



NEW DIVERSITIES

An online journal published by the Max Planck Institute for the
Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

Volume 20, No. 1, 2018

The Influence of Ethnic-Specific Networks on Turkish Belgian Women's Educational and Occupational Mobility

By **SINEM YILMAZ, BART VAN DE PUTTE, and PETER A. J. STEVENS**
Ghent University



Language Editor: Sarah BLANTON

Layout and Design: Birgitt SIPPEL

Past Issues in 2008-2017:

- “Mobilities – Migratory Experiences Ethnographically Connected”**, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2017
- “Indigenous Politics of Resistance: From Erasure to Recognition”**, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2017
- “The Transnational Infrastructures of Luso-Pentecostal Mega-Cities”**, Art. 19, No. 1, 2017
- “Religion and Superdiversity”**, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2016
- “The Infrastructures of Diversity: Materiality and Culture in Urban Space”**,
Vol. 17, No. 2, 2015
- “Engaging with the Other: Religion, Identity, and Politics in the Mediterranean”**,
Vol. 17, No. 1, 2015
- “Migration and Development: Rethinking Recruitment, Remittances, Diaspora Support
and Return”**, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2014
- “Social Mobility and Identity Formation”**, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2014
- “Diversity and Small Town Spaces: Twenty Years into Post-Apartheid
South African Democracy”**, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2013
- “Female Migration Outcomes II”**, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2013
- “Language and Superdiversities II”**, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2012
- “Skilled Migration and the Brain Drain”**, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2012
- “Language and Superdiversities”**, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2011
- “Female Migration Outcomes: Human Rights Perspectives”**, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2011
- “Depicting Diversities”**, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2010
- “Turks Abroad: Settlers, Citizens, Transnationals”**, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2009
- “The Human Rights of Migrants”**, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2009
- “The Conditions of Modern Return Migrants”**, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2008
- “Citizenship Tests in a Post-National Era”**, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2008

© MPI MMG (2018)

ISSN-Print 2199-8108

ISSN-Internet 2199-8116

Published by the Max Planck Institute for the
Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity
Hermann-Föge-Weg 11
D-37073 Göttingen, Germany

Available online at

www.newdiversities.mmg.mpg.de

The Influence of Ethnic-Specific Networks on Turkish Belgian Women's Educational and Occupational Mobility

by SINEM YILMAZ (Ghent University),
BART VAN DE PUTTE (Ghent University) and
PETER A. J. STEVENS (Ghent University)

Abstract

This study explores how different forms of ethnic-specific networks and ties influence realized educational mobility – and subsequently occupational mobility– among a group of highly educated Turkish Belgian women. Analysis of interview data with thirty highly-educated Turkish Belgian women focuses on their experiences of how various forms of ethnic-specific networks developed opportunities and/or barriers for educational and occupational success, and the importance of structural features in which these networks are embedded. The findings suggest that the importance and influence of co-ethnic networks and ties can change over time and in relationship to different (inter-related) forms of social mobility.

Keywords: Turkish migrants, ethnic-specific networks, educational mobility, occupational mobility, Turkish Belgian women

1. Introduction

Numerous studies have drawn attention to the low educational attainment and limited labour market entrance of second-generation Turkish in Europe (see Heath et al., 2008). Nevertheless, a limited but not inconsequential number of children of Turkish migrants have realized steep intergenerational social mobility through socio-economic and socio-cultural emancipation. Classical approaches to integration of ethnic minorities might explain this mobility through socio-economic and cultural assimilation to the dominant society (Alba and Nee 1997). However, research has found that ethnicity can also act as a resource and affect social mobility outcomes of minorities in a variety of ways (Modood 2004; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou 2005).

There is considerable discussion on how the concept of social capital relates to ethnic-specific networks and dense co-ethnic ties. However, findings from research analysing ethnicity as cap-

ital show a lack of theoretical clarity about which forms of ethnic resources are important in which context, in relationship to what type of population and form of social mobility. For example, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) suggest that dense co-ethnic networks protect youth from downward mobility, while Shah et al. (2010) state that these networks may not always lead to positive educational outcomes, and can even block children's upward mobility if the ethnic group consists of poorly educated working-class families who use each other as a source of information. Related to this, research in this field often fails to explore how the role of co-ethnic ties and networks are durable/temporal and transferable to following mobility stages. In her qualitative study on first generation Polish migrants in London, Ryan (2011) suggests that networks immigrants encounter on arrival are likely to change especially with social and geographical mobility.

A similar study about the impact of co-ethnic networks during transition from educational to occupational mobility for second generation immigrants is lacking. Existing research on the importance of ethnic resources in realizing social mobility is limited in showing this transferability since they focus either on education (see; Crozier and Davies 2006; Modood 2004; Shah et al. 2010; Zhou 2005), or employment (see Crul et al. 2017; Keskiner and Crul 2017; Konyali 2017; Rezai 2017; Vermeulen and Keskiner 2017).

In addition, research highlights that the influence of co-ethnic ties and networks can vary depending on structural conditions including time, group and place. Access to and activation of these co-ethnic networks as resources are embedded in structural factors such as school system, neighbourhood, (lack of) labour market representation and discrimination (Konyali 2017; Rezai 2017; Vermeulen and Keskiner 2017). Therefore, this embeddedness is likely to have an important role in shaping mobility processes.

This study uses qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with thirty highly educated Turkish Belgian women to inductively explore the influence ethnic-specific networks and ties have had on the realized educational and occupational mobility of these women. As a result, the research sheds new light on several important issues: (1) how durable/temporal co-ethnic networks are over time and transferable from one domain of mobility to the other; (2) how accessibility and activation of co-ethnic networks as resources are embedded in structural features and how this embeddedness functions in shaping mobility processes.

