Chapter 1

Introduction
‘There are barriers. I see that so clearly in my organization. And if you do not acknowledge these barriers, colleagues push you out of the group. So, what do I do? I play along, but only to a certain extent. I put on some sort of mask, but I always stay true to myself as well. For instance, people at work know that I’m religious, but do I express my religious beliefs openly? No, I don’t. If people ask me, I will always truthfully tell them that I’m a Muslim. And colleagues know that I won’t accept any stupid jokes about Turks and Islam. It’s all about striking a balance. I’m Turkish and I’m Dutch, and this combination works for me.’

(Second-generation Turkish-Dutch corporate lawyer, female, interviewed for the Pathways to Success Project)

For many people in the Netherlands, should they read the above mentioned quote, one of the most distinctive marks would be that the lawyer in question is Turkish-Dutch. The quote shows that the second generation – the descendants born of immigrant parentage in the country of migration encounters many barriers in the workplace because of their ethnic background but they handle it with great care and are strategic about confronting it. These barriers are partly based on stereotypes towards the second generation, which are mirrored in the general discourse on ethnic minorities and the second generation in the Netherlands. A discourse which is imbued with the notion of failed integration, as the second generation –and especially those with a Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch background - are considered being a predominantly low-educated group who has failed to adjust to the norms and values of Dutch society. The combination of having a second-generation Turkish-Dutch background and being a highly-educated professional working in a prestigious corporate Law firm therefore does not fit the average image of the second generation in the Dutch context.

1 Original quote in Dutch. Translated by the author.
There are however, next to the above mentioned lawyer, numerous other exceptions to refute the stereotype of the second generation as predominantly low-educated. Increasing numbers of the second generation are going through higher education and establishing themselves as professionals in the labour market. This successful group of second-generation professionals is hardly mentioned in the public discourse on ethnic minorities. Moreover, the combination of having a second-generation background and working as a highly-educated professional in the Dutch labour market also points to a noticeable gap in education and occupational attainment between this segment of the second-generation and their parents, who in majority came to the Netherlands during the 1960’s and 1970’s as low-educated and low-skilled labour migrants. This gap, in combination with a generally negative attitude in Dutch society towards ethnic minorities, begs the question how these second-generation professionals have succeeded against the odds.

In this thesis, the pathways to success of second-generation professionals will be highlighted. These pathways firstly pose a much-needed antidote to the many negatives images that exist about the second generation in the Netherlands. What’s more, these pathways can also shed light on how second-generation professionals, against the backdrop of a society which is dominated by negative stereotypes towards ethnic minorities, experience barriers in the workplace and how they consequently engage with these barriers.

The dominant discourse of failed integration

The educational and labour market pathways of the second generation are oftentimes problematized in migration countries throughout Western-Europe (Heath, Rothon & Kilpi, 2008). The Netherlands is no exception. Dutch public discourse revolving around the second generation is predominantly negative. Especially the second generation with a Muslim background are considered
problematic, because of their religion which is believed to be at odds with the Dutch liberal attitude (Vasta, 2007, p. 714; Foner & Alba, 2008, p. 369; Phalet, Maliepaard, Fleishmann & Güngör, 2013) and because of various societal issues, such as residential segregation, school-dropout, unemployment, poverty and delinquency (CBS, 2012; SCP, 2014). Moreover, the second generation with parents from Morocco and especially Turkey are considered to be among the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in the Netherlands concerning education, labour market access and occupational attainment (Heath et al., 2008, pp. 228-229).

The before-mentioned societal issues are part of the overarching theme of integration. When taking a closer look at what integration means, namely the process of increasing participation of migrants and their offspring on all levels of Dutch society (CBS, 2012), the general consensus in the Netherlands is one in which integration has failed (Vasta, 2007; Van Reekum & Duyvendak, 2012). This dominant discourse of failed integration has, over the years, become more and more a call for assimilation (Ghorashi, 2006; Vasta, 2007; Slootman & Duyvendak, 2015). This call for assimilation refers to a compulsory process of complete incorporation of migrants and the second generation into the norms and values of the Netherlands (Vasta, 2007, p. 734). A demand for complete incorporation into the dominant culture exposes deep fault lines in Dutch society, whereby migrants and the second generation are required to make a zero-sum choice between ethnic identities in order to belong in the Netherlands. This enforced choice creates impermeable, bright social boundaries (cf. Alba, 2005) between ethnic groups in Dutch society.
Social boundaries in the workplace: ‘There are barriers. I see that so clearly in my organization.’

