

## INTRODUCTION

# The upcoming new elite among children of immigrants: a cross-country and cross-sector comparison

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### ABSTRACT


The European-born children of immigrants, often referred to as the second generation, play an important role in the academic debate about integration and assimilation. The successful second generation, defined in terms of possessing a higher education diploma and or professional position, receives increasing attention. In this special issue, we will look at the most successful group: the upcoming “elite” among the descendants of migrants from Turkey, based on data gathered in the ELITES, Pathways to Success project. In this research project we deliberately selected on the dependent variable: being professionally successful in managerial jobs in the corporate business sector, the corporate law sector and the education sector.

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## Introduction

The European-born children of immigrants, often referred to as the second generation, play an important role in the academic debate on integration and assimilation. The successful second generation, defined in terms of possessing a higher education diploma and/or professional position, is receiving increasing attention (Crul, Schneider, and Lelie 2012; Crul 2013; Crul, Schneider, and Lelie 2013; Fibbi and Truong 2015; Keskiner 2013; Keskiner 2015; Konyali 2014; Legewie 2015; Raad 2015; Rezai et al. 2015; Santelli 2013; Schneider and Lang 2014; Schneider, Crul, and Van Praag 2014; Schnell 2012; Schnell, Keskiner, and Crul 2013; Sloomman 2014; Van Praag 2014; Waldring, Crul, and Ghorashi 2015). In this special issue, we will look at the most successful group: the upcoming “elite” among the descendants of migrants from Turkey, based on data gathered in the ELITES, Pathways to Success project. In this research project, we deliberately selected on the dependent variable: professional

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success in managerial jobs in the corporate business sector, the corporate law sector and the education sector.

Research on elites has a long tradition in sociology. The analysis of elites traditionally revolved around studying old boys' networks holding positions of power in organizations with certain social and or political goals (Froud et al. 2006). Classical studies, like that of C. Wright Mills (1956), focused on the "power elite", while Bourdieu's studies dealt with academics, the cultural elite, and civil servants as well as the institutional structures that produce and reproduce elite status (Bourdieu 1990). Recently, the discussion in the field of elite research has been revived by Savage and his colleagues, who published a special issue in the journal *The Sociological Review* called "Remembering Elites" in which they proposed a new approach to studying elites that goes beyond the limiting focus on old boys' networks or the power elite, but instead takes the complex and fluid structures of today's economy into account. They point out that changes in institutional structures, especially in the financial sector, have resulted in the emergence of new positions and networks, leading to new conceptualizations of elites (Savage and Williams 2008). In that special issue, Harvey and Maclean (2008) discuss the concept of new or upcoming elites: young people with parents of lower socio-economic status, who gain entry into high-ranking positions of leadership. We argue and illustrate in this special issue that within this group of "new elites" the descendants of labour migrants deserve special attention since they have to tackle even more barriers when moving up to leadership positions. While we can define this group as a new upcoming elite, especially because of their steep upward social mobility, compared to definitions used in previous elite studies, most of them are still on a path towards positions where they can exact power. Hence, this is a relatively young group, mostly in their thirties, so many are still at the beginning of their careers. Furthermore, as a new and upcoming elite they face specific challenges and obstacles, such as discrimination, that often slow down their entrance into elite positions.

### **Successful children of immigrants: an overview of the literature**

Research on the successful children of immigrants has become a new hot topic in the field of migration and ethnic studies in both the U.S. and Europe. In the U.S., this research is primarily focused on Asian-Americans as the new "model minority", and centres strongly around the question to which degree "cultural" factors are responsible for this success. In the public perception, children of Asian immigrants in the U.S. are frequently regarded as a "model minority" with high educational aspirations compared to Mexican immigrants and their children who are presumed to have, on average, lower educational aspirational levels. Amy Chua's books "The Tiger Mother" in 2011 and the "The Triple Package" in 2014 capitalized on these

public images. In the academic debate in the U.S., there is an emphasis on (hyper) selectivity of Asian-Americans and differences in family resources and other so-called group factors, such as a supportive middle-class culture and ethnic capital in heterogeneous communities like the Chinese or Korean communities (Lee and Zhou 2014; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 2005).