2. The Influences of Ethnic-Specific Networks on Mobility Paths

Dense ethnic-specific ties and resources bond co-ethnics, which create a safe place for people with similar cultural backgrounds. There has been a particular focus on the role of ethnic bonding ties and networks in facilitating educational and occupational mobility of descendants

of immigrants. US sociological studies depart from Coleman's findings, which suggest that networks foster educational success among Asian Americans (Zhou 2005). These studies, according to Modood (2004), collapse the Bourdieuan distinction between cultural and social capital and mark out a broad role for ethnicity. He finds this approach useful for the purpose of his study, which seeks to ascertain the 'motor' driving success in British Pakistanis. In addition, Zhou (2005) argues that community-based civic and religious organizations help minority youth in Chinatown to map the contours of complex educational systems and thus become more aware of their options and possibilities. Examining the case of Turks in Germany, Pott (2001) argues that mobilizing ethnicity through organizational membership assists educational mobility. Moreover, co-ethnic ties are utilised by the second-generation Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands to give informational support to younger generations (Rezai et al., 2015). On the other hand, a small number of other studies mention the negative influences of ethnic ties and networks in particular populations. Crul and Vermeulen (2003), for example, have argued that tight ethnic networks in Turkish communities in Europe mean traditional gender roles tend to be reproduced, negatively affecting girls' social mobility.

Studies have also emphasized the advantages of tightly-knit ethnic networks for successful entrepreneurship and self-employment (Zhou 2005; Volery 2007). Due to immigrants' disadvantaged positions and lack of resources, research has highlighted the critical importance of ethnic-specific networks in preserving the resources for in-group members (Sanders, 2002). On the other hand, it has been argued that ethnic-specific networks may be inadequate or even constraining after high school and that they fall short in providing resources for occupational mobility (Zhou 2005; Zhou and Kim 2006). Similarly, Phalet and Heath (2011) investigate socio-economic attainment among second-generation Turkish in Belgium, finding that co-ethnic ties have limited influence if they are not connected

to forms of social and cultural capital that are valued by dominant groups and institutions in the host country. This finding is supported by several subsequent studies that conclude that out-group networks are more effective than co-ethnic networks in labour-market success (Rezai 2017; Vermeulen and Keskiner 2017).

Among studies on the influence of ethnic-specific networks on occupational success, Vermeulen and Keskiner (2017) examine the role of professional network organizations on improving labour-market prospects of second-generation Turks in the Netherlands and France. Their findings show that the support provided by these professional networks is more intangible and interpersonal; they operate as 'bonding ties' with like-minded co-ethnics, rather than providing concrete assistance in advancing professional careers. Konyali (2017), on the other hand, indicates ethnic niches as an alternative path in the field of professional business where some Turkish migrants prefer to work with their co-ethnics in Europe and Turkey to overcome institutional obstacles. Particularly in professional contexts where it is easy to reach co-ethnic clients, ethnic background can be used as a resource (Konyali 2014). Likewise, Keskiner and Crul (2017) observe the advantages of co-ethnic networks in law sector among descendants of Turkish migrants in France. In short, these co-ethnic ties might boost a professional career in some fields of work but may also impede social mobility due to the extent they deter efforts to join broader (i.e., out-group) social networks.

Hence, we can conclude that dense, ethnic-specific networks might influence educational and occupational mobility in a variety of ways. While these networks sometimes operate as resources they can, at other times, be constraining. Therefore, existing research on the role of ethnic-specific networks for descendants of immigrants support Ryan's (2011) idea of evaluating social networks as transient and dynamic in terms of usefulness and accessibility. However, existing literature lacks studies addressing both educational and occupational mobility of a par-

ticular ethnic minority group to analyse the temporality of ethnic-specific networks in different mobility steps as well as their transferability.

3. Structural Conditions

To have a solid grasp on the influences of ethnic-specific networks on educational and occupational mobility, it is important to consider the structural circumstances in which they are activated (and deactivated). In the introduction of their special issue on upcoming ELITES among children of immigrants, Crul et al. (2017) tie ethnic-specific resources to the idea of analysing institutional barriers and opportunities both in education and the labour market. We support their approach and argue that accessibility and usefulness of ethnic-specific networks are embedded in structural factors and this embeddedness has influence in shaping mobility processes.

Research highlights discrimination and the institutional arrangements of education as the relevant structural factors affecting educational mobility (Crul and Vermeulen 2003; Fleischmann et al. 2012). School tracking systems have been criticised for creating unequal opportunities for second generation students to achieve academically. A previous study, though not focused on ethnic segregation, concludes that the educational tracking system in the Flemish region of Belgium produces inequality of opportunity and social segregation for children from lower economic classes (Hindriks et al., 2010). Studying descendants of immigrants from Turkey in various European countries, Crul et al., (2012) conclude that Turkish minority youth are mostly streamed into vocational tracks rather than academic tracks. Moreover, another study shows that early tracking demonstrates that descendants of immigrants are less likely to have access to academic tracks. This is because they are not mature and experienced enough to be informed about their potential choices and lack of parental knowledge about school system is not likely to be compensated at this stage (Crul and Vermeulen, 2003).

In addition, neighbourhoods in which families reside can contribute or hinder social mobility of children. A recent study reveals that co-ethnic concentration in stable neighbourhoods is positively related to school completion and decreases penalties for Turks and Moroccans in Belgium (Fleischmann et al. 2012). However, if valuable resources such as neighbours as role models and positive common norms are lacking among co-ethnics, this might lead to lower attainment levels of minorities, as seen in Turks in Belgium (Fleishmann et al. 2013). Hence, the context in which children of immigrants grow up might potentially slow down or facilitate their educational achievement. Furthermore, Rezai (2017) suggests that the ethnic composition of neighbourhoods and schools can influence both academic and professional pathways of descendants of migrants from Turkey in some European cities. She observes that the ones who lived and attended schools in 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods are less likely to adjust to the working culture which they did not see modelled by their families.