Social boundaries are (ethnic) group lines that demarcate social and cultural differences between groups and they serve to canalize social life in terms of who belongs within the boundary lines and who doesn’t (Barth, 1969). The nature of social boundaries varies, and “in turn, the nature of the boundary effects fundamentally the processes by which individuals gain access to the opportunities afforded the majority” (Alba, 2005, p. 22): some social boundaries are more flexible and therefore inclusive, while others are more impermeable and therefore excluding. The latter are called “bright boundaries” (Ibid., p. 22). Bright boundaries make the clearest distinction about who belongs within the boundary lines and who doesn’t, since “the distinction involved is unambiguous, so that individuals know at all times which side of the boundary line they are on” (Ibid., p. 22). Bright boundaries can therefore easily act to exclude, or at least drive individuals to make a zero-sum choice to become either someone on the inside of the boundary line, or outside of it.

When it comes to the nature of social boundaries based on ethnic distinctions, the basic assumption in this thesis is that social boundaries in the Netherlands are bright. Terms like ‘autochtoon’ and ‘allochtoon’, which are commonly and extensively used for people of native Dutch parentage on the one hand, and for migrants and the second generation on the other, are among the most obvious examples of a bright boundary: a person cannot be both and it is impossible to become autochtoon when one hasn’t been born in the Netherlands or even when one has been born in the Netherlands, like the second generation, but at least one of the parents was born abroad. Moreover, the common usage of these terms exposes a wry paradox: dominant discourse requires migrants and the second generation to make a zero-sum choice.
between ethnicities in favour of the Dutch one, while migrants and the second
generation can never become an *autochtoon*.

The terms ‘*autochtoon*’ and ‘*allochtoon*’ not only portray that boundaries
between ethnic groups in the Netherlands are bright. They also show that
boundaries are social constructs, since these terms were created to make
distinctions between people based on their ethnic background, demarcating –
based on certain constructed criteria - who belongs on the inside and who
belongs on the outside of the boundary (Barth, 1994; Wimmer, 2008a). These
distinctions are not neutral; they involve a hierarchy, whereby *autochtoon* is set
and seen as the norm and *allochtoon* refers to the eternal “other” who can
never become the norm. This creation of a hierarchy between *autochtoon* as
the norm and *allochtoon* as the “other” touches upon power dynamics in the
drawing of boundary lines (Barth, 1969). These power dynamics portray that
those with the power to draw boundary lines “choose that level of ethnic
distinction that will best support their claim to prestige, moral worth, and
political power” (Wimmer, 2008b, p. 1007), thereby depicting *allochtonen* “not
only as absolutely different but also as morally inferior” (Ghorashi, 2014b, p. 59;
cf. Essed & Trienekens, 2008; cf. Ossenkop, Vinkenburg, Jansen & Ghorashi,
2015).

The bright social boundary, on the basis of which ethnic groups in the
Netherlands are differentiated, therefore poses a double distinction: that of
being the “other” and of being inferior to the norm. Employees with an ethnic-
minority background show an awareness of these bright social boundaries by
placing emphasis on their professional “sameness” in the workplace in order to
find acceptance among co-workers of ethnic-majority descent (Siebers, 2009a;
cf. De Jong, 2012; Slootman, 2014; Konyali, 2014). This emphasis on professional
“sameness” goes hand in hand with a de-emphasis of ethnic “difference” in the
workplace, and it is a reflection of the implicit organizational norm of
assimilation that favours “sameness” over equality, and tolerates the “other” as
long as the organizational norm of assimilation is left intact (Puwar, 2004; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Van den Broek, 2009; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013).

**Agency: ‘So, what do I do? I play along, but only to a certain extent.’**

Understanding that social boundaries are created structures means that these boundaries do not have to be taken for granted as fixed, natural entities (Wimmer, 2008b, p. 995). According to Giddens (1984), structures both constrain and enable action. Structures constrain when they are taken for granted, seen as a given and are therefore unequivocally reproduced. But structures can also enable action.

The possibility of action refers to the concept of “agency”. Agency can be defined in a variety of ways, depending on how it is theorized (Kockelman, 2007, p. 387). Moreover, having agency comes in degrees (Ibid.) and it can have unintended and even diametrical effects (Van Laer & Janssens, 2017), and it is therefore not something one altogether ‘has’ or ‘hasn’t’. In this thesis, having agency involves having knowledge of the existence of structures, such as social boundaries, in combination with the tools and willingness to challenge these structures. In other words, agency refers to the capacity “to act otherwise” than inadvertently reproducing social boundaries (Giddens, 1984, p. 12). First generation migrants might be inclined to take social boundaries in the migration country as a given, partly because they lack the required knowledge of the structures of which social boundaries are made up. However, it can be expected that the Moroccan-Dutch and Turkish-Dutch second generation, born and socialized in the Netherlands, have the knowledge and potential to question, engage with, and challenge social boundaries (Alba, 2005, p. 21).

