koymuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ailecilik, Bireycilik, Toplumsal Değişme, Türk Üniversite Öğrencileri.

## **1. Introduction**

In a rapidly changing society, Turkish young people experience a dual transition. While experiencing a transition from adolescence to adulthood, they also develop some strategies to reconcile many aspects of social life within the traditionality-modernity dichotomy. Among many facets of such a duality of traditional and modern structure, transformation of familial relationships may be the most significant, as well as the most complicated one. Therefore the question of how social change led to the transformation of family in Turkey has been a widely held issue in sociological literature (Güvenç 1977; Kandiyoti 1984; Kıray 1984; Kongar 1970; Özbay 2015; Vergin 1987). Within this literature there is a strong agreement upon the point that rapid social change in Turkey, in turn, induced a change in family/kinship relations and formations, however with a certain level of dissimilarity between Turkish and Western models both in scope and structure (Baştuğ 2002; Duben 2012; Erder 2002; Sunar 2002). Therefore, it is claimed that ‘modernization theory’, which implies an evolutionary transition from rural/pre-industrial society to urban/industrial society in explaining the change occurred in family, remains incapable to account for other underlying factors such as culture, including the long-established norms and values in a society. It is already shown in a study using three waves of World Value Survey (covering 65 countries and 75% of world population) that cultural change display a great variety in terms of form among societies (Inglehart & Baker 2000). Embarking from this point, it seems indispensable to observe whether the social change evokes any change in pro-familistic values which is deeply rooted in Turkish culture. Because they are a group that is very open-minded, not only due to the period effect but also due to the age effect, young people today, and especially university students, are of great importance to research aimed at analyzing whether there are shifts in the tendency towards familism or individualism in the context of social change in Turkey.

Familism is a concept which refers to subordination of the individual interests and demands to those of the family. There is a wide range of definitions of familism in the literature, most of which are closely related to collectivism since familism is an important aspect of collectivist behavior. According to Triandis et al. (1995: 462), ‘the central theme of collectivism is the conception of individuals as aspects of groups or collectives’. As being defined as the smallest unit of society in the sociological sense, family has been a part of

collective sphere. Hence more specifically, familism is defined by Nehring (2011) as a concept which designates collective, rather than individualistic orientations to personal life. ‘Familism has been a dominant mode of social organization in traditional and modern peasant societies’ (Heller 1970: 73) and ‘is associated with higher levels of family loyalty and obligation’ (Stein et. al. 2015: 1256). Individualism, on the contrary, puts the priority to the individual, implying that interests and demands are, thereof, more important than those of the family. The dominance of individualistic values, which is generally assumed to be associated with modern societies, creates a particular form of culture in which people display more autonomous and self-sufficient agency (Allik&Realo 2004).

The dichotomy of familism and individualism, two concepts that superficially point out cultural and value-oriented meanings, is actually deeply rooted in prevailing mode of production of a given society. Although sociology is a considerably important discipline as it provides the political economy perspective to family issue, the familism-individualism dichotomy, which can only be understood through the changing mode of production and the changing cultural norms and values thereof, has been almost totally neglected in the sociology of family literature. Due to the fact that sociology has overlooked the importance of the familism-individualism dimension in explaining the transformations observed in familial relationships, some other disciplines -notably the cultural psychology- have dominated the field through their contribution both in theoretical and empirical ways. Nevertheless despite it is not always highlighted in specific debates on collectivistic and/or individualistic orientations of individuals in familial context, early theorists of sociology have already argued that as being departed from non-industrial economies, societies with collectivistic cultures are being transformed into more individualistic ones. The *Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft* distinction made by Tönnies is particularly important in displaying the dominating norms of collectivism and individualism in the respectively specified categories. He theorizes *Gemeinschaft* as the community, three original types of which are regarded as ‘kinship, neighborhood and friendship’, and the most important characteristics of which are ‘authority, mutuality and commonality’ (Tönnies 2001 [1887]).