According to Waldring et al. (2014), boundaries between majority and minority groups are brighter in the labour market. Various studies have shown that children of migrants from Turkey have to deal with persistent barriers, including subtle or explicit discrimination and underrepresentation in high-status jobs (see Behtoui 2015; Kalter and Granato 2007). In addition, a recent study in Belgium shows that Turks have less access to family social capital in terms of labour market and job information and this capital might turn out to (re)produce inequalities in labour market (Verhaeghe et al. 2012). In this case, some people develop broader social networks outside of their community (Keskiner and Crul 2017; Rezai 2017), while others pursue a double strategy, maintaining their close relations with their community and 'assimilating' to their professional environment to avoid exclusion and discrimination (Schneider and Lang 2014).

These structural barriers can limit people's mobility. Nevertheless, individuals may find

alternative pathways to bypass structural constraints. Studies show that some ethnic minorities reject dominant-group standards, while others depend on ethnic-community networks to overcome disadvantages (Zhou 2005). For example, people compensate a lack of parental knowledge and a background of disadvantage by drawing on extended family members, peers and older siblings as resources to help achieve educational success (Crozier and Davies 2006; Crul 2000; Schnell et al. 2013). In addition, another recent study shows that when national conditions decrease the likelihood of their success, highly educated descendants of Turkish immigrants incline to 'alternative career paths' by building an international career path, carving out a professional niche or becoming independent (Konyali, 2017).

In sum, ethnic-specific networks show variability in terms of their positive or negative influences and their effects are not usually durable. Moreover, the influence of these networks is embedded in structural conditions which also tend to show variability in educational and occupational mobility processes. Based on this literature, this study seeks to analyse the influence of ethnic-specific networks and ties on the educational and occupational mobility of thirty socially mobile Turkish Belgian women. Considering social context and the experiences and actions of individual actors, this study examines:

- (1) how durable/temporal co-ethnic networks are over time and transferable from one domain of mobility to the other;
- (2) how accessibility and activation of co-ethnic networks in different mobility steps are embedded in structural features and how this embeddedness functions in shaping mobility processes.

4. Methods

The study uses data from semi-structured interviews with thirty second-generation Turkish Belgian women to understand the influence of ethnic networks, family, and social norms on their experiences of educational and occupational

Table 1: Participant Information

Interviewee	Age	Edu. ¹	Occupation	Mother's edu.	Father's edu.	School population	Neighbourhood population ²
Hulya	42	5	Lawyer	0	1	(mostly) Belgian	(mostly) Turkish
Canan	45	5	Politician	0	2	Belgian	Turkish
Sevim	37	4	Teacher	1	4	Belgian	Turkish
Zehra	35	5	Psychologist	3	3	Turkish+Belgian	Turkish
Oznur	35	5	Lawyer	1	1	Belgian	Turkish
Deniz	34	6	Psychologist	1	2	Belgian	Turkish
Arzu	55	4	Policy adviser	0	1	Turkish	Turkish
Leyla	30	5	Politician	2	2	Belgian	Turkish
Melek	41	4	Counsellor	1	1	Belgian	Turkish
Ipek	42	5	Lawyer	0	3	Belgian	Turkish
Ceyda	30	4	Engineer	0	4	Belgian	Turkish
Ebru	31	5	Architect	1	1	Belgian	Turkish
Lale	27	4	Banker	0	1	Turkish	Turkish
Meral	31	5	Lawyer	1	0	Belgian	Migrant
Hatice	32	5	Economist	2	2	Belgian	Turkish
Aylin	35	5	Policy adviser	0	2	Migrant	Turkish
Sibel	39	5	Researcher	0	1	Belgian	Turkish
Ceren	28	6	Psychologist	0	2	Migrant	Migrant
Oya	30	5	Policy adviser	3	3	Turkish+Belgian	Turkish
Selma	37	5	Lawyer	0	1	Turkish	Migrant
Esra	44	6	Doctor	0	2	Belgian	Turkish
Melisa	30	5	Psychologist	1	1	Belgian	Mixed
Songul	32	5	Researcher	1	2	Belgian	Turkish
Mine	42	5	Lawyer	0	1	Belgian	Turkish
Nehir	32	6	Psychiatrist	1	0	Belgian	Turkish
Yasemin	41	5	Educator	0	1	Belgian	Turkish
Belgin	40	6	Psychologist	0	1	Belgian	Turkish
Demet	39	4	Civil servant	0	1	Belgian	Turkish
Gamze	34	5	Lawyer	1	3	Belgian	Mixed
Hilal	30	5	Researcher	0	3	Belgian	Turkish

mobility. All participants were either born in Belgium or had moved there before the age of

six. The respondents were between the ages of twenty-seven and fifty-five. The sample is theoretically interesting because it contains women who are both educationally and occupationally successful, despite coming from a working-class background with limited human capital. Since the respondents in our sample have experienced both forms of social mobility, they constitute a theoretically relevant group to investigate the impact of various forms of ethnic-specific networks. Moreover, instead of focussing solely on

¹ Educational levels have been classified based on International Standard Classification of Education.

0: Pre-primary education

1: Primary education

2: Lower secondary education

3: Upper secondary education

4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education

5: Tertiary education

6: Upper tertiary education

² Neighbourhood respondents were grown up.

aspirations, this group allows us to investigate how ethnic-specific networks influence *realized social mobility*.

The study was limited to highly educated Turkish women with at least a tertiary education who currently have professional occupations. We adopted a qualitative methodology because the aim of the research is to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' personal experiences, perceptions and strategies in relationship to social mobility. Furthermore, because the study focuses on potentially sensitive topics, qualitative research is appropriate since it allows the researcher to build a relationship of trust and rapport with participants.

