

Organized Crime in Immigrant Communities in Germany

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ABSTRACT

In my paper I study the Turkish and Polish immigrant communities in Germany in order to better understand what accounts for the variation in organized crime rates between these two populations. By examining crime statistics, census data and accounts of immigration experiences, I find that the variation in organized crime rates are linked to the different immigration and integration policies that these two populations experienced. I show that the higher rate of organized crime in the Turkish community is a result of the marginalization created by these policies.

BODY

What Factors Lead to Higher Rates of organized Crime in Some Immigrant Communities?

In this paper I answer this question by examining the Turkish and Polish immigrant populations in Germany. These populations are ideal for this analysis because both have a similar number of members, have been in the country for several generations and are poorer than native Germans. However, despite these similarities, the Turkish immigrant population is more involved in organized crime than the Polish immigrant community.

Argument

I argue that higher rates of organized crime are the result of immigration and integration policies which have marginalized and centralized the Turkish population in Germany.

Turkish immigrants originally came to the country as temporary workers through the *Gastarbeiter* program after WWII and settled in poor neighborhoods creating ethnic enclaves with substandard schools. It took decades for the German government to acknowledge that this population was going to stay in Germany permanently. By this time Turks were socially and economically marginalized within the country and have remained so to this day.

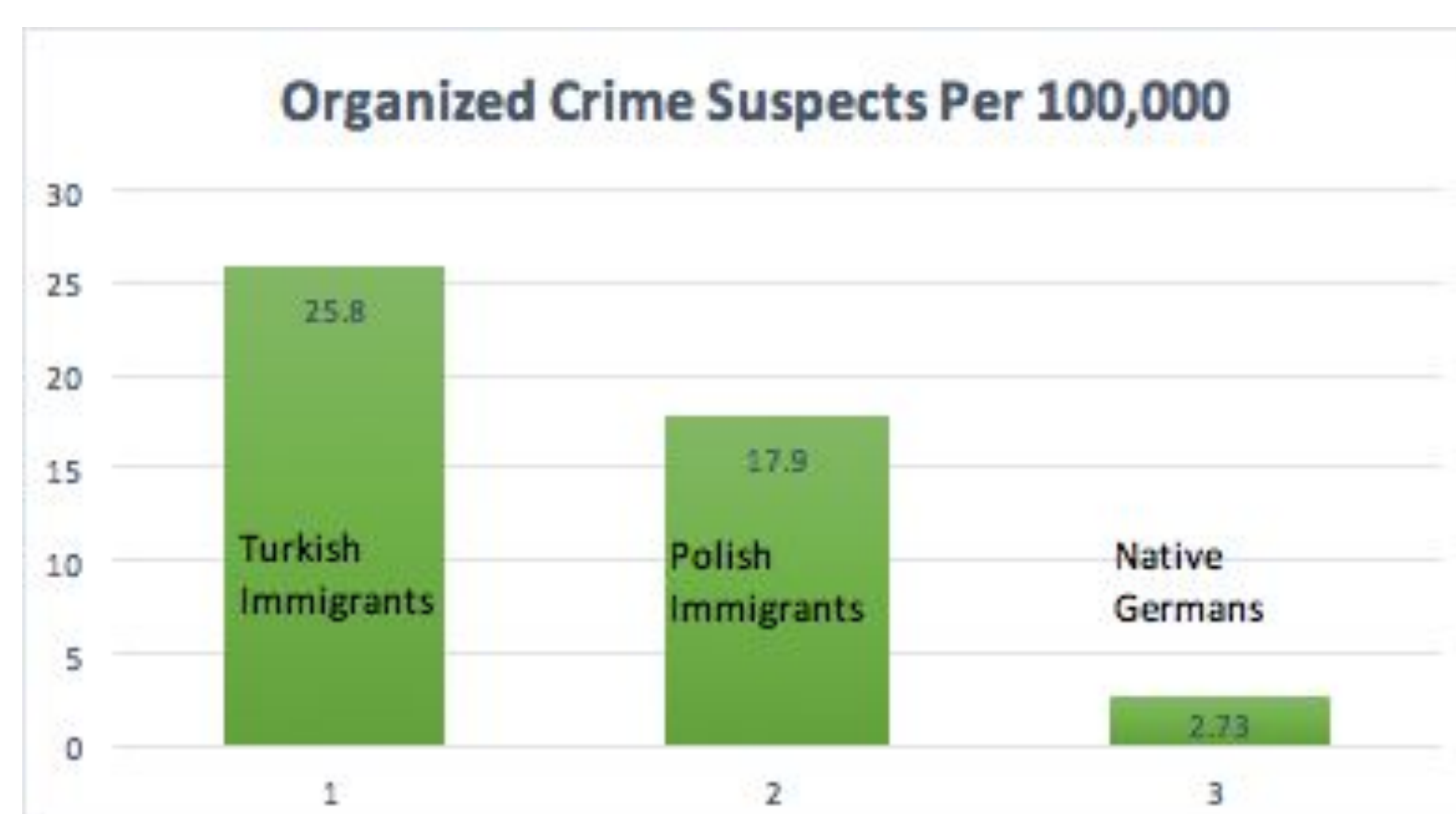
Poles began immigrating to Germany earlier than Turks but many returned to Poland after WWI. Polish immigration resumed after the fall of the Soviet Union and increased after the creation of the European Union. Because Polish immigrants have not faced the same barriers to integration as Turkish immigrants, many Polish families in Germany have integration into German society and live in German communities. This has meant that Poles in Germany are more geographically, economically and linguistically integrated than their Turkish counterparts.