In contrast to the U.S., there is no such focus on a model minority in Europe. Research on the successful second generation in Europe started around the 1990s. In *Germany*, Pott was one of the first to study educationally successful second-generation Turks. In his work, he looked at the effect of ethnicity, culture, (trans)locality and segregation on social mobility processes (Pott 2001, 2002). In *France*, Withold deWenden was among the first in Europe to study political elites and emerging leaders of immigrant descent (1995). Santelli (1997) in France conducted research on descendants of Algerian immigrants who had obtained a leading or an entrepreneurial position in French society in order to understand how they had managed to obtain higher education diplomas and occupy executive positions despite their parents' low educational background. In *Sweden*, Olsson and his colleagues were among the first to study the topic of success. They analysed how transnational social networks, connecting the younger generation to the diasporas' community or to their parents' country of origin, are facilitating careers for the second generation (Olsson et al. 2007). Crul was the first to look at successful second-generation Turkish and Moroccan youth in *the Netherlands* (Crul 1994, 2000a, 2000b). Crul emphasizes the importance of structural factors in the educational system that either prevent or help children of immigrants to succeed. A few years later, Bouw and colleagues (2003) used a qualitative research design to study successful second-generation Moroccan girls in the Netherlands, looking at both their strategies and their resources.

As can be seen in this short overview, the issue of second-generation upward mobility was picked up around the same time across north-western Europe but has focused on various topics. Cross-country comparisons focusing on the same topic are still exceptional. In this special issue the comparison between countries is a key aspect of all the articles. As we will show, cross-country comparison steers us towards new explaining factors for success. Among other things, the opportunity structure at the local and national level offers further explanations. This is not regarded as an alternative to individual, family or community level explanations, but as an explanation in which the *interaction* between structure and agency is central. Each local or national context of integration – both in education and on the labour market – causes different individual, family or community resources to become important. To point out an obvious example, let's look at internships. In some countries, internships form an integral part of the education system, while in other countries, they do not. Whether or not they have been immersed in a real

work environment obviously affects the way young people first enter the labour market; the extent to which they need a network; the sort of network they need to get a first job and also the challenges they face when adapting to a work situation. This goes to show that the demands on resources of the second generation vary greatly across different contexts.

## Theoretical debate

Selecting on the dependent variable, as we do in this special issue, turns the usual research perspective in the field of migration and ethnic studies inside out. Rather than explaining the over-representation of children of immigrants in certain negative categories compared to the group of native parentage, our research raises the question of why the people we have highlighted have succeeded against all odds. Researchers, mostly U.S.-based, argue that “immigrant optimism” or “migration as a family project” explain the enormous drive that is necessary to succeed without any proper family resources (Kao and Tienda 1995; Louie 2012). Kasinitz and his colleagues (2008) argue in their study of the second generation in New York that young people of all ethnic groups (including the ethnic majority group) need to integrate into the new reality of a super-diverse urban population. They claim that the second generation therefore has an advantage as their immigrant background has made them well-equipped to function in a multi-ethnic and diverse urban environment.

We build on this literature, but will also introduce new elements. Perhaps understandably, the American debate on the second generation shows a persistent blind spot for the importance of the specific national context. Partly because of the sheer size of the country, most researchers in the U.S. only make comparisons within the U.S. Taking the specific institutional arrangements and policies of a country as a given, however, can seriously affect the way in which we perceive successful integration among the children of immigrants. In Europe, a research tradition of looking at the importance of the national context has developed since the 1990s, with increasing funding for European comparative research becoming available (cf. Crul and Vermeulen 2003; Crul, Schneider, and Lelie 2012; Heckmann, Lederer, and Worbs 2001). To include the importance of the national context, we will build on the integration context theory developed by the guest editor of this issue, Maurice Crul, and his colleague Jens Schneider. This theory holds that differences in institutional arrangements in education and the labour market across countries influence the possibilities for upward social mobility among children of immigrants (Crul 2013; Crul and Schneider 2010; Crul, Schneider, and Lelie 2012; Keskiner 2013; Schnell 2012). Here, we will go further and add the importance of differences in institutional arrangements across three *different sectors*. It is in the education sector, as we will

show in this special issue, that the importance of the role of national institutional arrangements is most pronounced. The opportunities to acquire an influential position in the education sector are radically different across the four countries because of the differences in the structure of their education systems. Institutional arrangements – such as internship phases in higher vocational education in the Netherlands or on-the-job training in Germany – are also important influencing factors in the other two sectors, which explain different pathways to success (Keskiner 2013). Each of the three sectors has its own institutional logic that renders the possibilities and conditions necessary in order to climb the ladder substantially different.