Participants were sampled in the Flemish region of Belgium and Brussels through a variety of techniques, including e-mail and telephone contact, and outreach through women's organizations. The main researcher also used the 'snowball technique' to reach additional participants (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). Researchers provided all participants with detailed information about the process and obtained each individual's informed consent. All participants were assigned unique pseudonyms and personal information that might reveal their identity was removed from the presentation of the data analyses. All respondents provided information on their family background, experiences at school, entrance to the labour market, social control mechanisms, and strategies in dealing with contradictory sources of influence.

A Grounded Theory approach – which aims to develop an explanatory framework inductively through a constant comparative analysis of the qualitative data (Corbin and Strauss 1990) – was adopted to analyse the data. Data analysis began with full review of the entire corpus of interviews, using NVIVO software to attach a first series of codes. We initially identified recurring themes based on related concepts referred to in other studies and participants' own statements. In the following stage, we further analysed these codes inductively and divided them into categories or sub-categories by comparing and contrasting the

codes to find the relations between categories. A second researcher double-coded the data to examine the intercoder reliability score.

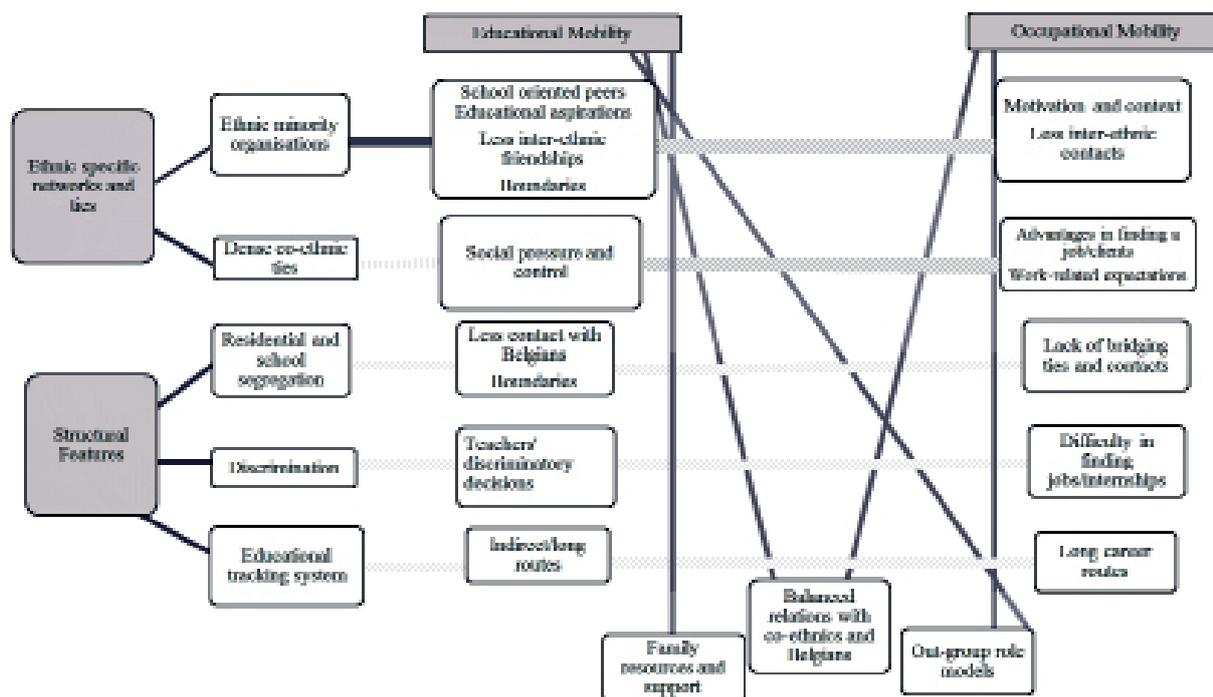
5. Explaining the Influence of Ethnic-Specific Networks on Social Mobility Opportunities

This section first describes various influences of ethnic minority organisations and dense community ties to which we commonly refer in our data. It specifically focuses on how temporal/durable these networks and ties are in women's mobility pathways. Second, it sheds light on the influences of structural conditions women encountered in education and employment. The schematic overview in Table 2 maps out the forms of ethnic-specific networks and structural features that seem to have influenced the educational and occupational mobility of our respondents, either positively and/or negatively. It also shows the mechanisms that connect ethnic-specific networks to mobility and those that connect educational mobility to occupational one.

5.1. Ethnic minority organisations

Ethnic-specific organizations were mentioned as a common advantage of ethnic solidarity and closed networks. As Vermeulen and Keskiner (2017) mentioned in their article, Turkish migrant organisations in Belgium – similar to other Western European countries – have been divided along 'political and ideological lines.' Respondents mentioned religio-political organisations (for example, Milli Görüş), ethno-religious organisations, ethnic student associations (for example, the Turkish Student Association Leuven, Flux Gent, la Turquoise) and youth branches of Turkish political parties as important in their early educational career. Some women explained their motivation to go to university through the ethno-religious organizations with which they are associated. As a member of youth branches, Ceren reports being motivated to become an educated Muslim in an ethnic minority organization where most of her friends are also educated. She went to a school populated mostly by fellow co-ethnics, but she was

Table 2: Explaining the Influences of Ethnic-Specific Networks and Structural Features on Social Mobility Opportunities



not very close with them. She preferred to spend her time with other co-ethnics in their religious-political organisation, because they were ‘more education-oriented.’ Likewise, Hilal was happy to make a circle of educated Turkish friends through several associations which ‘were raising awareness in families about the importance of higher education.’ In general, their engagement with such associations seem to be helpful in holding like-minded Turkish youth together, raising educational awareness among them, creating educational aspirations, and organizing social activities for them. Coming mostly from families who lack the tools to help their children to achieve educational aims, these social networks appear to play a vital role in compensating low parental capital.

