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Educational endeavors: children of immigrants in education in the Netherlands, 1980-2020

Heijden, E.W.A. van der

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Children of immigrants in education in the Netherlands

The educational positions of children of immigrants have been widely scrutinized in academic and societal debates on the integration process of immigrants and their children in the Netherlands. Interest in the education of children of immigrants increased considerably from the 1980s onwards, with the entrance of children of immigrants into the Dutch education system. This interest was particularly sparked by the increasing numbers of immigrants in the Netherlands from the 1970s onwards. Firstly, the temporary stay of many labor migrants and their families, especially from Morocco and Turkey, turned into permanent residency from the mid-1970s onward. Secondly, in the years leading up to its independence in 1975, many Surinamese immigrated to the Netherlands since Suriname was until that moment an integral part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, whose inhabitants enjoyed full Dutch citizenship.

For migrant and non-migrant families alike, education is a key resource for socio-economic improvement. Education plays a dual role in the intergenerational mobility of families. It can facilitate upward social mobility. Simultaneously, education can consolidate previous social stratification, i.e., reproduce the existing socio-economic class positions of families. The influence of migration background and the socioeconomic position of the family on the educational trajectories of children of immigrants are the main points of interest in this research. This dissertation, with its focus on the educational trajectories of immigrants in the Netherlands since 1980, connects the domains of social sciences focused on educational and immigrant acculturation - mainly sociology - with the domain of migration history. The principal research question in this dissertation is: how did the educational attainment of children of immigrants evolve between 1980 and 2020 and how did the perspectives on this change? This overarching question is divided in three sub questions: (1) how the educational trajectories of children of immigrants developed over the last forty years; (2) how the explanations of these trajectories shifted and (3) how migration background interacted with other student characteristics in affecting these trajectories. Therefore, in this dissertation, I combine a review of the educational positions of children of immigrants from the perspective of the 1980s until recent days, including academic insights, with empirical examinations of some of the mechanisms behind these educational positions.

Theoretical framework

By focusing on the relationship between the socio-economic positions and migration background of immigrant families, and the educational positions of their children, this dissertation operates at the intersection of two academic debates: (1) the debate on immigration and integration of immigrants and their children and (2) the debate on intergenerational mobility.

A canonical debate on assimilation and integration

In the debate on immigration and integration, the processes of settlement and incorporation of immigrants into the host society have been discussed in the sociological and historical literature using various terms. These processes span more than a single life course as they are intergenerational. The main concepts are acculturation, assimilation, and integration. Assimilation is the dominant terminology adopted in the North American context whereas integration is often used in Europe. The definitions of these two concepts converge as they refer to long-term processes of settlement and incorporation of immigrants and their children. Nevertheless, 'assimilation' and 'integration' can refer to the different outcomes of the processes of settlement and incorporation on the individual level, see the acculturation framework by Berry (1992) for the detailed differences as elaborated later in this dissertation. However, in this dissertation, the term 'integration' is used when referring to the overarching processes of settlement and incorporation of immigrants in the host society as this is the terminology in the European – and specifically the Dutch – context.

To understand the Dutch context of integration, I start with a brief history of the American debate. Theories on the acculturation of immigrants were developed by American sociologists in the first half of the twentieth century by Park (1928), Warner and Srole (1945), and Gordon (1964), who coined the term 'assimilation'. They described many struggles faced by first-generation migrants. Alba and Nee (1997) distinguished three perspectives on acculturation. First, the Chicago school put forward one-dimensional theories on the assimilation of the first generations. The central idea was that the first generation would become fully assimilated into the host society, and thereby they gradually abandoned their culture of origin through the stages of contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation (Park, 1928; Park & Burgess 1921; Park, 1950; Park and Thomas). Reducing assimilation to the only possible outcome of intergroup relations in multicultural or multi-ethnic societies was later heavily criticized by other scholars (Lyman 1973; Stone 1985; Alba & Nee 1997). Second, a multi-dimensional framework was presented by Gordon (1964) and he characterized assimilation as a far more complex process by differentiating between seven stages: acculturation, structural assimilation, intermarriage, host identity identification, attitude-receptional assimilation, behavior-receptional assimilation, and civic assimilation. Moreover, he expected that structural