On the other hand *Gessellschaft* refers to ‘society’ which must be understood in relation with the gradual evolution of the market (Tönnies 2001 [1887]: 64). As in line with the development of industrialization and market economy, people get increasingly detached from each other. According to him ‘Nothing happens in *Gessellschaft* that is more important for the individual’s wider group than it is for himself.’ (Tönnies 2001 [1887]: 52). Similar arguments may well be found in Durkheim’s works. Durkheim (2006 [1893]) makes a distinction between societies of mechanical and organic solidarity. In less differentiated societies where mechanical solidarity predominates, the

emotional bonds among the members of the society are strong, ‘we-feeling’ prevails and therefore collectivistic cultural norms are valued over the individualistic ones. On the other hand, in industrialized and urbanized societies which are characterized by organic solidarity, ‘I-feeling’ is highly valued among its members and those members are detached from the society; and are instead tended towards individualistic orientations. That is to say, it is well-documented in the early sociological literature that as the societies become more industrialized; people show a higher tendency towards individualism (Tönnies 2001 [1887]; Durkheim 2006 [1893]). Moreover, contemporary sociological literature also evidently argues that individualism has been on the rise along with advanced industrialization. Giddens conceptualizes high modernity as a context which refers to socio-cultural aspects of advanced industrialization. He argues that individualism which was previously a market-related phenomenon becomes extended to the sphere of consumption within this context (Giddens 1991: 197). From a more socio-cultural perspective, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: xxi) argues that in late modernity, ‘Human mutuality and community rest no longer on solidly established traditions, but, rather a paradoxical collectivity of reciprocal individualization.’ Likewise, from a macro point of view Bauman (2001) suggests that the society as a whole is individualized due to the changes in nature of labor throughout the globalization process. Uncertainty today, according to him, is a powerful effect for individualization where solidarity has already lost its former status.

## **2. Structural Factors Underlying Familism and Individualism in Turkey**

Since industrialization and urbanization are experienced somewhat later in Turkey than its Western counterparts, Turkish people still adhere to familism as a normative cultural value. Turkish people have overwhelmingly lived in rural areas within a great variety of extended family types until very recently. This living arrangement requires family members relate to each other both in psychological and material terms, a context which refers to ‘culture of relatedness’ (Kağıtçıbaşı 2002; Kağıtçıbaşı&Ataca 2005). However due to the capitalization of agriculture in Turkish rural, the petit commodity producers, comprising a prevailing category of family-based businesses making use of unpaid labor in agrarian production, were liquidated. However Boratav (2004) argues that, unlike in some developed countries where agricultural structure is suitably articulated to capitalization, capitalization of agriculture prompted the liquidation of peasantry in Turkey. As Tekeli (2016: 76) asserts, two important factors accelerate the transformation seen in the agricultural structure of Turkey. Firstly, it is the mechanization of agriculture; and secondly, it is the transition from a self-sufficient economy to a market economy. As long as the local market has been integrated to the macro market

economy, peasants have obtained the opportunity to enlarge their businesses. In addition to the pull factors of the urban, due to the push factors of the rural areas, the peasants who are impoverished throughout this process moved towards urban areas in order to be employed in non-agricultural sectors. In short, from the 1950's onwards, rural to urban migration transformed Turkey from a predominantly agrarian country to an industrial one. The changing mode of production had, in turn, caused a change on social relations of production, including the relations within the family. Apart for the affluent extended families of the rural, dispossessed and impoverished extended families turned into nuclear ones both in rural and urban areas.

Throughout their life cycles, families take many forms which best fit with the existing socio-economic conjunctures. Therefore huge changes at the societal level may well influence certain micro structures, such as the family structure. This is also true for the family in Turkish society where rapid changes have been displayed since 1950's. Particularly capitalization of agriculture in the rural areas and industrialization in the urban areas pave the way to the shrink of household size due to the factors explained above. However, it is of great importance to emphasize here that the studies based on historical records have already revealed that nuclear families did long exist before industrialization in Europe (Laslett 2001). Also viewed from the contemporary literature on Turkish family systems from a diachronic methodology, Turkish households were overwhelmingly composed of nuclear families even in the pre-industrial period. By drawing upon the original main rosters of the de jure Ottoman censuses of 1885 and 1907, Duben (1990) and Duben and Behar (2014), argued that households in Istanbul were predominantly nuclear, except for a small category of well-to-do families living in *konaks* (Vergin, describes *konaks* as large two- or three-storey houses which form households including several generations (Vergin, 1985: 572). In fact, *Türkiye'de Aile Yapısı (Family Structure in Turkey)*, a research conducted by Timur (1972) at national scale, had previously shown that living as an extended family is a privilege only for the rural families holding property at hand.

