Understanding the pathways to success of Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second-generation professionals is what lies at the heart of this thesis. These pathways to success are, throughout the chapters of this thesis, analyzed at the intersection of various social boundaries in Dutch society and organizations on the one hand, and boundary strategies employed by second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals in the workplace on the other. This analysis at the intersection of social boundaries in the workplace and boundary strategies employed by second-generation professionals is reflected in the main research question, which is posed in the introduction of this thesis:

How are social boundaries opening up for and being opened up by second-generation professionals in the workplace?

The relevance of this question is embedded in a societal context in which the integration —meaning the process of increasing participation of the second generation on all levels of Dutch society (CBS, 2012), of the Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second generation is, in general, regarded as failed (cf. Slootman & Duyvendak, 2015). The resulting discourse of failed integration has led to an increased call for assimilation whereby the second generation is required to make a zero-sum choice between ethnic identities in order to be able to fully incorporate the norms and values of the Netherlands, and in turn, to become incorporated in Dutch society (cf. Vasta, 2007, p. 734).

The call for assimilation, and its enforced choice between ethnic identities, is a reflection of the impermeable, bright social boundaries that are in place between ethnic groups in Dutch society. Social boundaries are socially constructed group lines, created to demarcate social and cultural differences between groups in society based on certain characteristics, such as ethnic background (Barth, 1994; Wimmer, 2008a). These social and cultural differences

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12 Dutch-born descendants of labour migrants from Turkey and Morocco.
serve to canalize social life in terms of who belongs within the boundary lines and who doesn’t (Barth, 1969).

The canalization of social life through social boundaries takes place in multiple and varying social fields (Wimmer, 2008b, p. 992). In this thesis, the focus lies on one specific social field: the workplace. The workplace is a highly applicable field to study social boundaries, since organizations can be seen as extensions of society and social boundaries that exist in society are therefore oftentimes reflected in organizations (Holvino & Kamp, 2009, p. 400; Slay & Smith, 2011, p. 86).

Looking at how social boundaries in Dutch society are reflected in the workplace requires us to take into consideration that the character of social boundaries varies. This variation in how social boundaries are constructed makes certain social boundaries more flexible and inclusive, while others are more impermeable and therefore excluding. The latter are called “bright boundaries” (Alba, 2005), and the chapters in this thesis depart from the premise that social boundaries in the Netherlands vis-à-vis the Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second generation are bright. This brightness of social boundaries in the Netherlands implies that in Dutch society a clear distinction is made about who belongs within the boundary lines and who doesn’t. Bright boundaries can therefore easily act to exclude and negatively affect “the processes by which individuals gain access to the opportunities afforded the majority” (Ibid., p. 22), or at least drive the Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second generation to make a zero-sum choice to become either someone on the inside of the boundary line, or outside of it.

The zero-sum choice that the Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second-generation is required to make in the Dutch context of bright social boundaries touches upon the fact that one can engage with social boundaries, since social boundaries do not have to be taken for granted as fixed, natural entities but instead are created structures (Wimmer, 2008b, p. 995). This
engagement can be done in several ways. Alba (2005) and Wimmer (2008a) use a typology of boundary-related strategies which is made up of three options: boundary crossing, boundary shifting and boundary blurring. Boundary crossing refers to an individual membership changing strategy (Ibid., p. 1044), whereby a person is allowed within the boundary lines at the expense of leaving behind the membership of the group on the outside of the boundary. Boundary crossing is usually linked to bright boundaries, where the zero-sum choice has to be made by the individual, and the characteristics of the boundary lines, in terms of being impermeable and exclusive, do not change.

In the case of boundary shifting, the character of the boundary line doesn’t necessarily change either, but the topography of the boundary does, meaning that the boundary lines can either expand to include new groups within the boundary, or contract to exclude groups that previously belonged within the boundary (Ibid.). In either case, boundary shifting addresses boundary alterations on a group-level and therefore, as a strategy, appears to be unsuitable for individuals to undertake.