assimilation would be the route to other types of assimilation though remarkably leaving out socioeconomic assimilation, such as occupational mobility, as pointed out by Alba and Nee (1997). These conceptions were challenged especially since Gordon referred to a minority-majority dynamic and thus overlooked the American multigroup reality (Alba and Nee, 1997). Methodological critiques of Gordon emphasized that the level of analysis remained ambivalent: the boundaries – as well as the interactions - between individual attainment and group-level process were disregarded (Alba and Nee, 1997). Thirdly, the straight-line assimilation emphasizes the generational development of acculturation: every new generation represents a next step in the assimilation process. Assimilation would be inevitable with the passing of multiple generations. This was put forward by Gans (1973) and Sandberg (1973) though bequeathed by Warner and Srole (1945). This inevitable generational assimilation implied that assimilation was endogenously driven by immigrant or ethnic groups, therefore neglecting the context of the host society in the assimilation process. Gans listened to this criticism: in 1992, he adjusted the straight-line to the bumpy-line theory. He differentiated between three paths of upward mobility: education-driven, succession-driven, and niche improvement (Gans, 1992). In this theory, he devoted special attention to the second generation as he predicted the economic decline of the second generation coming of age in the second half of the 20th century: part of the U.S.-born second generation would have great difficulty integrating economically, because they - voluntarily or involuntarily - would struggle to obtain jobs in the mainstream economy. Also focusing on the second generation were the scholars working on segmented assimilation (Zhou, 1997; Zhou & Portes, 1993). Zhou and Portes painted a similar picture with their theory of segmented assimilation to Gans' bumpy line. They expected part of the second generation, especially with roots in the Caribbean and Latin America, to assimilate downward into the American stigmatized underclass, which was excluded by racial discrimination, rather than into a seemingly unified core of American society. Three modes of assimilation into the host society are distinguished: linear upward assimilation, linear downward assimilation, or assimilation into an ethnic niche. Linear upward assimilation expected part of the second generation to assimilate into 'the white middle class'. Those who assimilated into the underclass and are associated with poverty and discrimination experienced linear downward assimilation. This was especially expected to occur among the children of low-skilled immigrants of color, such as the Mexican second generation. Assimilating into an ethnic niche referred to upward economic incorporation while maintaining the tight ethnic group-based social network and culture.

Although the notion of segmented assimilation gained prominence in the thinking about the integration of children of immigrants, it did not remain uncriticized either. Criticism mainly centered around having overlooked socio-economic differentiation as well as the role of gender and agency.

Waldinger and colleagues (Perlmann, 2005; Waldinger, 2007; Waldinger & Feliciano, 2004) pointed out that the assimilation of the Mexican second generation in the U.S. did not unilaterally support the hypothesis of downward assimilation into a 'rainbow underclass', nor did the parallels drawn between the contemporary and previous - e.g., Jews, Italians, Slavs - second generation by Portes, Zhou, and Rumbaut hold. They specifically claimed that segmented assimilation ignored gender and the specific economic opportunity structure in shaping the roads of assimilation of the current second generation (Waldinger, 2007; Waldinger & Feliciano, 2004) as the main paths of assimilation addressed mainly concerned the male second generation and disregarded the differential economic situation including the importance of the manufacturing sector and compressed wage structure when earlier birth cohorts of the second generation came to age. Perlmann and Waldinger (Perlmann & Waldinger, 1997) juxtaposed two different categories of comparison for the next generation of children of immigrants in the United States: class and agency. They argued that lower socio-economic position and average lower skill levels - which they labeled as 'class' - especially of Mexican immigrants and their descendants posed risks for their acculturation. At the same time, they expected that children of higher SES immigrants would renegotiate their position in society to circumvent 'the stigmatized and subordinated "other" category' (Perlmann & Waldinger, 1997, p. 918).