To put in a nutshell, any change at family structure is highly subjected to the structural changes occurring at macro levels. As an open system which is highly sensitive to the transformations at the other areas surrounding it, family undergoes certain structural formations as a survival strategy. Among those, the most ostensive one is the change of family size. This has also been the case in the change of family in Turkey since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The household size which was 5,25 by 1980, fell to 4,5 persons only in two decades (TÜİK 2016). This downsizing number simply illustrates that Turkish family has been increasingly getting nuclear in form. However, change in family structure, which are derived from material conditions, did not immediately entail changes in long-established cultural values and norms. Therefore a cultural lag, a sociological concept coined by Ogburn (1964)

which indicates that culture takes time to be adapted to the changes occurred at the material domain, has also been appeared in family relationships. This also implies an adjustment to ‘the new ways of relatedness’ among family members. Throughout the modernization process of Turkey, families get nuclear in structural terms, however intergenerational relations, including those between the young member and his/her parents, have long maintained its familistic character. In line with this argument, Kağıtçıbaşı (2002: 24) explains the familial relationships between generations in metropolitan areas of Turkey through her ‘*Family Model of Emotional Interdependence*’ which entails a shift from rural to industrial urban lifestyles and a higher prosperity, while still pursuing family-collectivistic cultural norms. According to Kağıtçıbaşı and Ataca (2005: 320), family relations in Turkey combine interdependence in the emotional realm with independence in the material one.

### **3. University Students’ Tendency towards Familism or Individualism**

As being a member of a changing society, young people in Turkey experience a micro level transition from being an adolescent to being an adult; along with a macro shift from family-collectivistic culture to a culture where individualistic tendencies are increasingly being observed.

In societies where familistic values and norms prevail, people are more constrained by expected norms of behavior that are set by their families. Given that in those societies patriarchal familial patterns are more prevalent, those who are constrained in such a way are especially the young and the female members of the family, since status of people are largely dependent upon age and gender especially in the families having a patriarchal ideology. Kandiyoti (2015: 328) argues that in classic patriarchy, respect patterns are based on age, along with gender. Unquestionably, social relationships, including the familial relationships, are highly gendered in Turkey and it is always the women who are subordinated and supervised (Baştuğ 2002; Sunar 2002). Therefore, it may be argued that young people, notably the young females have less room to behave independently from the familial control. Despite the fact that modern nuclear family is deemed more egalitarian and democratic; patriarchal patterns may well determine the intrafamilial relationships even in Turkish urban nuclear families. In Turkish culture there is a ‘strong emphasis on the authority of the parents, especially the father, obedience by the children, and surveillant control over the behavior of everyone in the family’ (Sunar 2002: 220). Therefore from the point of the young person, existing patterns of patriarchal ideology is an important criterion for developing familistic/individualistic behaviors. In other words, young members of a family behave individualistically only to the extent that

their father leaves room for them to do so. On the other hand, Peterson et al. (2005: 236) argues that cultures that emphasize individualism may have greater tolerance for youthful efforts to engage in behavioral exchanges with parents that challenge non-behavioral sources of parental influence such as parental authority, competence and wisdom. It may also be argued that in Turkey individualism is increasingly being accepted as a norm due to the social transformations experienced, although with a certain degree of dissimilarity from Western model of modernization, both in scope and structure. Therefore young people began to display more autonomous behaviors, or at least negotiate to do so or reconcile both in such a changing society. Although it is commonly assumed that individualism is an inherently Western cultural trait, this paper argues that non-Western ways of individualism -such as reconciling familism and individualism as a strategy- may well be observed especially among the young people.

This paper aims at exploring the ways how young members of a changing society develop relationship with their parents and the ways how they develop strategies to behave in accordance with their tendency towards familism, individualism or reconciling both, at familial level. It is of great importance to state that our sample, composed of young people, and more specifically of university students, is not arbitrarily drawn. Instead, young people are, as the major players in a society in flux, who are subjected to the changes occurring both in their own lives at micro level and in the society surrounding them at the macro.

## **4. Method**

### **4.1. Procedure**

The data is gathered through questionnaires conducted upon 165 university students who are still enrolling at four class levels of Sociology Department, Faculty of Letters, Ege University. Questionnaires were given to students during lecturing period of the spring term in 2015-2016 academic year. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and their consents were taken. The researchers informed the participants that the questionnaires would be filled out anonymously and that they could stop participating or withdraw at any moment of the study. All of the students that are reached at the moment when the survey is being conducted accepted to participate in the research.