Although only mentioned by a few women, the positive influence of ethnic minority organisation engagement during their educational careers appears to be transferable to their future occupational careers. As a lawyer, Oznur has been engaged in co-ethnic associations since her years as a university student. Before, she did not have Turkish friends due to her Belgian populated schools and neighbourhood. She expanded her

co-ethnic network with like-minded people from similar fields and found a ‘role model’ through these associations:

I was engaged with a human rights association since the age of 18. Then we established new associations. I could only have relations with Turkish community through these associations. I broadened my network and met a Turkish lawyer who became my role model (Lawyer).

Her case supports Rezai’s (2017) analysis on the long-term importance of ‘significant others’ acquainted in early educational career. However, in general, ethnic minority associations do not seem to have a strong effect on labour market outcomes.

Based on in-depth conversations with respondents, these organisational attachments are more likely to be considered as ‘resources’ in early mobility stages. They bring together ‘school-oriented peers’ (Rezai, 2017). However, some women expressed ‘indirect negative influences’ of engaging mostly with co-ethnics to aspire for higher education. Considering the political and ideological nature of these associations, ‘nationalist feelings’ appear to increase and thicken

the boundaries between the co-ethnic community and the majority. Moreover, these engagements seem to decrease the probability of making Belgian friends, which seems to have long-term negative influences. Hence, our schematic table (2) and data suggest that ethnic-specific associations work as recourses mostly in educational mobility, while they appear to become constraints for some over the long run. Although limited, their positive influences seem to be transferred to occupational mobility depending on the field and finding 'the right' associations. While these organizations do not seem to have a direct effect on employment, the context they provide, which motivates individuals to become successful, appear to have favourable consequences in later stages.

5.2. Dense Ethnic Community Ties

Apart from structured organisational networks explained in the previous section, respondents pointed out both positive and negative aspects of dense ethnic community ties and networks on their mobility processes. In general, being together with co-ethnics is perceived to form solidarity in dealing with the difficulties of pertaining a minority group. However, unlike ethnic minority organisations, which are thought to be more helpful in early educational career, general ethnic community ties do not seem act as resource for educational mobility. On the contrary, social control for women is regarded as the price of ethnic solidarity and dense ties within an ethnic community (Crul and Vermeulen 2003). Even though families support their daughters' education, it seems that they are under the influence of external co-ethnics. Being highly educated is seen as unnecessary and even dangerous by some members of the Turkish community in Belgium:

The community had the idea that 'if she goes to higher school, what will happen? She is of no help to you [her parents], she is going to marry and go' (Canan, politician).

This community notion implies that higher education is 'useless' because women will marry

and will not contribute financially to their parents:

I was working for the university exam at home. Some of my relatives came to ask my family to give me for marriage. I had heard my relatives tell my father not to send me to school by saying 'how come you let her go to school, you should marry her off at the age of 18,' but my father supported me that day (Esra, doctor).

Our data also shows that some families really want their daughters to continue higher education, but if there is a geographical distance between school and home, the community can exert significant pressure on family to discourage this. Moreover, compulsory education is often regarded as sufficient; higher education is unnecessary for some members of the community. Reasoned from this perspective, only educational tracks that directly and easily lead to practical jobs that readily produce a stable salary are deemed appropriate for Turkish Belgian girls. Some women in our sample expressed difficulties in convincing family and community that taking extra training to specialize in a field is worth doing.

Our research also suggests that relations with Belgian peers is very limited during school years. Most women explained that families fear judgment from the Turkish community. Deniz, for example, was harshly criticized when she was seen entering the home of a Belgian friend. Songül, on the other hand, had close relations with Belgian friends and, therefore, she said that she was seen as 'abnormal' and 'breaking convention.' She was encouraged to have Turkish friends, go to Turkish weddings and visit family members to break her connections with Belgians. Some respondents put forward the negative long-term influences of these boundaries in their educational and professional careers. Moreover, respondents mentioned the influences of social control and community pressure during their professional careers in a very limited way. This suggests that the power position of women changes when they move from the educational ladder to the occupational one. In relation to that, family

and community pressures seem to fade in importance in later stages. Moreover, it might also be suggested that pressures from family and ethnic community are experienced less when women realize their ambitions.

Although strong co-ethnic ties are likely to be less effective for the labour market dominated by the majority, they appear to work in particular fields. For example, the lawyers, architects and psychologists mentioned that ethnic-minority language fluency and networks mean ready access to Turkish clients, a key professional advantage:

I have never had difficulty in finding a job. As a Turkish Belgian, I have access to various projects from both sides (Ebru, architect).

Speaking Turkish worked out for the first time. I did my first internship at a hospital where Turkish patients come out in large numbers. Then I applied for a job there and they accepted me just because I am speaking Turkish (Zehra, psychologist).

Similarly, Selma moved to a Turkish populated city in Flanders to open her own law office since there was only a few Turkish lawyers there. Aside from that, our results show that the Turkish community place work-related expectations on educated women. Most women in our sample complained about how these demands can put them in difficult positions. Depending on the profession, some mentioned that co-ethnics ask for favouritism, extra attention and illegal demands such as forging documents:

My Turkish clients have more expectations from me compared to a Belgian psychologist. I always encounter questions like 'Can you arrange an urgent appointment?', 'Can you write a report for me?' They can ask for documents diagnosing long-term disease to claim insurance benefits (Ceren, psychologist).

Additionally, of the sample as a whole, lawyers, doctors, and psychologists were more likely to complain about porous boundaries between private and professional life:

Everyone in my large family comes to me thinking that I can deal with all of their legal issues as a lawyer. You can do that to a certain extent, but it is too

much. I cannot make friends with Turkish people (Hulya, lawyer).

Many reported that people's problems and questions are brought up at family gatherings, wedding ceremonies or social outings. Moreover, some stated that they had to deal with extra workload due to the paperwork demands of their extended family.