The work of Alba and Nee, and Foner (Alba & Nee, 2003; Foner, 2000) contradicted the premise of segmented assimilation by showing how immigrants and their children assimilate into mainstream society and thus succeed in intergenerational upward mobility. They rejected the assumption of segmented assimilation that there is a singular linear upwardly mobile path for children of immigrants, while the main trend for immigrants and their children in the United States remained assimilation into the mainstream.

The theories recounted thus far studied the trajectories of integration - or assimilation in the American context - on a group level rather than on an individual level. A useful analytical framework on the immigrants' individual modes of acculturation was developed by Berry (1992). He juxtaposed the retention versus rejection of the origin culture to the adaption versus rejection of the host culture. This leads to four possible outcomes: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization as depicted in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1

Modes of individual acculturation as formulated by John W. Berry (1992)

	Retention culture of “origin”	Rejection culture of “origin”
Adaptation of “host” culture	integration	assimilation
Rejection of “host” culture	separation	marginalization

Integration in the Dutch context

These ‘grand’ macro-level theories were developed in a specific North American context, and its application to Western European welfare states, and specifically, the Dutch variant is disputed. The national context of the Netherlands differs unmistakably from the American context, hence, the process and options of integration into Dutch society differ from those in the United States. Specifically, the path of downward assimilation is contested as it assumes assimilation of the visibly identifiable second generation into a ‘rainbow underclass’, joining minorities such as African Americans and Puerto Ricans as explained by Lucassen (2005) and Foner and Lucassen (2012) since the European context is seemingly more complex with less clear-cut “native” minorities (Foner & Lucassen, 2012; Lucassen, 2005). Moreover, European welfare states such as the Dutch one, guaranteed a certain level of social security over the last decades, in stark contrast to the absence of national-level social securities in the United States which aggravates uncertain socio-economic positions and opportunities. Notwithstanding the critical assessments of segmented assimilation, the core notion that several paths can occur for children of immigrants when it comes to their incorporation into society remains of vital importance – also in the Dutch context. Specifically, approaching integration in Dutch society as a single path to integration into a unified core neglects contextual differences regarding local context, immigrant group, generation, or gender. Firm criticism on segmented assimilation has been formulated by Crul and colleagues (Crul & Heering, 2008; Crul & Vermeulen, 2003) as they argued it’s too static and pessimistic to apply to the Dutch context. They especially stress the importance of intra-group differences by painting an American picture of ghettos with downward assimilation that do not exist in the Netherlands. Moreover, the assumption that people with a migration background should ‘integrate’ into Dutch society seems archaic as the population – specifically in the urban contexts - is becoming “super-diverse”. The concept of super-diversity as described by Vertovec (Vertovec, 2007) goes beyond the binary of those with and without a migration background in which both groups are seemingly described as monolithic. Vertovec (2007) argued for accounting for “differential convergence of factors” associated with migration background

such as country of origin, legal status, migration channel, human capital, and access to employment (see Vertovec 2007 for elaboration). This perspective formed a starting point to consider the “interaction of multiple axes of differentiation” when studying migrants and immigration (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1049). Super-diversity provides a new outlook on what the integration of people with a migration background means as the interaction between - and the numeric breakdown of - people with and without a migration background in local entities like neighborhoods in big cities are shifting. Remarkably, super-diversity gained traction in the European debate on immigration and integration (for example see (Crul, 2016; Crul et al., 2013; Vertovec, 2007) yet barely in the American debate to date as pointed out by Crul (2016) and by Foner, Duyvendak and Kasinitz (Foner et al., 2019). In the European context, super-diversity – however – provoked criticism. Meissner (Meissner, 2015) formulated a critique of its definition: what differentiates super-diversity, especially when compared to the concept of diversity? Another criticism is how super-diversity describes the new reality of shifting population proportions rather than providing a useful analytical framework to study these shifts. Criticism from intersectional scholars contends that super-diversity contributes to the one-dimensional message of ‘happy diversity’ (Ahmed, 2007; Geerts et al., 2018) and insufficiently takes gender and power relations into account (Geerts et al., 2018).