### **4.2. Population and Sample**

By the 2015-2016 academic year, 165 volunteer students out of 278 registered students at Sociology Department participated in the research. Research population is selected according to the rationales listed below:

1. The authors are affiliated with the above mentioned institution. Hence previous extracurricular dialogues with the students and observations regarding values and norms about familism/individualism arouse an interest about their aforementioned value orientations and also about if they develop any strategies to reconcile both. In addition, the principle of ‘accessibility to the population’ played an important role in selecting the population.

2. Ege University is located in İzmir which is the third biggest urban centre in Turkey. Locating in the most-Western part of Turkey, İzmir has considerably distinctive characteristics demographically, culturally and socially. As it has been a port city for centuries, İzmir displayed a high cultural diversity due to internal and international immigrations received. This cultural diversity, in turn, caused a higher level of tolerance for different cultures and life-styles. By drawing upon Van de Kaa (1987), it is argued that individualistic orientations in family formation is associated with a set of demographic indicators including total fertility rate, divorce rate, first age of marriage for both sexes and household size. According to the official statistics (TÜİK 2014, 2015), İzmir, among other cities of Turkey, has the highest divorce rate, one of the lowest total fertility rate (below replacement level), one of the highest first age of marriage for both sexes and one of the smallest household size.

3. Unlike private universities in Turkey, where almost all of the students are from families of higher socio-economic status, Ege University -as a state university- displays a higher level of heterogeneity in terms of family origins.

From the research population elaborately explained above, a representative sample size was determined. The size of the sample was calculated according to the formula  $n = Nt^2pq / d^2 (N-1) + t^2pq$  (Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan 2007). Within confidence interval of 95%  $n=162$  (sample size) was found for  $N=278$  (the given population size); where  $d=0,05$ ;  $t=1,96$ ;  $p=0,5$  and  $q=0,5$ . The sample is composed of the participants ranging in age from 19 years old to 32 years old. The median age is 22 in the sample where 136 students (82,4%) are females, and 29 students (17,6%) are males. Based on place of birth, 85% reported that they are from urban, whereas based on their father’s place of birth, 75% of them reported that their fathers have an urban origin. 5.5% of students’ mothers and 0,6% of students’ fathers are illiterate, 80% of students’ mothers and 73,9% of students’ fathers are moderately educated (high school and below) and 14,5% of students’ mothers and 25,5% of students’ fathers are highly educated (above high school). About 78% of all students’ mothers and fathers are still married with each other, whereas 22% of students’ parents are

composed of individuals who are divorced, widowed and married with someone else.

### **4.3. Instrument**

The questionnaire originated by the researchers is made up of 14 items which measure three dimensions below:

1. Family's intervention: Family's intervention includes interventions in university and department preference, where the student lives, seeking for approval for friends and girl/boyfriends, parents' supervision even when they are physically distant, spending holidays with family, asking for advice when spending a considerable amount of his/her budget, asking for advice for the decisions regarding his/her academic life and decisions regarding his/her body and being able to behave independently from family regarding general scope of his/her life.
2. Frequency for communication: Frequency for communication per day with parents on the condition that the student lives distant from family.
3. Disabling/enabling factors: The most disabling factor for behaving independently from family and the most enabling factor for behaving independently from family.

In the questionnaire, participants answered 8 items of five-point Likert type units. Participants answered those items on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Other 6 items are converted to the same type which allows us to carry out inferential statistics in order to analyze the relationship between the students' tendency towards familism or individualism and parents' educational level, parents' marital status, gender, age, primary source of personal income and students' and their fathers' place of birth.

We executed One-Way ANOVA to estimate the effect of four categorical independent variables (parents' marital status, gender, primary source of personal income and students' and their fathers' place of birth) on familism/individualism tendencies of students. We, then, proceeded to Pearson correlation test to analyze the relationship between two continuous independent variables (parents' educational level and age) and familism/individualism tendencies of students. We also used Independent Sample t Test to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two independent subsamples.

## 5. Results

It was hypothesized that tendency towards familism or individualism among university students is shaped by six independent variables which are; parents' educational level, parents' marital status, gender, age, primary source of personal income and students' and fathers' place of birth.

### 5.1. Parents' Educational Level

Parents' educational level is sorted hierarchically from 1 to 7; therefore it turned out to be a continuous variable that allows us to display the correlations between the measures within familism/individualism scale. As shown in Table 1, mother's educational level is more significant in tendency towards either familism or individualism than that of the father's (Table 1).