We can expand the theoretical foundation of the integration context theory on the basis of our findings in this special issue. The most crucial addition is what Bourdieu would call the “logic of the field” (Bourdieu 1990). Bourdieu uses it to understand the social reproduction of the field and the maintenance of its social boundaries. In our case, we can also use it for understanding processes of social mobility and changing the boundaries in the field (cf. Schneider and Lang 2014). A Bourdieusian field is a competitive arena which changes when there is an innovative breakthrough or when changes occur with regard to clientele or the market (Bourdieu 1984). Professionals with an immigrant background can be part of such an innovative force and they may be the searched-for answer to changes in clientele and the world market (see for example, Konyali, *in press*). The emerging markets in Turkey and the Arab world, for example, require business leaders who speak the languages of those countries and who are sensitive to cultural and religious codes. But we also found examples of changing demands and assets in the field in education. In many metropolitan schools children of immigrants have become the norm among the pupils. As well as requiring new pedagogies and innovative schools, this new reality most likely also requires a different composition of the teaching force and school leaders (cf. Schmidt and Schneider, *forthcoming*).

In this special issue, we will tie the theoretical idea of the specific drive and resources in immigrant families prevalent in the American literature to the theoretical idea of looking at institutional barriers and opportunities in education, the labour market and at the level of the sectors. One particular way we do this is by examining the details of the pathways of the upcoming elite among the second generation. By reconstructing these pathways, we can see more precisely how people manage institutional challenges and find a way around blockades in order to succeed. We see that successful children of immigrants have often taken alternative or longer routes through education and the labour market. The challenges they face vary, both in different city and country contexts, and within the three sectors we studied. We will describe their main strategies and highlight the challenges they have faced throughout their careers.

What draws our attention is that disadvantages persist up until the labour market, even though most people managed to obtain higher education diplomas. Not having the right network contacts or being unaware of the unwritten rules in the field they are entering into once more puts them at a disadvantage. We describe the strategies people employ to overcome this, but will also show how this disadvantage slows down their entrance into the elite positions or may even prevent it altogether. All articles in this special issue emphasize the importance of network contacts and the role of mentors and other significant people to guide the new elite and acquaint them with the rules of the game.

The findings of our analysis point to new patterns of social mobility. We use the term *new* here in two ways. First of all, the social mobility pathways we scrutinized point to the use of alternative routes to achieving a successful position. This is not only true for the educational careers of our respondents, but also for their entrance to the labour market and for how they are climbing the corporate ladder. Secondly, the social mobility pattern is new because these children of immigrants are moving into a social world that their ethnic group has never before inhabited in the country of immigration. This means that they have to deal with a double disadvantage, often being unaware of both certain dominant cultural codes, and other specific codes related to class differences. Several authors in this special issue describe in detail how the respondents try to overcome this disadvantage by learning along the way during their climb upward, first through education and later through the labour market.

### **Professionals in managerial functions whose parents migrated from Turkey: a quantitative comparison**

The findings presented in this special issue are derived from the ELITES, Pathways to Success project, an international research project funded by the European Research Council (ERC). The project has both a quantitative and a qualitative component. Throughout the special issue, we will primarily present the qualitative part of the project. In this paragraph, however, we want to highlight some important findings from the quantitative analysis to contextualize the findings of the qualitative part.

The Turkish community is, with about five million people, the largest and most spread out immigrant community in Europe. This makes the Turkish second generation one of the most important groups to study in Europe. Naturally, the definition of who is successful among the Turkish second generation is open to debate. You can, for instance, either opt for a subjective or objective definition of success. Then the next question will be: successful compared to whom? Compared to their parents, compared to their peers from the same socio-economic and ethnic background or compared to the average

level in society? In the ELITES, Pathways to Success project, we opted for an objective way to select our success group by taking job status as the selection criterion. We selected people working in a professional job according to the international EGP (Erikson–Goldthorpe–Portocarero Occupational Class Coding) scheme: people working in the top two scales of the eleven point EGP coding scheme work in mid-level or higher managerial functions. These people usually show a steep mobility compared to their parents. This criterion means that our respondents are also far more successful than the average person in their own ethnic group or the average person in the majority group. In other words, our respondents belong to the most successful group in their own community and the group of above-average successful persons in society.