Intergenerational transmission and social mobility

Apart from the field of migration and integration studies, this dissertation is indebted to ideas about social mobility in general and more specifically about the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status. The effect of family background on education is twofold: (1) through processes of socialization within the family preferences and values converge, and (2) parents employ their resources to benefit the positions of their children. I mainly focus on the effect of family background in this dissertation as family background spans multiple dimensions of relevance in my research questions, e.g. migration background and socio-economic background. In their pioneering 1967 study, Blau and Duncan examined how determinants of occupational achievement in the American context shed light on the pivotal role of education (Blau & Duncan, 1967). Occupational achievement was found to function directly and indirectly in education through a myriad of additional factors such as sibling size and spatial components like region of birth. The status attainment model developed by Blau and Duncan depicted how the father’s education and occupation correlated retrospectively and explained the inferential relations between paternal socioeconomic status and the son’s status: paternal education, as well as occupation, influenced that of the son. They differentiated between *ascribed* and *achieved* characteristics in their model. The association between the child’s education and its occupational status is an example of achievement, whereas the status attainment of the child that can be linked back to parental education or occupation is interpreted as ascribed and is an

example of reproduction. This model became a blueprint for social stratification models in the decades to come.

The Matthew effect points out another form of social reproduction through education (Kerckhoff & Glennie, 1999; Merton, 1968). This effect explains the accumulative effect of education by assuming that children of higher-educated parents benefit more from education and that this increases exponentially over generations. Although these mechanisms concern individual-level outcomes, the Matthew effect sheds light on the increasing asymmetry between the children lucky enough to be born to higher-educated parents, and those precluded from beneficial family capital.

Diving deeper into the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status, questions arise like what is transferred from parent to child, how is this done, and how does this impact the child's education? And more importantly, how does the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status and its impact on education vary between immigrant families and non-immigrant families? To answer such questions a conceptual framework that differentiates, on the one hand, between educational performance and educational choice as results of processes of transmission, and, on the other hand, between socio-economic status and migration background as drivers of transmission is insightful, see Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2

Conceptual framework of intergenerational transmission rooted in socio-economic background or migration background and its impact on educational performance and educational choice

		Drivers of transmission	
		<i>Socio-economic background</i>	<i>Migration background</i>
Results of transmission	<i>Educational performance</i>	Human capital Cultural capital Economic capital	Language background Human; cultural; economic capital
	<i>Educational choice</i>	Rational choice Risk aversion	Family mobilization

To understand the role of socio-economic status in affecting the education of children of immigrants, the general mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status regarding education should be examined. Boudon (1973) provides a useful framework for how parental socioeconomic status affects the child's educational position (Boudon, 1973). He described how the family's socioeconomic position influences both the performances - primary effects - and the choices of children - secondary effects - in education. *Primary effects of socioeconomic position* concern the performances of the children, such as test scores or track placement. Socio-economic position influences educational performances via intergenerational capital transmission. Intergenerational capital transmission refers to parental human, cultural and economic capital that affects the children's education. First, *human capital transmission* assumes that children are bestowed with their parents' cognitive abilities directly through genetic transmission and indirectly through parental education level (Anger & Heineck, 2010; Björklund et al., 2010; Black et al., 2009; de Zeeuw et al., 2015; Plug & Vijverberg, 2005). Direct human capital transmission refers to the 'nature' component given the partial genetic transmission: biological children's cognitive ability levels are partially inherited from their parents. Higher-able parents will pass on these abilities to their children who will profit from this in education. Indirect human capital transmission regards the positive 'by-product' of higher parental cognitive abilities: higher-able parents are more likely to have attained higher educational levels themselves, which can result in more or higher human capital to transmit to their children. This could result in an accumulative and additive effect of human capital transmission in high SES families. However, this does not rely on direct associations between cognitive abilities and educational attainment. Stienstra and colleagues (2021) have shown how cognitive abilities and educational attainment both merely rely on genetic influences as well as environmental influences (Stienstra et al., 2021).