Boundary blurring seems to be the option where the character of the boundary lines is altered, not just to include certain people or certain groups, but on the level of the boundary itself. Wimmer (Ibid.) classifies boundary blurring as the strategy that changes the meaning of the boundary instead of just its location or memberships. As with boundary shifting, boundary blurring addresses boundary alterations on a group level. But other than boundary shifting, boundary blurring takes away the “brightness” of a boundary and allows for people to be both on the inside and on the outside of the boundary lines. “This could mean that individuals are seen as simultaneously members of the groups on both sides of the boundary or that sometimes they appear to be members of one and at other times members of the other” (Alba, 2005, p. 25).

At first sight, the most obvious strategy for second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals to engage with bright social
boundaries in the workplace would seem to be the strategy of boundary crossing. Both because it fits best in the context of bright boundaries, and because shifting and blurring, as they have been theorized, refer to large-scale group-processes and they therefore appear unsuitable for individuals to undertake. However, boundary crossing “requires a breaking of many ties to the group of origin and the assumption of a high degree of risk of failure [makes] it unlikely to be undertaken by large numbers, even in the second generation” (Alba, 2005, p. 26). The high degree of risk of failure pertains to the fact that even when one decides to cross a social boundary, one can still remain some sort of outsider within the new group (Ibid.), and this risk could be especially salient for second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals, as they are considered to come from, and are therefore associated with, the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in the Netherlands (cf. Heath, Rothon & Kilpi, 2008). Boundary crossing therefore doesn’t appear to be an attractive option for second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals to engage with bright social boundaries in the workplace.

In the four empirical chapters of the thesis, of which the first two are based on the qualitative Dutch study ‘Pathways to Success Project’ and the second two on the qualitative international-comparative ‘ELITES project’, it is explored, given the premise that boundary crossing is indeed an unattractive and therefore an unlikely strategy to choose, what boundary strategy has been employed by second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals in order to become successful in engaging with bright social boundaries in the workplace.

The chapter ‘The fine art of boundary sensitivity’ revolves around the central question of what strategies highly-educated Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals apply to gain entrance to and succeed in the Dutch labour market. The chapter shows, based on 114 semi-structured interviews with second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch
professionals working in a variety of professional fields in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, how social boundaries are particularly bright during the transition from higher education to the labour market, and how second-generation professionals develop several coping strategies to gain access to organizations. The chapter furthermore explores how social boundaries remain bright for second-generation professionals once they have gained access to organizations, for instance in the form of experiencing subtle discrimination, and how their coping strategies turn into a distinct boundary strategy, which has been labelled ‘boundary sensitivity’. This strategy of boundary sensitivity points to an awareness by the second generation that boundaries exist, and it is an individual strategy, like boundary crossing. Yet, the distinguishing aspect of boundary sensitivity, in relation to boundary crossing, is that the highly-educated second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals do not make a zero-sum choice between ethnic identifications, but rather emphasize their “sameness” (Siebers, 2009a) through their professional identification at work to cross boundary lines, while keeping their ethnic and religious “difference” (Ibid.) mostly private but intact to avoid assimilation.

In the chapter ‘Discrimination of second-generation professionals in leadership positions’, which is based on a subsample from the Pathways to Success Project consisting of 40 second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals that work in leadership positions in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the focus lies on one particular social boundary that was generally addressed in the previous chapter: subtle discrimination. The central question in this chapter is how second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals working in leadership positions experience and deal with subtle discrimination in different organizational relationships – such as with supervisors, co-managers and subordinates – within an organization. The shift in focus to the particular social boundary of subtle discrimination and second-generation professionals working in leadership positions makes this the bridging
chapter between the Pathways to Success Project (containing Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second-generation professionals in various positions in the labour market) and the ELITES project (containing the second generation with parents from Turkey in leadership positions). In this chapter it is argued that the bright social boundaries that exist in Dutch society in relation to the Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second generation are mirrored in organizations in the form of subtle discrimination at various organizational levels—of supervisors, same-level colleagues and subordinates. And that second-generation agency in the form of boundary sensitivity, albeit limited, is used for forms of small-scale boundary changes in organizations.