A main objective of our study is to compare the pathways of the successful professionals of Turkish descent across different countries so that we can explore the importance of the integration context for their upward mobility trajectories. For this reason we compare people with “similar” background characteristics. We only selected people who were born in Europe or raised there from a very young age (pre-primary school) and whose parents were born in Turkey. We are, of course, aware that the children of migrants from Turkey are not all similar across the four European countries investigated. To start with, there is the size of the Turkish community. Germany harbours by far the largest Turkish community, with well over three million people residing there. The Turkish communities in Sweden, France and the Netherlands are much smaller, consisting of between 300,000 and 500,000 people of Turkish descent, respectively. The composition of the groups is also not exactly the same in all four countries.

To highlight some of the differences in the four countries, we will make use of the TIES survey, a representative survey in which data were gathered for second-generation Turkish youth and their parents in thirteen cities in seven European countries. In the TIES survey we interviewed people in the same cities as in the ELITES project: Stockholm, Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris, Strasbourg, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Below we refer, for reasons of convenience, to country differences where in fact we are describing the findings for the two cities combined in each country, with the exception of Sweden (only Stockholm). The respondents interviewed in the TIES survey were between 18 and 35 years old and all were born in European countries. The so-called second generation in Sweden and the Netherlands were identified through administrative register data at the city level. In Germany and France, we used onomastic sampling (based on the first and last name) in combination with administrative register data and, to identify the second generation, further screening of respondents in the households we approached (for more details on the survey, see Crul, Schneider, and Lelie 2012). This made it possible to also include naturalized second-generation respondents in all countries.

Based on the outcomes of the TIES survey, we can sketch the main differences for the Turkish second generation and their parents in the cities in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden.

The “Turkish” group is most homogenous in France, Germany and the Netherlands. In these three countries, the majority of the first-generation men came as guest workers. In Sweden, a considerable part of the people that came from Turkey are Kurdish or Christian Turks (Vera Larrucea 2015, 38). In the TIES survey in Sweden, fourteen per cent of the parents of the second-generation respondents identify as Kurdish and twenty-three per cent as Assyrian (Vera Larrucea 2015, 37). Approximately half of the Assyrians and almost a quarter of the Kurdish Turks came as refugees. Those who came to Sweden as refugees tended to be slightly higher educated than those who came as labour migrants. In the first group, twenty-four per cent of the first-generation men had some form of post-secondary education, compared to eleven per cent in the group of labour migrants. This still means that the vast majority in both groups is low educated. The other big difference is that the parents of the second generation in Sweden more often attended some form of second chance education. This resulted in better Swedish language abilities and more first-hand experiences within the Swedish school system. This means that on average, Turkish parents in Sweden were better educated than Turkish parents in the other three countries. One would expect this difference to also translate into success among the second generation. This is partly true, but not to the extent that one would expect. Of all the countries studied in the TIES project, Sweden is the country where parents’ education *least* predicts educational outcomes of children, due to the fairly egalitarian school system. In Germany, a higher level of education among the parents would have had a much greater effect, as the education level of one’s parents has a much stronger influence there (see for further details: Crul 2013).

Partly as a result of the differences between the countries described above, the size of the group of successful professionals traced in the TIES survey using the definition of the two top levels in the EGP coding scheme, varies between the cities in the four countries compared (Table 1). The group is largest (see row 3) in relative terms in Sweden (24 per cent) and smallest in Germany (12 per cent).

**Table 1.** Turkish second generation who left school and are working as a professional through the pathway of a higher education diploma (row 1); who work as a professional through a pathway in the labour market (row 2); total who work as a professional (row 3).

	Germany (%)	The Netherlands (%)	France (%)	Sweden (%)
Through higher education	2	11	11	18
Through labour market	10	8	7	6
Working as a professional	12	19	18	24

Source: TIES Survey Germany, The Netherlands, France and Sweden



The proportion of people either becoming successful through education or through the labour market also varies greatly according to country. The professionals in the two German cities, Berlin and Frankfurt, in the TIES survey stand out because the vast majority (83 per cent of successful professionals) does *not* have a higher education diploma, but became upwardly mobile through apprenticeships and on-the-job training (row 2, Table 1). This is in contrast to Stockholm in Sweden, where 75 per cent of the successful professionals had first earned a degree in higher education. Sweden is known for its comprehensive and open school system. The meritocratic school system does not divide children into different tracks before the age of fifteen and this allows children with scant cultural capital and family resources to reach university. The case of France is similar to that of Sweden in terms of the strong effects of a comprehensive school system. These different outcomes in the four countries affect the composition of the success group in the labour market. Hence, according to the TIES Survey, we can find many more people in a higher managerial position in France and Sweden than in Germany and the Netherlands, because many more people in France and Sweden have gained a university diploma.