Yet for immigrant families, the frequently used measures of human capital transmission such as education level or occupational status do not capture the potential of the family's human capital. Specifically, parental education level as the operationalization of the socio-economic position of immigrant families paints a skewed picture as immigrant parents might not have had similar opportunities, either to translate their human capital into the education level in the country of origin, or in the country of destination as the parents of Dutch majority children have had. This means that despite their cognitive abilities, immigrant parents may not have the opportunities to translate this human capital into education or occupation. Nevertheless, theoretically, we have no reason to believe that the impact of immigrants' parental cognitive abilities on their children's educational levels is solely reliant on the direct genetic link. However, methodologically speaking, measuring the indirect

link through immigrants' parental education level remains challenging as immigrant parents may have more unmaterialized human capital.

Second, *cultural capital* as described by Bourdieu (1973) emphasized 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1973). This concerns cultural codes, practices, and norms that parents transfer to their children through socialization. These codes, practices, and norms are indirectly related to education: 'high-brow' cultural capital is assumed to be evaluated positively and thus rewarded in education. Hence, children originating from higher socio-economic status families benefit in education from being socialized by 'high-brow' cultural codes, practices, and norms. Immigrant families might not have the cultural capital that is evaluated positively in the Dutch educational system. In studies however, this is mostly limited to language proficiency and barriers (Broeder & Extra, 1999; Driessen, 1996; Extra & Yagmur, 2010; Rijkschroeff et al., 2005). which are merely a consequence of immigration resulting in lower cultural capital.

Third, *economic capital* refers to the financial support of parents in their children's education. Boudon (1973) explained this as the economic capital hypothesis: more wealthy parents can support their children in education because they have the luxury to be able to pay higher tuition fees, live in more affluent neighborhoods with better schools, or through investing in extra-curricular support for their children. In the Dutch case, primary and secondary school fees are predominately publicly funded. Nevertheless, more affluent families can invest in extra-curricular support such as tutoring or in paying tuition fees for tertiary education, preventing their children from taking out student loans. Moreover, with the growing numbers of students attending private education or extracurricular education (Elffers, 2019), economic capital becomes more salient in the educational inequalities between children from wealthy parents and those from less fortunate families.

These three types of capital are interrelated as explained by resource compensation and resource multiplication. A higher SES background could form a buffer for low cognitive abilities (Bernardi, 2014; Bernardi & Boado, 2014; Bernardi & Triventi, 2020; Erola et al., 2016; Heckman & Carneiro, 2003) which is labelled resource compensation. The effects of lower cognitive abilities on educational attainment can be limited in higher SES families as other resources – for example, economic capital or cultural capital – can compensate. Yet having a higher SES background could potentially also boost educational attainment for those with higher cognitive abilities, i.e., resource multiplication (Bukodi et al., 2014). In line with Blau and Duncan (1967) and DiPrete and Eirich (2005), the expectation can be distilled that children from higher SES families would profit more from having higher cognitive abilities in education than peers from lower SES families (Blau & Duncan, 1967; DiPrete & Eirich, 2005). Either because higher SES parents are more likely to have been more highly educated themselves and

consequently are better equipped to recognize and support higher cognitive abilities in their children, or they might engage more in and support their children's education by being able to afford tutoring or private education or advocating for their children in education. It should be noted though that both resource compensation and multiplication require abounding resources: i.e., the relation between abilities and family SES is manifested prominently in the topmost SES families.