Engaging with and challenging boundaries can be done in several ways. Alba (Ibid., p. 23) uses a typology of boundary-related strategies, which is made up of
three options: boundary crossing, boundary shifting, and boundary blurring. “Boundary crossing corresponds to the classic version of individual-level assimilation” (Ibid., p. 23), and it is a boundary-related strategy that fits well in the context of bright boundaries. Wimmer (2008a) has elaborated on the boundary strategy typologies of crossing, blurring and shifting. In his “taxonomy of boundary-making strategies” (p. 1044), Wimmer classifies boundary crossing as a membership changing strategy. Boundary crossing refers to an individual boundary strategy, 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 a zero-sum choice has to be made, and the boundary lines themselves, in principle, do not change. The risk involved in boundary crossing is that a person who is forced to make a zero-sum choice in order to belong within the boundary lines, can lose the connection to the (ethnic) group outside of the boundary, while remaining unsure whether he or she will ever be truly accepted within the group on the inside of the boundary lines (Alba, 2005, p. 23).

Boundary shifting, according to Alba (Ibid.), refers to the situation in which boundary lines are expanded to include people who were previously on the outside of the boundary lines. Wimmer (2008a) adds to this classification by stating that boundary shifting is a strategy that changes the topography of the boundary, but this change can concern both the expansion and the contraction of boundary lines. In other words, boundary shifting can lead to a broader inclusion of who belongs within the boundary lines, but it might also lead to a narrower definition of who belongs and who doesn’t. In general, boundary shifting addresses boundary alterations on a group level. It requires that both those within and those outside the boundary lines accept the changing topography of the boundary.

The third option, boundary blurring, seems to be the option where the actual boundary lines are 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).

Boundary shifting and boundary blurring, as they have been theorized, refer to large-scale group-processes. These boundary-related strategies therefore appear to be unsuitable for individuals to undertake. Moreover, in the case of boundary shifting, although it can occur and has occurred, “it is premature to look for boundary shifts involving contemporary immigrant groups and the ethnic majorities in their societies” (Alba, 2005, pp. 23-24). In the same vein, boundary blurring isn’t probable to occur either in the Dutch context with its call for assimilation, since one of the conditions for blurring boundaries is a societal context which “allow[s] for the incorporation of cultural elements brought by immigrant groups” (Ibid., p. 25). It could therefore be presumed that boundary crossing, especially in the Dutch context of bright social boundaries, is the most probable strategy, compared to shifting and blurring, for highly-educated second-generation Moroccan-Dutch and Turkish-Dutch professionals to undertake.

**The successful second generation: ‘It’s all about striking a balance.’**

To engage with the bright social boundaries that are in place in the Netherlands by crossing them “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). This breaking of group ties as a prerequisite for crossing boundaries, in combination with the uncertainty of being accepted in the new group, doesn’t make boundary crossing an attractive option.

Yet, bright boundaries are apparently challenged, since it is evident that the second generation of Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch descent are participating more on all levels in Dutch society than their first generation parents (CBS, 2012). Moreover, there is a considerable group among the Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second generation who is doing very well in education and the labour market, by going through higher education successfully (Crul & Heering, 2008; Crul, Schneider & Lelie, 2013; Rezai, Crul, Severiens & Keskiner, 2015) and consequently establishing themselves in professional positions in the labour market (Crul & Schneider, 2012; Crul et al., 2013; Slootman, 2014; Konyali, 2014; Van der Raad, 2015; Ossenkop, 2015). These facts first of all refute the dominant discourse of failed integration and make clear that the concurrent call for assimilation is built on false pretences (Slootman & Duyvendak, 2015). Secondly, and more importantly for this thesis, this successful second-generation group receives little attention in the Dutch migration discourse, whereas it could be argued that their steep upward mobility and successful professional establishment in the workplace is either a sign of successful boundary crossing or a sign that second-generation professionals otherwise challenge bright boundaries in Dutch society.