**Table 1.** T Test Concerning Parental Education and Selected Measures of Familism/Individualism

	<b>Mother's educational level</b>	<b>Father's educational level</b>
<i>Behaving independently</i> in general scope of life	0,240**	0,168*
<i>Parents' supervision</i> when they are distant	0,166*	0,105
<i>Spending holidays with the family</i>	-0,157*	-0,032
Asking for <i>parents' advice for spending</i> a considerable amount of <i>budget</i>	0,188*	0,089
Asking for <i>parents' advice regarding academic decisions</i>	0,112	0,185*

\*p<.05

\*\*p<.01

A strong correlation is found between mother's educational level and student's ability to behave independently from family in general scope of life (t=0,240, p<.01); whereas it's slightly correlated with father's educational level. In addition, it can be also inferred that as the mother's educational level increases it becomes more likely for the parents to supervise their daughter/son (t=0,166, p<.05) when they are physically distant and it becomes more likely for the students to ask for parent's advice when spending a considerable amount of his/her budget (t=0,188, p<.05). However mother's education is negatively correlated with student's preference for spending holidays with the family (t=-0,157, p<.01). On the other hand, father's educational level is especially important for the student's decisions regarding his/her academic life. In other words, as father's educational level increases, it

becomes more likely for the students to ask for his/her father’s advice regarding his/her decisions about academic life ( $t=0,185, p<.01$ ).

## 5.2. Parents’ Marital Status

Marital status is classified into four categories as; married with the student’s mother/father, married with anyone else, divorced and widowed. Students whose mothers/fathers are deceased are asked to ignore this question; hence those are treated as N/A. Since the numbers of categories are five (more than two categories), One-Way ANOVA is executed. It is found that none of the items in familism/individualism scale is significantly related ( $\text{Sig.} < 0,001$ ) to both parents’ marital status.

## 5.3. Gender

Out of 165 students, 82,4% ( $n=136$ ) are females, and 17,6% ( $n=29$ ) are males. As shown in Table 2, gender is related to a set of measures of parental intervention which include interventions at friend preference, girl/boyfriend preference, parental supervision when the student is physically distant from parents and decisions regarding his/her body. Moreover gender is significant for the communication frequency with parents at 95% CI (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Independent Samples Test (Levene and t Test) Concerning Gender and Selected Measures of Familism/Individualism

	Levene Test		t Test		Means	
	F	Sig	t	Sig (2tailed)	Female	Male
Frequency of communication	2,028	0,158	2,230	0,175	1,20	0,80
Asking for the parents' approval for friends.	0,085	0,771	2,944	0,005	2,33	1,76
Asking for the parents' approval for girl/boyfriends.	0,726	0,385	2,658	0,011	2,54	1,97
Parents' surveillance even when apart.	0,023	0,879	5,340	0,000	3,70	2,72
Asking for parents' advice for the decisions regarding his/her body.	0,466	0,496	2,333	0,024	2,34	1,86

When means are compared, it is found that female students are more subjected to parental intervention whereas male students are less subjected to it. However, in contrast with the findings of studies conducted in Turkey which indicate that female students’ department preferences (Korkut-Owen et al., 2012) and university preferences (Özcan 2016) are more shaped by

parental intervention, we found no statistically significant relationship between gender and parental intervention in department and/or university preference. In terms of communication frequency per day, findings show that female students communicate more frequently with their parents in a day than their male counterparts on average.

#### **5.4. Age**

Since the sample is an inherently age-based category, the range between the minimum age (min=19) and maximum age (max=32) is not significantly large. Therefore age is not categorized as subgroups; hence it is left as a continuous variable.

The convergence of ages, in turn, may have possibly impeded correlations between other continuous variables, except for ability to behave independently from family regarding general scope of life. Specifically, it is found that as the age increases, the students become more likely to behave independently from their family regarding general scope of life (Pearson Corr.= 0,171,  $p < 0,01$ ).