DATA

I structured my paper as a comparative case study which naturally controls for countrywide variables while allowing differences between these populations to be highlighted. For my analysis I relied on crime statistics from the *Bundeskriminalamt*, census data and accounts of immigration and integration experiences.

Findings

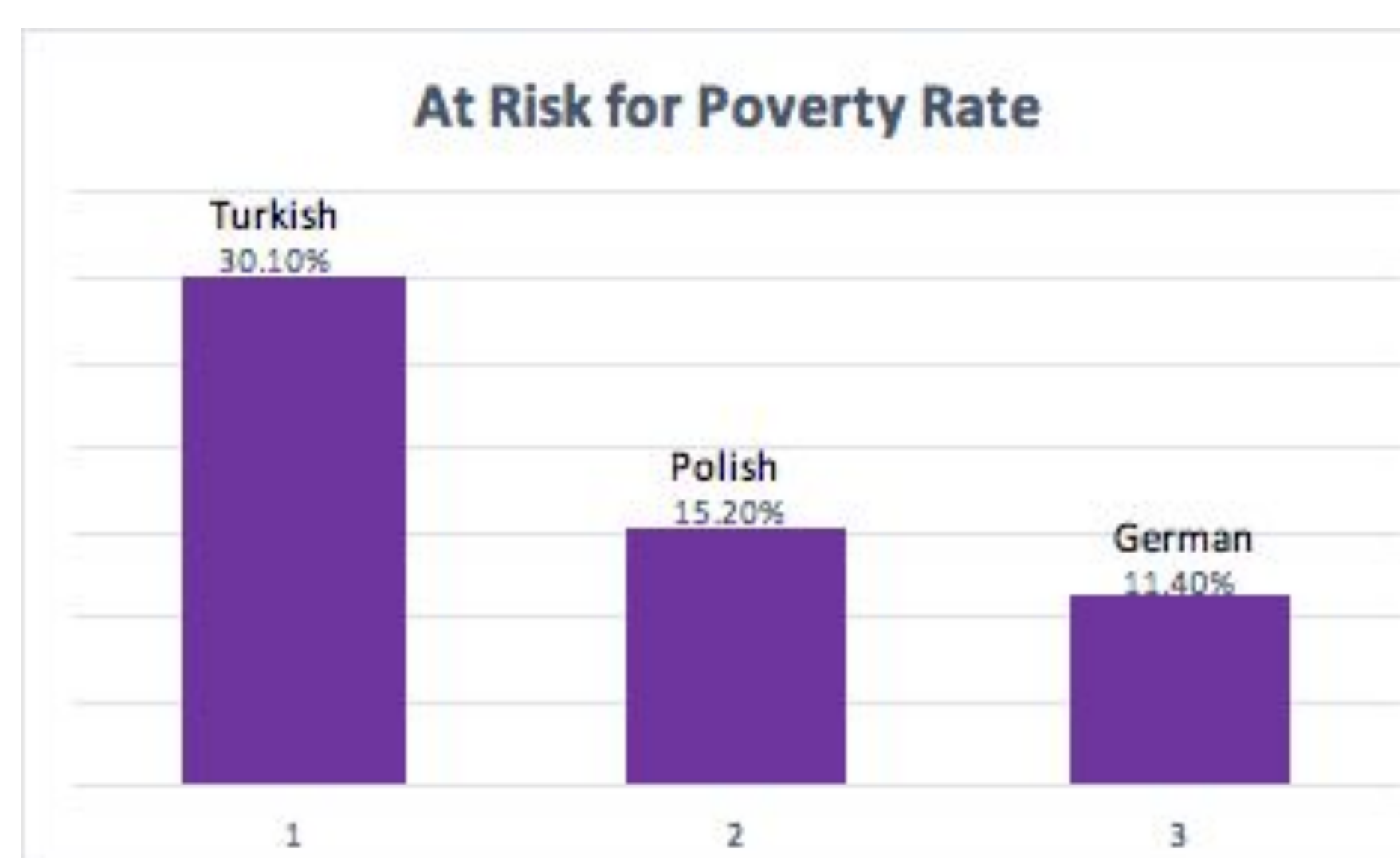
First I established that the Turkish immigrant population is in fact more involved in organized crime than the Polish immigrant community. This is demonstrated by a report on organized crime from the *Bundeskriminalamt* which show that there are 71 organized crime groups dominated by Turks in Germany and only 23 groups dominated by Poles. Similarly there are more Turkish organized crime suspects than Polish suspects, as shows in the graph below.