The variants of transmission in immigrant families may differ for families without a migration background. Not only because they tend on average to have a higher socio-economic status, but because non-migrant families also profit more from the context in which intergenerational transmission takes place. Specifically, intergenerational transmission is suggested to be weaker in immigrant families than in families without a migration history for two reasons. First, relations between parent and child can be disrupted due to migration (Kwak, 2003; Nauck, 2001b). Children of immigrants grow up in a society in which they may master the host country's language better than their parents and have more or better suitable knowledge of the host country's society, e.g. are better informed about the educational system. Therefore, the role of parents as the main agents in socialization is challenged by peers, school, or media. The theory of dissonant acculturation (Kwak, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) shines light on the acculturation gap between immigrant parents and their children. These children are more likely to easily find their way in the host country than their parents because these children are educated and socially embedded in the host society. Particularly, with acquiring the host country's language and culture, the parental origin country's language and cultural norms lose importance to children of immigrants. Moreover, first-generation parents most likely grew up and were educated in their country of origin. The cultural capital that they transmit to their children, however, is likely to be context-specific for the country of origin and thus deviates from the "high-brow" cultural capital as described by Bourdieu (1973) such as cultural codes, practices, and norms, that are evaluated positively in the educational system in the host country. As shown by Leopold and Shavit, the cultural capital in immigrant families may therefore not be as valuable for the education of their children in the host country's educational system (Leopold & Shavit, 2013).

First-generation parents grew up and were educated in their country of origin. The educational system in their home countries, such as developing countries Morocco and Turkey and especially in the rural regions of these countries, may not have provided sufficient opportunities for all first-generation parents to employ their cognitive abilities and obtain the education that matches their abilities. Therefore, the intergenerational transmission of cognitive abilities in immigrant families only partially relies on the mediating mechanism of parental education levels, yet more so on genetic inheritance. Intergenerational transmission of cognitive abilities is thus expected to be weaker in

immigrant families than in native families. In sum, processes of intergenerational transmission of capital – either human, cultural, or economic – are on average expected to be weaker in immigrant families, especially in those with a lower socio-economic status.

Secondary effects of socioeconomic position on education concern educational choices, such as tracking decisions or pursuing the long route. A central assumption in this dissertation is that children from families of a higher social status make more ambitious educational choices (Mare, 1980). First, this can be driven by a rational choice perspective: higher socio-economic status families can afford higher costs of education than lower socio-economic status families, in the short term by paying tuition for example and in the long term by being able to afford the opportunity costs of extended educational trajectories. The lower socio-economic families may not be able to afford the postponed returns of extended educational trajectories as this implies imminent loss of labor and income for the time children are enrolled. This is especially relevant to the Dutch context with relatively high tuition costs for higher education compared to other European countries and increasing socio-economic inequality in education (Onderwijsinspectie, 2016). Second, more ambitious educational decisions can be driven by higher socio-economic backgrounds as explained by risk aversion theory. Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) argued that children from higher socio-economic families are more likely to enroll in higher educational tracks to reassert or maintain the families' position in socio-economic regard and to forestall downward social mobility (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997). This is especially the case for children with lower cognitive abilities from higher SES families as excellently explained by Stienstra and colleagues (2021). While children with lower cognitive abilities are more at risk of downward social mobility, high SES parents can invest more to compensate for their child's lower cognitive abilities – as compared to lower SES parents – and thereby aim to avoid downward social mobility.

Educational choices and opportunities are often studied in the context of migrant families. Migration background of the family can be a driver in making socially upward educational decisions for their children. Immigration optimism or the family mobilization thesis (Heath et al., 2008; Kao & Tienda, 2002) describes how intergenerational transmission of positive values, aspirations, and behavior pertaining to education in immigrant families can affect children of immigrant's education favorably. The assumption is that the experience of migration facilitates the immigrant family's commitment to education and their urge for intergenerational upward social mobility in the host country. Positive self-selection of the first generation is assumed to be pivotal to this process: international migration is an adventurous operation supposedly undertaken by a selection of overall more positively predisposed and driven people (Borjas, 1987; Chiswick, 1999). Upon arrival and settling into the host society, the first generation might attain lower socio-economic positions.