The focus on small-scale boundary changes is further explored in the chapter ‘Practices of change in the education sector’. In this chapter, based on semi-structured interviews with 25 second-generation professionals with parents from Turkey in the Netherlands, Sweden and France, the emphasis lies on changing social boundaries in one particular organizational field: the education sector. I have taken the example of ethnic school segregation as a “wicked problem”. This social boundary of ethnic school segregation shows a strong interdependence with other social boundaries, such as residential segregation and free school choice. The exact nature of these social boundaries varies across countries. Therefore, different national contexts are included in the analysis, allowing for a cross-country comparison of how the social boundary of ethnic school segregation is to be understood and how second-generation professionals working in the education sector are able to shape outcomes concerning ethnic school segregation, taking the different national characteristics of the sector into consideration. The chapter shows that agency is conditional because of the fixed structural boundaries of the education sector. Simultaneously, second-generation professionals use their awareness of the nation-specific structures of ethnic school segregation, in combination with their professional knowledge of the education system and their positionality as
second-generation social climbers. Through this combination of knowledge of the sector and its possibilities and limitations towards change, and their position as second generation with knowledge of multiple cultural repertoires and a drive for educational change, second-generation education professionals apply in their organization on a group-level small-scale practices of change that are guided by the specific opportunities offered by the national context.

Based on the findings in the previous chapter on how second-generation professionals use their positionality as second-generation professionals to bring about change in the education sector, the chapter ‘The ability to deal with difference’ further explores this “newcomer” positionality, and how it plays out in the ethnically homogeneous upper echelons of the Dutch education sector, in which second-generation professionals form a very small minority. The chapter, based on 16 semi-structured interviews with second-generation Turkish-Dutch education professionals, revolves around the central question how second-generation Turkish-Dutch professionals working in the education sector experience in-betweenness at work, and how they act upon these experiences?, and it departs from the notion that the second generation, based on their ethnic-minority background in the migration country, has long been considered a group “in-between” cultures, and therefore not belonging anywhere or able to reach their full potential. And that this in-between position is exacerbated for these professionals, since they are new to the upper echelons of the education sector and stem from a marginalized ethnic and religious group. The chapter unravels how instead of being stuck in-between ethnic and social cultures, the newcomer position of second-generation education professionals enables them to actively “go-between” cultural repertoires. This ability to “go-between” cultural repertoires is considered to be both an advantage and growing necessity in the increasingly super-diverse Dutch classrooms, and it is conceptually better suited than “in-betweenness” to describe the position of second-generation professionals.
The findings of the four empirical chapters have been tied together in the ‘Discussion and Conclusion’ through the ‘Upward Mobility Boundary Sensitivity Model’ in order to provide an answer to the main research question of this thesis. I argue in this final chapter that Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second-generation professionals experience bright social boundaries in the workplace because the ethnic and religious stereotypes that are persistent in Dutch society and that revolve around ethnic minorities with an Islamic background especially (Vasta, 2007), reverberate in conversations and interactions in the workplace (cf. Van Laer & Janssens, 2011) between second-generation professionals and co-workers of ethnic-Dutch descent from all organizational levels. Simultaneously, I also argue that it is precisely their ethnic and religious and social class background which equips second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals to successfully engage with bright social boundaries in the workplace. Growing up in the Netherlands in an ethnic-minority family has given these second-generation professionals access to multiple and divergent cultural repertoires: throughout their educational trajectory and in everyday life they have been socialized in the Dutch context (“sameness”), while they also have cultural knowledge of their parental countries (“difference”). Juggling these diverse cultural repertoires can be, and sometimes has been, a challenge for these second-generation professionals. Yet, in return, these cultural repertoires offer second-generation professionals the ability to successfully engage with bright social boundaries in the workplace by allowing them to use various constellations of “sameness” and “difference” strategies.

These various constellations arise from second-generation professionals switching between “sameness” and “difference” strategies when they engage with social boundaries in organizations, depending on whether they engage with social boundaries in the context of the advancement of their career, the protection of their identity in the workplace, or their wish and drive for social
change in their organization or organizational field (cf. Van Laer & Janssens, 2017).