If we compare these figures with those of TIES respondents of native descent in the same cities, we see that trends differ between countries. In Germany, clearly more Turkish-German respondents become successful through the labour market path compared to respondents of native descent (row 2, Table 2). In Sweden it is the other way around. Relatively more professionals of native Swedish descent become successful through the labour market path. This indicates that in Germany the problems of access for the children of immigrants lie more in education, while in Sweden they are more prominent in the labour market.

All four country cases also have their own specificities in terms of the transition to the labour market. The German system offers the most

**Table 2.** Turkish second generation and the comparison group of native descent (CG) who left school who are working as a professional through the pathway of a higher education diploma (row 1); who work as a professional through a pathway in the labour market (row 2); and total who work at a professional job (row 3).

	Germany (%)		The Netherlands (%)		France (%)		Sweden (%)	
	Turkish-German	German CG	Turkish-Dutch	Dutch CG	Turkish-French	French CG	Turkish-Swedish	Swedish CG
Through higher education	2	6	11	26	11	27	18	26
Through labour market	10	8	8	18	7	15	6	16
Working as a professional	12	14	19	44	18	42	24	42

Source: TIES Survey Germany, The Netherlands, France and Sweden

**Table 3.** Turkish second generation who left school who have a higher education diploma (row 1); who participate in the labour market and are working (row 2); and who work at a professional job level eGp 1 and 2 on a eleven point scale (row 3).

	Germany (%)	The Netherlands (%)	France (%)	Sweden (%)
Higher education	3	16	20	28
Participating and working	3	12	16	25
Working as a professional	2	11	11	18

Source: TIES Survey Germany, The Netherlands, France and Sweden

institutionalized transition to the labour market with the result that most people who obtain a higher education diploma actually gain a position at their skill level (row 3, Table 3). The contrasting case here is France, which almost entirely lacks any such institutional arrangement for a smooth transition to the labour market. People seem to be left more to their own devices when entering the labour market as there is no apprenticeship system in place. Once more the Netherlands lies somewhere in-between, with an apprenticeship system that is much less extensive than Germany's, but much more developed than that of France and Sweden. These differences translate into different employment rates (row 2 of Table 3) and also have an effect on whether or not people with a higher education degree can find employment at their skill level (row 3 of Table 3). We found the most dramatic reduction of people able to find a job at their skill level in France. One in five respondents had managed to obtain a higher education degree, but this group was then reduced by almost a quarter because some were not participating in the labour market (mostly women) while others were unemployed. The group working as a professional at EGP level 1 or 2 was further reduced because another five per cent could not find a position at their skill level.

Not surprisingly, the big differences in the proportion of second-generation Turks attaining a professional position also have consequences for the characteristics of the success group in the four countries. The successful professionals in Sweden, for instance, make up a significantly larger share of the total group of second-generation respondents and, strikingly, their background characteristics are very similar to those of the less successful TIES respondents. In Germany, the successful group is much smaller percentage-wise, but because of the much larger Turkish community their absolute numbers are still higher than in any other country, creating a significant pool of successful second-generation German Turks. However, the background characteristics of the success group here are very different from those of the less successful group. The success group is indeed a more select group, as the German school system relies so heavily on resources within families. As a result, members of the successful group more often come from families that were very supportive of education, and have parents who are significantly better educated and fluent in German than parents whose children are less successful (Crul et al. 2012; Schnell 2012).

By contrast, in Sweden the success group hardly differs in terms of these characteristics from the Turkish community as a whole.

If we compare these results again with the results of respondents of native parentage in the four countries, we see an overall trend, whereby young people from an immigrant background with a higher education degree have a much harder time finding a position at their skill level than their peers of native descent.

In France, only about half (11 per cent out of 20 per cent) of the Turkish-French respondents with a higher education diploma could find such a position, in contrast to the respondents of native descent, two-thirds of whom (42 per cent out of 62 per cent) were able to do so (Table 4). In the Netherlands, eight out of ten highly educated respondents of native descent found a position at their skill level while this was true for only six out of ten of the Turkish-Dutch respondents.

### Professionals in corporate law, corporate business and the education sector whose parents migrated from Turkey: the ELITES qualitative research design

In this special issue we focus on the qualitative findings of the ELITES project. The project team interviewed a total of 189 people in Stockholm, Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris and the Randstad area (Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague). The interviews with these respondents form the core part of the articles in this special issue. To avoid repetition throughout the different articles we will describe the sample of the research project in this introductory article in more detail. Table 5 shows the distribution of the respondents between the four countries and five cities.