In sum, dense co-ethnic ties are not regarded as resource for women in their educational career due to the great social pressure they entail. However, control mechanisms are less likely to be effective in occupational mobility with respondents who hold stronger positions of power. In occupational mobility, community ties pave the way for finding a job for respondents from particular professional fields, while they are not likely to be effective for other fields. These ties appear to help some women to start their professional lives easier, but growing up within dense ethnic networks puts added pressure on women who are successful in their occupations (through the community's work-related expectations).

5.3. Structural Conditions

According to our analysis, the transition from educational to occupational mobility does not seem to be straightforward for our respondents. Ethnic-specific networks and ties appear to have changing influences and they are also closely related to structural conditions. When discussing their mobility paths, respondents generally mentioned the influences of segregated school and neighbourhood, the school tracking system and discrimination. Most women in our sample grew up in either Turkish or mixed-migrant neighbourhoods. Residential and school segregation are closely related because families prefer to send their children to local schools. Ceren, for example, was brought up in a Turkish populated neighbourhood and was segregated from non-(Turkish) Muslims until she went to university. As explained in the previous section, her involvement with ethnic-specific organisations kept her close to education-oriented Turkish friends. She emphasized the benefits of 'segregation' and

being close to her culture by 'avoiding assimilation.' However, she accepts that it has been a disadvantage in the long run due to lack of social and professional connections with Belgians.

Zehra remarked that living in a neighbourhood populated with only immigrants negatively influenced her education. She lost her self-confidence when she changed to a school populated with Belgians. She was also afraid of going to university, and instead preferred technical tracks at first. Only later did she decide to go to university. Hence, structural conditions characteristic of Zehra's life appear to make her occupational mobility harder, since she could not take a 'direct route' to higher education. Although she felt that her co-ethnics in her neighbourhood complicated her educational career, her ethnic-specific connections seemed to ease her occupational life as a psychologist. For Arzu, finding contacts to get access to the labour market and adaptation to a working culture were difficult, as she also took the indirect and long route to start her career:

I was raised in a Turkish populated ghetto neighbourhood. My school was also a ghetto school. I lived there till my marriage. We were together with Turkish people both in the neighbourhood and at school. We did not have any contact with Belgians. That affected my future working life negatively, because professional life was totally Belgian, and you do not know them (Policy adviser).

Similarly, Hülya said that living in a concentrated neighbourhood hindered her language proficiency. She said that her Dutch was still 'unsatisfactory' for her. Moreover, some of the participants emphasized the lack of role models in their Turkish-populated social surrounding. As an example, Hatice stated: 'When no one around you goes on to higher education, you feel like it must be too difficult for someone like you to do. This means you choose something you know others in your group have found easier.'

Our data shows that some women had no Turkish peers at school, while others experienced a concentrated school environment within a given period of school life. Most participants went to

Catholic schools and considered this a positive influence on future success. Some respondents mentioned to experience a smoother mobility with the help of a balance between co-ethnic connections and relationship with Belgians. Ebru, for example, grew up in a Turkish populated neighbourhood but she did not seem to experience any negative outcomes:

It was not something negative for our family, but if family is not careful enough, it might be negative for children. Education was very important for my parents. I was together with my Turkish friends in the neighbourhood, but I had more Belgian friends at school. It was very normal for Flemish friends to go to university, and I started to think like them. It became something normal for me as well (Architect).

Therefore, living in Turkish-populated neighbourhoods, but at the same time going to Belgian populated schools saw some choose out-group role models and develop aspirations for higher education.

A limited number of families made school choices consciously, but others chose schools that were geographically close; regardless of their quality or reputation. Gamze's father, for instance, preferred to move to a Belgian populated neighbourhood so that his children could go 'better' schools. She had language problems in her primary school where she was interacting almost exclusively with other Turkish youth. After she moved to a Catholic school, she adapted easily. She appreciates these changes and emphasizes them as the 'motor' of her success.

On the other hand, some respondents mentioned the school tracking system as a structural obstacle for their mobility. According to some women, tracking was done in reference to teachers' feedback. Demet and Selma mentioned enforced class streaming in Belgium:

The 'A' stream is predominantly for Belgians and the 'B' stream for immigrant students. I was registered for A stream only by luck (Demet).

Ceyda's teacher advised her to go to A stream and her educational career changed dramatically,

because she did not have educational aspirations before. Some other women expressed how they were discouraged by their teachers to pursue the academic (high status) track. However, some women stated that discrimination made them stronger and more determined to be successful at school. Hülya said; 'being a foreigner motivated me'; she explained that she chose to be a lawyer in order to fight discrimination.

Moreover, most women talked about direct/indirect discrimination in their working lives as a result of their migration background and their belonging to a poorly educated ethnic group. As a woman with headscarf, Ceren stated to have difficulties both at school and in finding a job. Both discrimination and limited out-group connections decreased her chances:

My qualifications mean I should have easily found a place in a Belgian practice. But I was denied this opportunity had to open my own practice instead. Now all my patients are Turkish but this is more a result of circumstances than my own choice.

Ceren's story supports the idea of 'alternative career paths' explained in Konyali's (2017) study examining the career paths of descendants of labour migrants from Turkey. Likewise, Lale talked about how, during job applications, she would be told that it would be impossible for her to land a job wearing a headscarf. Several women said that they have had to prove themselves and work harder than their Belgian colleagues on account of their migration background. Some other women had to choose jobs inappropriate to their qualifications before having the chance to build their own professional career. As a lawyer, Hülya had difficulty in finding an internship position which was required for her studies. She related that to discrimination:

I would walk into their business life as a lawyer with Turkish origin. I would strip them of their jobs in a way.

Besides, Hülya complained about lack of connections when moving from education to employment. She did not have experienced contacts that could guide her to start her career with an

internship. As Rezai (2017) mentions in her study, when people lack significant others in labour market entrance, it seems more difficult for them to find internships.