#### **5.5. Primary Source of Personal Income**

Students whose personal income is provided from non-family sources consist of 31,5% of all students. In contrast, the majority of the students (68,5%) are economically dependent upon their family members, namely their parents. In spite of the assumption that the students who are economically independent from their families are also the ones who display more independent and autonomous behaviors in other aspects of life, no significant difference is found among the groups. Since the number of categories are four (more than two categories), One-Way ANOVA is executed. It is found that none of the items in familism/individualism scale is significantly related (Sig.  $< 0,001$ ) to primary source of personal income (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Distribution of Students' Primary Source of Personal Income

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Family	113	68,5
Scholarship	42	25,5
Working	6	3,6
Other	4	2,4
<b>Total</b>	165	100

#### **5.6. Place of Birth**

The relationship between rural-urban differences of students and their tendency towards familism/individualism is measured through Levene and t

test. Concerning analysis of rural-urban dichotomy, not only students' but also their fathers' place of birth was asked. However it is found that except for communication frequency with parents per day, none of the items in familism/individualism scale is significantly related (Sig. < 0,001) to both students' and fathers' place of birth. As shown in Table 4, the relationship between place of birth and communication frequency with parents is found significant at 95% CI. When means are compared, it is found that students from rural origin and students having fathers from rural origin communicate with their parents more frequently (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Independent Samples Tests Concerning Place of Birth and Frequency of Communication

		Levene Test		t Test		Means	
		F	Sig	t	Sig 2tailed	Rural	Urban
Frequency of Communication	<i>Student's Place of Birth</i>	15,862	0,000	2,282	0,025	1,792	1,034
	<i>Father's Place of Birth</i>	11,437	0,001	2,687	0,008	1,648	0,962

## 6. Discussion

The purpose of our study was to examine the underlying factors that influence Turkish university students' tendency towards familism or individualism and to what extent they are likely to reconcile both, as a strategy. In addition to their transitions to adulthood in their micro lives, a macro transition from traditionality to modernity in dual structure of Turkish society is being experienced by young people. This twofold transition creates an ambivalent situation which requires them to develop new strategies for reconciling traditional and modern forms of behaviors. Such strategies include those related to intergenerational relationships within the family. More specifically, tendency either towards familism or towards individualism may be the norm for the young in their familial relationships; another option may be reconciling both.

Being an important orientation in modern life, individualism is highly associated with education which is one of the most important factors for adopting individualistic values. Throughout the modernization process, education has been of particular importance for learning, internalizing and transforming the modern values and symbols (Akşit et al. 2000, p. 59). Given that all of the participants are at the same level of educational attainment, only the parents' educational level was assumed to make a difference in students'

tendency towards familism or individualism. Hence with respect to parents' educational attainment level, it can be concluded that it is especially the mothers' educational level which has an influence upon younger generation's tendency towards familism or individualism. In other words, as the mother's educational level increases the young person displays more autonomous behaviours. Specifically, the higher the mother's educational level is the more independent behaviours in general scope of life of the student are displayed. This is also (slightly) related to the higher educational level of the father. It is also found that as the mother's educational level increases it becomes more likely for the parents to supervise their daughter/son even when they are physically distant. Moreover by reckoning upon the findings about the gender effect, which illustrate that female students are more supervised by their parents (especially by educated mothers), two interpretations may be possible: firstly a stronger bond might have been established between mother and daughter which enables them to develop a more friendly dialogue, or secondly a more educated mother is more likely to develop strategies to supervise her daughter in order to eliminate the possible threats. The former explanation seems more reasonable since it is validated with another finding of this study which points out that the students having more educated mothers are more likely to ask for parent's advice when spending a considerable amount of his/her budget. On the other hand, it is found that students having mothers with higher levels of educational attainment are not as restricted as students having mothers with lower levels of educational attainment in spending holidays with the family. Therefore as for the mother's educational level, it can be concluded that as the mother's educational level increases more egalitarian and democratic relationship along with a stronger bond between mother and child is developed. Besides, father's educational level is especially influential in student's decisions regarding his/her academic life. Since academic decisions are thought as more critical in one's life, the father figure, as the head of the household in practice, especially when educated, becomes a figure who is asked for advice in academic decisions.

With respect to marital status of parents, no significant relationship was found. It is inferred from here that regardless of what marital status their parents have, students' tendency towards familism or individualism is dependent upon other factors.