If boundaries for second-generation Moroccan-Dutch and Turkish-Dutch in the Netherlands are indeed bright and negatively affect “the processes by which individuals gain access to the opportunities afforded the majority” (Alba, 2005, p. 22), and if boundary crossing is indeed an unattractive and therefore an unlikely boundary strategy for second-generation Moroccan-Dutch and Turkish-Dutch to choose, it is relevant to understand how highly-educated second-
As social boundaries permeate multiple and varying social fields (Wimmer, 2008b, p. 992), this thesis will focus on one specific social field: the workplace. This particular field is highly applicable 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). Taking bright social boundaries in the field of the workplace as starting point, the aim of this thesis is to understand how highly-educated second-generation Moroccan-Dutch and Turkish-Dutch professionals experience these social boundaries in the workplace, and how they subsequently deal with the consequences of social boundaries. This leads to the main research question of the thesis:

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

In order to answer this main research question, the thesis is based on empirical research that was conducted over the course of two separate, but related, studies: the Pathways to Success Project and the ELITES project. Before going into how the two studies were set up and carried out, the notion of “success” will be reflected upon.

“Success”: ‘I’m Turkish and I’m Dutch, and this combination works for me.’

The definition of who is successful among the second generation is open to debate. There is the option of choosing for an objective or for a subjective definition of success. In the Pathways to Success Project and in the ELITES

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2 ELITES stands for Emerging Leaders In The European Second generation.
project the definition of success was an objective one, based on job position and
job status criteria. The idea of imposing an “objective” mould of success upon
participants can be considered problematic, since what researchers define as
“success” might not always be in accordance with how the second-generation
participants would define success. Zhou and Lee (2007) and Zhou, Lee, Vallejo,
Tafoya-Estrada and Xiong (2008) therefore refer to the importance of paying
attention to the ways in which the second generation defines success, in order
to not impose one particular idea of what success means. Participants in the
Pathways to Success Project and the ELITES project, although selected on the
basis of objective criteria, were therefore also asked in the interviews whether
they considered themselves successful and why.

Yet, even after introducing the question to participants of whether they
considered themselves success, the matter remains that being successful is
always in relation to others. This relational aspect of success begs the question
whether these second-generation professionals in leadership positions are
successful compared to their parents, compared to their peers from the same
socio-economic and ethnic background or compared to the average level in
society? Firstly, in the Pathways to Success Project and the ELITES project the
participants show a steep upward mobility compared to their parents. Secondly,
by selecting participants working in the top two scales of the eleven point EGP
(Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero Occupational Class Coding) coding scheme as a
criterion for the ELITES project, makes the participants in this study also far
more successful than the average person in their own ethnic group or the
average person in the native parentage group (Crul, Keskiner & Lelie, 2017, p.
215). In other words, the participants in the ELITES project belong to the most
successful group in their ethnic community and to the above-average successful
segment in society. While the participants in the Pathways to Success project
show steep upward mobility compared to their parents and the average person
in their own ethnic groups.
Looking at success through the lens of occupying a high-status position can seem one-dimensional. However, when considering the fact that the second generation with labour migrant parents from Turkey come from one of the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in Western-Europe (Heath et al., 2008), and considering the one-sided negative attention surrounding this group, the professional pathways of these new upcoming elites in four Western-European countries\(^3\) are worth the attention.

**Data collection**

The thesis is built upon two data sets. The articles in chapters 2 and 3 are based upon the empirical material from the Pathways to Success Project. The articles in chapters 4 and 5 are based upon the empirical data from the ELITES project. The two projects are closely related, but there are two important differences between the data sets: The Pathways to Success Project focuses on second-generation professionals with a Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch background in the Netherlands. Whereas the ELITES project, having a comparative character which includes four Western-European countries in the data set, focuses only on second-generation professionals with labour migrant parents from Turkey.

**The Pathways to Success Project**

The Pathways to Success Project is the first major Dutch qualitative study conducted in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, focusing on highly-educated second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch professionals. The Pathways to Success project was initiated because of earlier findings from the TIES\(^4\) study, showing that a quarter of the Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch second

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\(^3\) The four countries are: The Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and France.

\(^4\) TIES stands for The Integration of the European Second generation. TIES was a comparative research project conducted in 8 European countries concerning the integration of second generation young adults of Turkish, Moroccan and former-Yugoslavian descent.
generation is in or has finished higher education (Crul, Pasztor & Lelie, 2008). This finding inspired to understand how this highly-educated segment of the second generation has managed to get where they are, taking into account their school trajectories, labour market experiences, and social activities.