Table 2 and these findings suggest that residential and school segregation seem to influence educational mobility negatively, while no one mentioned direct positive/negative influences of neighbourhood during working life. Hence, it might be argued that neighbourhood characteristics affect mobility outcomes more during childhood and adolescence when people are more vulnerable to external effects. However, women who rarely interacted with Belgians in their neighbourhood or school were more likely to experience challenges in future mobility due to lack of bridging ties and contacts with Belgians. When families invest in education, support their children and make conscious school choices, women's mobility pathways seem to be smoother, even though discrimination at school either through the tracking system or teachers' (discriminating) decisions might have an impact. On the other hand, discrimination seems to have a more long-term negative influence on employment since some women have difficulties finding internships and work after school. Women in particular occupations cope with discrimination by giving services to Turkish clients, nevertheless they still need out-group networks to find internships and start their professional career.

6. Conclusion

There is a rich body of research that focuses on the positive influences of ethnic-specific networks and structural conditions that might affect the functioning of these networks on education or employment in different populations. However, little attention has been given to dynamic and temporal nature of different dimensions of ethnic-specific networks and their influences on both educational and occupational mobility within a particular population. Therefore, based on analysis of qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with a group of highly educated Turkish Belgian women, this study

explores the temporal nature of the relationship between ethnic-specific networks and mobility along with structural conditions in which they are embedded.

Ethnic-specific networks seem to act both as resources and constraints in different mobility steps. Engagements with ethnic minority organizations appear to motivate women to continue higher education by bringing together likeminded people, raising awareness, creating educational aspirations and compensating low parental capital. Moreover, engagement with these organisations are likely to have indirect consequences in motivating women to pursue high positions as Turkish/Muslims in occupational life. However, the often political and nationalistic nature of these organisations seem to maintain boundaries between their ethnic community and Belgians, and this is perceived to drive them apart from Belgians over the long run.

Dense ethnic community ties seem to provide solidarity to cope with negative influences of being a minority. However, this ethnic solidarity also appears to provoke community pressure, which might discourage higher education and intergroup relations in educational attainment. When women realize occupational success, they feel less community pressure due to changing power positions and being decision makers of their own choices. In addition, these dense networks in which they grew up seem to cause both additional work-related expectations from the ethnic community, but also facilitate finding clients in particular jobs.

It is undeniable that these ethnic-specific networks have had both positive and negative effects for these women, though the extent of their importance varies. Considering that these women have become successful against the odds, it seems that there are other factors that help them to be successful. Growing up in Turkish or mixed-migrant neighbourhoods, some have managed to make friends with like-minded people at schools where they could develop inter-group relations. When they lack professional contacts, their limited access to job information and low

parental capital come together with discrimination, and some women have gone towards alternative career paths by opening their offices in Turkish populated neighbourhoods and serving mostly Turkish clients. In general, our analysis suggests that when solidarity with co-ethnics in neighbourhood or associations is combined with connections with Belgians at school and social life, women are likely to experience a smoother mobility path. Although, discrimination in school was mentioned regularly, most of the respondents did not experience direct discrimination personally. Working life, on the other hand, involved discrimination, especially for women with headscarves, and was mentioned to be a determining factor affecting their mobility.

Inspired by literature on ethnic-specific networks and given what we have found in our study, it seems that – at least for this population – co-ethnic networks and ties have no clear direction when studied contextually and over time. It is not only that these networks can work differently in education and employment, but also the way they operate in educational processes, which influences what happens in terms of co-ethnic networks in employment. Examining the success stories of a group of women against the odds, our analysis hints at the possibility that problems might be solved much more readily when occupational social mobility is realized. However, discrimination and underrepresentation in the labour market must remain an important focus for policymakers. In addition, the aim of this research is not to reproduce clichés about Muslim minorities and give a deficit perspective about the minority culture. On the contrary, it shows the difficulties of a transition period for the first-generation parents and ethnic community and their daughters who are now highly educated.

This study adds to existing research by emphasizing the temporality and transferability of the influences of ethnic-specific networks. It also highlights a relational approach to ethnic-specific networks and structural conditions. More generally, it shows that the influence of these networks

and ties on social mobility is highly context and time-dependent. Future quantitative research can build on our findings by testing changing (positive or negative) influences of dense co-ethnic ties and networks for educational and occupational mobility for different groups. In this sense, small-n, qualitative studies such as ours can stimulate broader, large-n research focused on the same research questions and populations. They can compare different ethnic minority populations with Turkish minority women, compare Turkish minority men with women, or focus on ethnic minority groups who were educationally, but not occupationally, mobile.