The involvement of second-generation professionals with social boundaries in organizations starts as an individual career-level boundary strategy. Second-generation professionals encounter social boundaries when they attempt to enter organizations, climb the organizational ladder, and gain acceptance by co-workers, and they act upon these social boundaries by portraying “sameness”. “Sameness” as a career-level strategy entails aspects of boundary crossing and boundary blurring since second-generation professionals emphasize their professional identity over their ethnic and religious identities to find the necessary common ground with co-workers of ethnic-Dutch descent and thereby manage to gain entry into organizations. Yet, despite the fact that it grants second-generation professionals access to high-level positions in organizations, “sameness” fails to change the meaning, and therefore the brightness, of social boundaries in organizations.

The fact that “sameness” doesn’t alter the brightness of social boundaries in organizations implies that second-generation professionals are faced with continuous lack of acceptance by co-workers of ethnic-Dutch descent on all organizational levels, ranging from supervisors, to same-level colleagues and subordinates alike. This lack of acceptance takes various shapes and forms, but it usually revolves around the ethnic and religious background of second-generation professionals.

When second-generation professionals attempt to protect their ethnic and religious identity in the workplace, they do so through the portrayal of “difference”. Through “difference” second-generation professionals explicitly discuss -and thereby resist- stereotypical assumptions concerning their ethnicity and Islamic religion, and exclusionary behaviours by co-workers that follow from these assumptions. Through the discussion of stereotypes, second-generation professionals embed their experiences in the workplace in the broader context
of stereotypes that exist in society in large. By making the combination between the organization and society, and between their individual experiences and the mostly negative perceptions and ideas about ethnic minorities in general (Vasta, 2007; Ghorashi, 2014a), second-generation professionals portrayal of “difference” challenges ethnic-Dutch co-workers to consider their remarks and behaviours towards second-generation professionals in a broader context of exclusion, in which “difference” is positioned on the outside of the boundary lines because it is considered deviant from the “ideal” or norm employee (cf. Acker, 1992; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Gowricharn, 2002; Van der Raad, 2015). Through positioning “difference” in a broader context, second-generation professionals transfer the “difference” strategy from the protection of the identity-level to the level of social change. In this context of the social change-level, “difference” entails elements of boundary shifting (Alba, 2005; cf. Wimmer, 2008a). Second-generation professionals hereby attempt to change the topography of the boundary (cf. Wimmer, 2008a) by challenging the implicit rules about who belongs-and who is therefore fully accepted, with the inclusion of their different ethnic or religious background- within the organizational boundary lines.

This switching between “sameness” and “difference” amounts to -what I have coined- the strategy of “boundary sensitivity”, which is an individual and contextual strategy that incorporates elements of boundary crossing, blurring and shifting. The strategy of boundary sensitivity offers a viable strategy towards the sharp and bright boundary lines that continue to affect second-generation professionals in the form of boundary making in organizations. Through “sameness” boundary sensitivity makes room for the introduction of second-generation professional “newcomers” in organizational positions of influence and power. While simultaneously, through “difference”, boundary sensitivity can challenge the implicit normalcy of social boundaries in organizations.
The strategy of boundary sensitivity has the potential to open up social boundaries in the workplace because second-generation professionals do not make a zero-sum choice between “sameness” and “difference” (cf. Slootman & Duyvendak, 2015), but because they actively and intentionally switch between and thereby employ both “sameness and difference” in order to engage with social boundaries on the career-, identity- and social change-level. This employment of “sameness and difference” on three levels does not result in a straightforward process of social boundaries being opened up in the workplace by second-generation professionals. Rather, the ways in which second-generation professionals employ “sameness” and “difference”, that is through including elements of boundary crossing, blurring and shifting (Alba, 2005; Wimmer, 2008a) when they engage with impermeable, bright boundaries in the workplace, can amount to both a perpetuation and an opening up of social boundaries in organizations (cf. Van Laer & Janssens, 2017).