We interviewed more male than female respondents due to the over-representation of males in high-ranking positions, especially in the business

**Table 4.** Turkish second generation and the comparison group of native descent (CG) who left school who have a higher education diploma (row 1); who participate in the labour market and are working (row 2); and who work at a professional job level EGP 1 and 2 on a eleven point scale (row 3).

	Germany (%)		The Netherlands (%)		France (%)		Sweden (%)	
	Turkish-German	German CG	Turkish-Dutch	Dutch CG	Turkish-French	French CG	Turkish-Swedish	Swedish CG
Higher education	3	18	16	55	20	62	28	62
Participating and working	3	17	12	54	16	57	25	56
Working as a professional at their skill level	2	14	11	44	11	42	18	42

Source: TIES Survey Germany, The Netherlands, France and Sweden

**Table 5.** Respondents ELITES project per sector, per city.

	Corporate law sector		Corporate business sector		Education sector		Total
	Respondents with parents born in Turkey	Respondents with parents born in Europe	Respondents with parents born in Turkey	Respondents with parents born in Europe	Respondents with parents born in Turkey	Respondents with parents born in Europe	
Frankfurt	9	1	10	3	9	0	32
Berlin	7	2	7	3	10	4	33
Randstad Area	5	2	16	5	16	5	49
Paris	9	3	12	7	8	5	44
Stockholm	9	1	8	1	8	4	31
Total	39	9	54	18	51	18	189

**Table 6.** Respondents with parents born in Turkey: educational level of the father.

Father	Primary school at the most	Secondary school	Post-secondary education	Missing	Total
Berlin	16	6	0	2	24
Frankfurt	17	5	5	1	28
Paris	15	3	1	10	29
Stockholm	13	6	2	4	25
Randstad	18	13	3	3	37

Source: ELITES, pathways to success

sector. We chose to interview people over 25, but the bulk of the respondents were between 30 and 45 years old (Table A1 in the appendix). We intentionally selected people from low-educated families, and as Tables 6 and 7 show, this means most of the respondents had parents who had not been educated past primary school level.

In contrast to this, the respondents had, on average, attained a very high level of education (Table 8). This is especially the case for respondents in the law sector, all of whom had obtained a university degree, usually with high grades. The respondents in the business sector showed the largest variation in educational degrees. Some only had a high school diploma and a considerable group had gone to a university of applied science and obtained a BA, rather than an MA from a research university. In the education sector, it is also common to have a diploma from a university of applied science, especially in the Netherlands, where teacher training courses are held in universities of applied science.

**Table 7.** Respondents with parents born in Turkey: educational level of the mother.

Mother	Primary school at the most	Secondary school	Post-secondary education	Missing	Total
Berlin	18	3	1	2	24
Frankfurt	18	5	1	4	28
Paris	14	2	0	13	29
Stockholm	15	5	2	3	25
Randstad	29	3	1	4	37

**Table 8.** Respondents with parents born in Turkey: highest educational level respondents.

	High school	Post-secondary	University of Applied Science	University	Ph.D.	Total
Corporate law sector	0	0	0	37	2	39
Corporate business sector	4	5	4	37	1	54 (3 missing)
Education sector	1	0	8	30	0	51 (12 missing)

**Table 9.** Respondents with parents born in Turkey: type of managerial position in the corporate law sector.

	Lower managerial	Higher managerial	Not applicable	Total
Stockholm	6	2	1	9
Berlin	6	1	0	7
Frankfurt	7	1	1	9
Randstad	4	0	1	5
Paris	5	0	4	9
Total	28	4	7	39

As [Tables 9–11](#) show, our respondents hold different types of management positions. We distinguish between lower and higher managerial positions, depending on the number of people they supervise: 1–10 or more than 10. However, there is also a category consisting of people who do not supervise employees, but nonetheless occupy positions of influence within their respective sectors, such as policy-makers or professors. This category falls under “not applicable”. Also, keep in mind that since many respondents are in their early thirties, it is likely that they will work their way up to higher managerial positions in the future. The respondents in the corporate business sector most often work in higher managerial positions. Most of the respondents in the law sector are not in higher managerial positions. Most of the attorneys working at large firms are still not in a senior or partner position, and attorneys who are independent or who work in smaller firms do not supervise high numbers of employees. The respondents in the business sector are, on average, somewhat older (see [Table A1](#) in the [Appendix](#))