Furthermore, my analysis supports my argument and shows that failures in integration policies have left the Turkish population disadvantaged and susceptible to organized crime involvement.

This can be seen by their relative economic and educational disadvantages. About 20% of the Turkish population in Germany did not complete secondary education compared to 4% of the Polish community and 1% of native Germans. This low graduation rate may be a result of the low quality schools created for the children of Turkish *Gastarbeiter* and likely contributes to this population's economic disadvantage.

Similarly the unemployment and at risk for poverty rates are disproportionately high for Turkish immigrants. As of 2018 the unemployment rate was 7% for Turkish immigrants but only 3% for Polish immigrants and native Germans. As can be seen in the graph below, Turkish immigrants are much more at risk for poverty than either Polish immigrants or native Germans.



These higher unemployment and poverty rates for the Turkish population in Germany leaves this group economically marginalized which may incentivize individuals to look outside the formal economy for employment, and rely on involvement in organized crime for income.

An additional reason why this population may engage in organized crime is its lack of linguistic integration. In order to measure this I examined what language was spoken at home. Fifty percent of families in which at least one member had a Turkish immigration background spoke Turkish at home. In comparison, 71% of families with at least one Polish member primarily spoke German at home. Considering that most families with a Turkish immigration background have been in Germany for multiple generations this is an important disparity. It likely reflects the ethnic enclaves in which many members of the Turkish community live and shows their relative lack of integration. This lack of integration can be exploited by organized crime groups which benefit from the insular and close knit nature of the Turkish community.

CONCLUSION

I found that failures in immigration and integration policies can have severe and prolonged negative impacts which may lead to higher rates of organized criminal involvement. Although there has been significant reporting on organized crime linked to Arab groups in Germany, as well as research on the failures in integrating the Turkish population into German society, my paper provides a unique analysis and conclusion by comparing the immigration experiences and relative integration of the Polish and Turkish communities in Germany and showing how the different policies that these two populations faced resulted in systemic disadvantages for the Turkish population which has likely led to the higher rates of organized criminal activity within its members.

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