References

- ALBA, R. and V. NEE. 1997. "Rethinking assimilation theory for a new era of immigration". *International Migration Review* 31 (4): 826-874.
- BEHTOUI, A. 2015. "Social Capital". In: C. Westin, ed., *The integration of descendants of migrants from Turkey in Stockholm: The TIES study in Sweden*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- BIERNACKI, P and D. WALDORF. 1981. "Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling". *Sociological Methods & Research* 10 (2): 141-163.
- CORBIN, J. M. and A. STRAUSS. 1990. "Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria". *Qualitative Sociology* 13 (1): 3-21.
- CROZIER, G. and J. DAVIES. 2006. "Family matters: a discussion of the Bangladeshi and Pakistani extended family and community in supporting the children's education". *The Sociological Review* 54 (4): 678-695.
- CRUL, M. 2000. "Breaking the circle of disadvantage: Social mobility of second-generation Moroccans and Turks in the Netherlands". In: H. Vermeulen and J. Perlmann, eds., *Immigrants, schooling and social mobility: Does culture make a difference?* UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- CRUL, M. and H. VERMEULEN. 2003. "The second generation in Europe". *International Migration Review* 37 (4): 965-986.
- CRUL, M., J. SCHNEIDER and F. LELIE (Eds.). 2012. *The European second generation compared: Does the integration context matter?*. Amsterdam University Press.
- CRUL, M., E. KESKINER, F. LELIE. 2017. "The upcoming new elite among children of immigrants: a cross-country and cross-sector comparison". *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (2): 209-229.
- CRUL, M., J. SCHNEIDER, E. KESKINER and F. LELIE. 2017 "The multiplier effect: How the accumulation of cultural and social capital explains steep upward social mobility of children of low-educated immigrants". *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (2): 321-338.
- FLEISCHMANN, F., K. PHALET, P. DEBOOSERE and K. NEELS. 2012. "Comparing concepts of ethnicity in ethnic composition measures: Local community contexts and the educational attainment of the second generation in Belgium". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38 (10), 1513-1531.
- FLEISCHMANN, F., P. DEBOOSERE, K. NEELS and K. PHALET. 2013. "From ethnic capital to ethnic educational inequality: how family and co-ethnic neighbourhood resources affect second-generation attainment in Belgium". *European Sociological Review*, 29 (6), 1239-1250.
- HEATH, A. F., C. ROTHON and E. KILPI. 2008. "The second generation in Western Europe: Education, unemployment, and occupational attainment". *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 211-235.
- HINDRIKS, J., M. VERSCHELDE, G. RAYP and K. SCHOORS. 2010. "School tracking, social segregation and educational opportunity: evidence from Belgium". *CORE DP n 2010, 8*.
- KALTER, F. and N. GRANATO. 2007 "Educational hurdles on the way to structural assimilation in Germany". In: A. Heath and S. Y. Chueng, eds., *Unequal chances: Ethnic minorities in western labour markets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- KESKINER, E. and M. CRUL. 2017. "How to reach the top? Fields, forms of capital, and strategies in accessing leadership positions in France among descendants of migrants from Turkey". *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (2): 283-300.
- KONYALI, A. 2017. "International opportunities on the way up: Alternative career paths of descendants of migrants from Turkey in the field of professional business services". *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (2): 264-282.
- KONYALI, A. 2014. "Turning disadvantage into advantage: Achievement narratives of descendants

- of migrants from Turkey in the corporate business sector". *New Diversities* 16 (1): 107-121.
- MODOOD, T. 2004. "Capitals, ethnic identity and educational qualifications". *Cultural Trends* 13 (2): 87-105.
- PHALET, K. and A. HEATH. 2011. "Ethnic community, urban economy and second-generation attainment: Turkish disadvantage in Belgium". In: R. Alba and M. C. Waters, eds., *The next generation: Immigrant youth in a comparative perspective*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- PORTES, A. and R. G. RUMBAUT. 2001. *The story of the immigrant second generation: Legacies*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- POTT, A. 2001. "Ethnicity and social mobility: The case of Turks in Germany". *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 2 (2): 169-186.
- REZAI, S., M. CRUL, S. SEVERIENS and E. KESKINER. 2015. "Passing the torch to a new generation: a qualitative study of the highly educated second generation's receiving of parental support and giving of support to the younger generation". *Journal of Comparative Migration Studies*, 3 (12).
- REZAI, S. 2017. "Self-made lawyers? Pathways of socially mobile descendants of migrants from Turkey in Europe". *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (2): 230-246.
- RYAN, L. 2011. "Migrants' social networks and weak ties: accessing resources and constructing relationships post-migration". *The Sociological Review*, 59(4): 707-724.
- SANDERS, J. M. 2002. "Ethnic boundaries and identity in plural societies". *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 327-357.
- SCHNEIDER, J. and C. LANG. 2014. "Social mobility, habitus and identity formation in the Turkish-German second generation". *New Diversities* 16 (1): 89-105.
- SCHNELL, P., E. KESKINER and M. CRUL. 2013. "Success against the odds: Educational pathways of disadvantaged second-generation Turks in France and the Netherlands". *Education Inquiry* (4) 1: 125-147.
- SHAH, B., C. DWYER and T. MODOOD. 2010. "Explaining educational achievement and career aspirations among young British Pakistanis: Mobilizing 'ethnic capital'?" *Sociology* 44 (6): 1109-1127.
- VERHAEGHE, P. P., Y. LI and B. VAN DE PUTTE. 2012. "Socio-economic and ethnic inequalities in social capital from the family among labour market entrants". *European Sociological Review* 29 (4): 683-694.
- VERMEULEN, F. and E. KESKINER. 2017. "Bonding or bridging? Professional network organizations of second-generation Turks in the Netherlands and France". *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (2): 301-320.
- VOLERY, T. 2007. "Ethnic entrepreneurship: a theoretical framework". In: L. P. Dana, ed., *Handbook of research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship. A co-evolutionary view on resource management*. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar.
- WALDRING, I., M. CRUL and H. GHORASHI. 2014. "The fine art of boundary sensitivity: Successful second generation Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands". *New Diversities* 16 (1): 71-87.
- ZHOU, M. 2005. "Ethnicity as social capital: Community-based institutions and embedded networks of social relations". In: G. Loury, T. Modood and S. Teles, eds., *Ethnicity, social mobility and public policy: comparing the US and UK*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ZHOU, M. and S. KIM. 2006. "Community forces, social capital, and educational achievement: The case of supplementary education in the Chinese and Korean immigrant communities". *Harvard Educational Review* 76 (1): 1-29.

Note on the Authors

SINEM YILMAZ's research provides insight on how Turkish Belgian women become socially mobile. Touching upon the resources, strategies and limitations for upward social mobility, it aims to understand how informal institutions such as family, neighbourhood, and ethnic group in particular, influence social mobility.

PROFESSOR BART VAN DE PUTTE teaches specialized courses in social demography ('migration and integration,' 'seminar in social demography'), as well as introductory courses in sociology and courses in general sociology such as 'social change.' His research focuses on topics that relate to social demography and historical sociology.

PETER AJ STEVENS is Professor of Qualitative Research Methodology at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences at Ghent University. Stevens's research focuses on the areas of sociology of education and ethnic relations. His work has been published in leading journals in the fields of educational research, ethnic relations, and sociology.