**Table 10.** Respondents with parents born in Turkey: type of managerial position in the corporate business sector.

	Lower managerial	Higher managerial	Not applicable	Total
Stockholm	0	7	1	8
Berlin	0	6	1	7
Frankfurt	2	6	2	10
Randstad	2	14	0	16
Paris	3	8	1	12
Total	7	41	5	53

**Table 11.** Respondents with parents born in Turkey: type of managerial position in the education sector.

	Lower managerial	Higher managerial	Not applicable	Total
Stockholm	3	2	3	8
Berlin	1	3	6	10
Frankfurt	4	3	2	9
Randstad	5	7	4	16
Paris	2	0	4	6
Total	15	15	19	49

which also explains some of the variation. In the education sector the category “not applicable” is significant, because it includes policy-makers, consultants and the like. Although they do not necessarily have a managerial function, they do exert influence.

Our sample allows us to make two types of comparisons in this special issue: across countries and across sectors, which allows us to compare social mobility pathways within and between sectors. By looking at people whose parents were born in the same country and who had the same starting position (all respondents being born in Europe), we will scrutinize the importance of the receiving country context. By looking at the same three sectors in these countries and comparing people in similar functions, we can make the comparison more precise. What are the differences and similarities between the experiences of corporate lawyers (whose parents were all born in Turkey) in Paris compared to their peers in Frankfurt, Stockholm or Amsterdam? Did they follow similar educational pathways? Do they have comparable strategies to climb the corporate ladder? Do they face similar barriers?

## Overview of articles

The first article by Elif Keskiner and Maurice Crul (Keskiner and Crul, [in press](#)) draws on a comparison of the upcoming elite across three labour market sectors in Paris. Researchers have written about the importance of the country or city context in explaining outcomes for children of immigrants. In this article, the two authors add to this complexity the impact of typical institutional arrangements in the three sectors that are compared in this special issue: corporate law, the corporate business sector and the education sector. Comparing the social trajectories of the professionals, the article illustrates how these sectors, or *fields*, to use Bourdieu’s term, have their own logic and formal and informal rules of engagements, which make them more or less open to newcomers to the field. Analysing the strategies of the respondents, the article reveals varying forms of capital deemed significant by the respondents for accessing positions in the respective sectors. For example, while social capital is considered an important resource in each sector, the way in which it functions varies across professions. Educational capital, especially access to elite education institutions (*Grandes Écoles*), is more crucial in the corporate business sector than in law and the education sector. This reveals the sector-specific structures that allow or deny access to high-ranking positions. The article also serves as an introduction to the approach used in this special issue to compare outcomes in these three sectors across different countries.

The article comparing the outcomes in the three labour market sectors in Paris is followed by three articles, each looking at a single labour market sector across three or four countries. Although they each take a different focus, the

first two articles both examine significant support and network contacts as important explaining factors for successfully entering into the labour market and for climbing the ladder to leading positions in the corporate law and business sector respectively. The third article looks at the influence that people in leading positions assert in the educational field.

Sara Rezai, the author of the article on professionals working in the law sector, portrays four attorneys in Stockholm, Paris and Frankfurt who practice corporate law (Rezai, [in press](#)). Of the three sectors under study the social rules in the corporate law sector are most strongly articulated. Rezai gives an overview of the social support mechanisms that were an important aid, helping the respondents to become successful in this sector. Many researchers have described support mechanisms for children of immigrants in school. The focus in the labour market has mainly been on exclusion and discrimination. In contrast to this, Rezai describes the mechanisms that help people to succeed. Significant others have assisted them in three ways: by being a mentor, by contributing to finding jobs and by helping them to comprehend the rules of the game. Besides social support mechanisms she also observes how processes of social hindrance can influence the careers of our successful attorneys. However, this does not necessarily have to be a negative influence. When confronted with social hindrance our participants modified their paths, while continuing their upward mobility process.

In his article, Ali Konyali examines the effect of the national and international context on success among business professionals (Konyali, [in press](#)). Konyali compares professionals in Stockholm, Frankfurt, Paris and the Randstad metropolitan area in the Netherlands. He analyses how the respondents entered the corporate business sector and climbed the ladder to leading positions. Konyali distinguishes three ideal types of career paths. In the first, respondents ended up working for international firms. For these people the national context was important when entering the labour market and gaining a first position, but increasingly declined in importance. The mechanisms important for climbing the ladder in international firms show many similarities across national contexts. The second ideal type is represented by people for whose work the national context remains important. National peculiarities play a key role in the opportunities and investments needed in order to climb the ladder. Some respondents in the countries studied, however, have managed to carve out their own niche within the firm (often in relation to the population with a background in Turkey or the Turkish market itself). Lastly, there are people whose opportunities for promotion have been blocked. The reasons for their blocked opportunities vary across national contexts but what they have in common is that they see starting their own business as an option and some have indeed gained success working as independent professionals.