As for the gender, it can be argued that the superior status of male in patriarchal tradition leads to the fact that it is the woman who is more subordinated within family relations (Sevil&Yanikkerem, 2006, p. 23). Given that intrafamilial relations are gendered in Turkey, behavioral patterns of parents towards daughters and sons are highly differentiated. Specifically, the results show that it is more likely for female students to seek for parent's approval both for friends and boyfriends than their male counterparts. They are also the ones who ask for their parents' advice for the decisions regarding

their body. As a matter of fact, as feminist theorists have already argued female body is seen as an object to be controlled over. Since it is the male who exerts this control over female body, the female becomes more dependent than male (Beauvoir, 1987). As for the relationship between gender and communication frequency, it is also important to mention that female students communicate significantly more frequently with their parents. Hence it is concluded that female students are more subjected to parental intervention which implies that they are socialized in more familistic orientations. On the contrary, male students are more independent from parental intervention and hence more likely to behave accordance with individualistic values.

In Turkish culture age is a core cultural construct within kinship discourses (Neyzi, 2001). Hence in the research, age is handled as a core variable to examine its effect on students' tendency towards familism or individualism. However partly because of the convergence of student ages, it is confirmed that age variable doesn't have a significant effect on students' tendency neither towards familism nor towards individualism. Although the range between minimum and maximum ages of the students participated in the research is rather limited, it is found that as the age increases students display a higher independency in decisions regarding their general scope of life.

As for the student's primary source of personal income, the results show that majority of university students are economically dependent upon their family members, especially the parents. Despite students are highly convinced that the most disabling factor for behaving independent from family is economical dependency, it is contrasted with the reality since no significant relationship between primary source of personal income and independent behaviour at any kind is found.

With respect to rural-urban differences, neither students' nor fathers' place of birth is closely related with familistic or individualistic orientations of students, except for communication frequency with parents per day. The results only show that both students from rural origin and students having father from rural origin communicate with their parents much more frequently. The widely-held familistic values of Turkish people both from rural and urban origins may well account for this highly insignificant relationship between place of birth and familistic/individualistic tendency. This is partly because people from rural and urban origins are spatially mixed in rapidly growing urban areas due to migration in Turkey (Erder, 2002, p. 117). As a cultural trait, family and kinship relations have never lost their important role in almost every aspect of social life in Turkey. As a matter of fact, throughout urbanization process family and kinship relations play even more critical role as a coping strategy (Erder, 2002, p. 126).

Finally we should point out the factors which are considered by university students as the most enabling and the most disabling ones for behaving independently from their family. It is particularly important in order to display what sort of strategies they develop to emancipate from dependency and hence to behave individually. 41,4% of all students (the largest group among others) reported that the behavioural patterns attributed themselves enable them to behave independently. Among those patterns they mention, gaining parents' trust and having never done anything shameful for the family honour are the two with the highest frequency. As for the most disabling factors, 24,8% of all students (the largest group among others) reported that material and economic dependency on family also causes a certain degree of dependency at other aspects of their life. It is inferred from these findings that students more or less fall back upon some strategies to emancipate from the enmeshment of family and therefore to be able to behave as an independent individual.

Baştuğ (2002) argues that Turkish kinship system is quite similar to those of other Mediterranean cultures in which family members do not only responsible for themselves, but also responsible for each other due to strong family bonds. These strong family bonds, in turn, cause a norm of enmeshment just similar to many other collectivistic cultures (Sunar&Fişek, 2005). Because it is a long-established norm, it could be foreseen that familism will undoubtedly determine intrafamilial relations for years to come. We can argue that there is a coexistence of familistic and individualistic tendencies among university students who develop certain strategies to reconcile both. However rapid social change in Turkey would eventually bring about a relative rise in individualistic values and norms, well along with familistic ones.

## **7. Conclusion**

For a concluding remark, we would like to refer some implications regarding familistic-individualistic orientations in Turkey. By drawing upon an examination of university students' self-reported behavioural patterns within their family, this study revealed which variables are most directly involved in their familistic-individualistic orientations. The findings evidently show that students who are female, relatively younger, from rural origins and children of parents with lower educational level are subjected to familistic values at higher levels. It is also observed that marital status of parents and students' primary source of personal income are not related to university students' tendency towards familism or individualism. However, as they report that they fall back upon some strategies to be emancipated from the enmeshment of family, it could be interpreted that as a coping strategy they would reconcile the familistic and individualistic paradigms and behavioural patterns within their family relations. It can be concluded that there is a coexistence of

familistic and individualistic orientations among university students in Turkey. By drawing upon the findings of this research conducted upon young people, it can be foreseen that, beside long-established familistic values and norms held by the majority of Turkish society, individualistic orientations will also be influential in intrafamilial relations.

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