The fieldwork for the Pathways to Success Project started in April 2011 and lasted until January 2012. During that period second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch participants for the Pathways to Success Project were found and approached using different search methods. Firstly, respondents who had participated in the 2007-2008 Dutch part of the TIES study, during which time they were in a higher education trajectory or had just finished higher education, were asked whether they wanted to participate in the Pathways to Success Project. Secondly, when former-TIES respondents participated in the Pathways to Success Project, they were subsequently asked if they could provide more second-generation Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch participants from their networks. This snowball method, in combination with the former TIES respondents, generated 114 participants.

“Success” was defined by the Pathways to Success research team. Participants were considered successful when they met one of the following three criteria for success:

- Having a higher education diploma, or;
- Working in a position managing at least five employees, or;
- Earning more than €2000 net per month.

In the Pathways to Success Project participants were interviewed based on a semi-structured questionnaire in order to understand the mechanisms that allowed the second generation from two of the most marginalized ethnic groups throughout Western-Europe to succeed against the odds. Since the Pathways to Success research team worked with multiple interviewers to cover the wanted sample size within the available time frame, semi-structured interviews ensured
both a fixed questionnaire ensuring that all interviewers would cover the same questions. While simultaneously, the semi-structured questionnaire also allowed both interviewers the room to probe, and the participants the room to address issues that the researchers had initially not thought of (Gilbert, 2008; Gomm, 2008).

The ELITES project

The ELITES project is the first study with an international, comparative perspective, focusing on the “new upcoming elites” (Harvey & Maclean, 2008) among second-generation professionals with parents from Turkey and born in The Netherlands, Germany, France and Sweden. These four countries were chosen based on outcomes of the TIES study, showing that these country cases represent distinct pathways to success (Crul, 2015, p. 328). All participants in the study had parents who had come from Turkey to North-western Europe under similar labour migrant conditions, and their similar background features make comparisons between the Turkish second generation in different European countries possible. The results from the ELITES project are therefore at the forefront of the academic debate on second-generation upward mobility, labour market careers, and the role of national, institutional structures on processes of second-generation elite formation.

The fieldwork for the ELITES project started in September 2012 in the Netherlands and Germany. The fieldwork period was closed when the fieldwork in Sweden and France was done by the end of 2013. The ELITES project worked with a sector-focus, meaning that professionals working in leadership positions in the business, law and education sector were interviewed. Looking at similar sectors and similar positions within the sectors across the four countries, made the cross-national comparisons more precise. For the purpose of this thesis, the
focus will be on the professionals working in leadership positions in the education sector.

The professionals working in leadership positions in the education sector were selected for the ELITES project by taking their job status as a selection criterion for success. More specifically, participants were selected when they worked in a professional job in middle or higher managerial functions (Crul et al, 2017, p. 215).

How participants were found and approached varied. Some of the participants were found through searches on the internet. Other participants were –more or less- public figures in their respective country and were therefore relatively easy to find and approach. When the people who were approached agreed to participate in the ELITES project, they were subsequently asked whether they could provide more names of second generation professionals in leadership positions with parents from Turkey. And most of the participants could. Therefore, snowballing proved to be an important means of finding participants.

The different approaches resulted in 50 semi-structured interviews with professionals working in leadership positions in the education sector in the Netherlands, Sweden, France and Germany.

More detailed information on data-collection and data-analysis can be found in chapters 2 to 5.

Outline of the thesis

In the subsequent outline of the thesis the main research question and argument per chapter will be described.
The fine art of boundary sensitivity

Chapter 2 broadly explores the two main theoretical concepts of the thesis: social boundaries and agency. The article 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 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 professional identification at work to cross boundary lines, while keeping their ethnic and religious differences mostly private but intact to avoid assimilation.

Discrimination of second-generation professionals in leadership positions

In chapter 3, the focus lies on one particular social boundary that was generally addressed in chapter 2: 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 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 -that 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.

**Practices of change in the education sector**

Chapter 3 showed how second-generation professionals try to change the boundaries in their various professional fields in regard to how others see them or their ethnic group. In chapter 4 the emphasis lies on changing social boundaries in one particular field: the education sector. I have taken the example of ethnic school segregation as a “wicked problem”. This social boundary 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.

The ability to deal with difference
Based on the findings in chapter 4 on how second-generation professionals use their positionality as second-generation professionals to bring about change in the education sector, chapter 5 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 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 minority ethnic 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.

Based on the ‘Upward Mobility Boundary Sensitivity Model’ that I have constructed, I will tie together the empirical findings of the four chapters in order to provide an answer to the main research question of the thesis in the final “Discussion and Conclusion” chapter. The chapter ends with a discussion of the main theoretical implications that follow from this thesis, and suggestions for future research.