Isminha Waldring, who studies the education sector, describes the reasons that motivate people to work in the education sector and the possibilities for



changing or influencing practices and policies in the sector (Waldring, [in press](#)). She does this comparatively in Stockholm, Paris and the Randstad metropolitan area in the Netherlands. The motivation to work in the sector – largely formulated as idealistic and aimed at giving children a better chance in education – is very similar across the three national contexts. The type of influence that people can assert varies and is strongly linked to how education is organized and at what level one can intervene in educational practices and policies. Waldring takes the “wicked problem” of school segregation as a powerful example to compare the type of influence people in leading positions can assert in this sector. In the centralized and bureaucratic system in France, the influence of actors at the school level is very limited. In the Netherlands, however, the decentralized school system and the opportunity to start one’s own school with public funding offer much more opportunity to influence educational practices. In Sweden, there seems to be more opportunities to influence practices in activities outside of the school system in self-organizations that aim to help to overcome some of the negative effects of school segregation.

In the fifth article, we shift the focus to professional organizations (Vermeulen, [in press](#)). The authors of the previous articles already underscored the importance of networks. The new upcoming elite often lacks the relevant network contacts they need to move up in their career. A new phenomenon we came across in our study are professional network organizations of the new upcoming elite. This article looks at the function of these organizations for the upcoming elite both in terms of bridging and bonding capital. The network organizations seem to be operating as bonding organization connecting like-minded individuals. It offers young professionals of immigrant origin a safe place where can encounter each other but also where they can exchange experiences and build new network contacts. Primarily these organizations aim to help their members to advance their professional networks by providing an environment where they can promote themselves and improve their skills. Furthermore, the organizations also assume a social goal, reaching out to support the younger generations of descendants of migrants and other vulnerable youth by serving as role models and offering both mentorship and access to networks

The last article is designed as an overview by the editors of this special issue, Maurice Crul and Elif Keskiner, with Jens Schneider and Frans Lelie acting as their co-authors (Crul, Kesinker, et al., [in press](#)). The authors describe what selecting on the dependent variable, the method used in this special issue, has brought in terms of new insights for the theoretical debate on social mobility. What are the conditions that make success in a society or sector possible? Looking at the routes people have pursued, the barriers they describe and how they have overcome them, gives new insights into the mechanisms of steep upward mobility in different professional sectors

and varying local and national settings. The authors have identified a phenomenon that they coin the *multiplier effect*. This describes how successful children of immigrants make more efforts and make more use of opportunities and loopholes in the system than their peers of native descent. Another element of the *multiplier effect* looks like self-propelled mobility. The authors argue that the steep upward social mobility of the respondents, especially in the latter part of their educational career and entry into the labour market, is to be explained by factors that are related to the pathways of the climbers themselves, independent of family resources. Each and every successful step in the career of these steep climbers seems to have a snowball effect, bringing new possibilities on which they build, thereby accumulating cultural and social capital and multiplying their chances of success. Over time initially small differences in their pathway generate larger and larger effects which generate an increasingly wider gap with less successful peers. Cultural and social capital theories primarily explain the reproduction of inequalities in society. The multiplier effect explains the breaking of the perpetual cycle of this reproduction, enabling steep upward mobility even when this group does not initially possess the right cultural and social capital to be successful. The possibilities that arise and the opportunities that are taken up are different in each country and each sector. The authors therefore stress the importance of contextual factors in explaining differences between countries and labour market sectors regarding the pace and extent of success.

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## Appendix

**Table 1.** Table A1. Respondents of Turkish descent of the ELITES study divided up in five age cohorts.

	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	41 and above	Missing
Corporate law sector	1	5	12	11	9	1
Corporate business sector	0	3	12	10	23	5
Education Sector	2	2	10	4	23	10

**Table 1.** Table A2. Respondents of native descent of the ELITES study divided up in five age cohorts.

	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	41 and above	Missing
Corporate law sector	0	0	1	1	2	2
Corporate business sector	2	1	3	3	2	8
Education Sector	0	0	1	4	6	7