However, their children aspire to upward mobility and aim for enhanced socioeconomic prospects such as higher educational and occupational levels.

Given these inferences on the role of migration background and socioeconomic positions, with various capital deficits casting down intergenerational transmission within immigrant families, one would expect a rather pessimistic outlook on the educational positions of children of immigrants. Furthermore, children with migration backgrounds tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged by the tracked educational system in the Netherlands. Finally, their position might be negatively influenced by the major shift in the public debate on immigration and integration since the 1990s. Lucassen and Lucassen (2015) described this pessimistic turn as a result of the timing and political correctness on the one hand, and the distinct political nature of the anti-immigrant movement in the Netherlands that transcended traditional categories as 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' on the other (Lucassen & Lucassen, 2015). Combining the disheartening perspectives on the education of children of immigrants in the Netherlands and the pessimistic setting of the public debate on immigration and integration, one may be dispirited about the situation of children of immigrants in the Netherlands. However, contrary to this pessimistic scenario for young people with a migration background, recent reports on the educational position of children of immigrants painted a more hopeful picture (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2020, 2022b): immigrant youth become higher educated and the gaps between children with and without migration background are shrinking. I argue that these trends and scenarios should be seen from a longer-term and historical perspective because these trends in educational attainment are embedded in a longer-term process of immigrant children navigating education as successive cohorts of various migration backgrounds enter the educational system.

Data and sources

Children of immigrants are of interest in this dissertation. Specifically, children of immigrants with a Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean background are studied, representing prominent groups within the demographic of immigrant children in the Netherlands. The inclusion of the Indonesian second generation in the fifth chapter is substantiated given it is one of the largest group – next to the aforementioned four groups. The significance of investigating children with an Indonesian migration background lies in the potential to provide insights into distinctive differences or parallels when compared to other colonial or post-colonial groups, such as those with a Surinamese or Antillean migration background. The sixth chapter addresses the Chinese second generation. Prior research conducted in the Netherlands and internationally, including the United States, posits that the children

of Chinese migrants tend to obtain higher educational attainment and employment rates (e.g. Portes & Hao, 2004) despite potential capital deficits.

The concept 'children of immigrants' refers to the second generation yet is not exclusively bound to this generation. Specifically, the research population in Chapters 5 and 6 are people with a second-generation migration background. In Chapters 3 and 4, a broader definition of children of immigrants is used, that includes children of immigrants who attended school in the Netherlands. This included the second generation, but also the 1.5 generation as well as some first-generation children. The conceptual differences between these migrant generations regard place of birth and age of migration. Second-generation children refer to children who are born in the Netherlands and who have at least one parent who was born abroad, contrary to generation 1.5 and first-generation children who themselves were born abroad. Generation 1.5 can be distinguished from the first generation by the age of children upon migration to the Netherlands. Commonly, the difference between generation 1.5 and the first generation is drawn around the age of 12 (Rumbaut, 2004), because people who migrate as adults – i.e., over the age of 18 – are considered first-generation immigrants, and children who migrate before their teenage years as generation 1.5. Differences in this are mainly assigned to the age children enter the educational system in the country of destination. The idea underlying these differentiations is that the earlier children migrated and entered education, the easier their integration is assumed to be. In this dissertation, mainly children with a migration background belonging to the second generation and in the generations between the first and second are studied, unless explicitly mentioned – as is in the fifth and sixth chapters in which the second generation is exclusively of interest.

Two types of data are utilized: public data and register data provided by Statistics Netherlands. Publicly available data concerns information and figures derived from publications and open-source data tools. The third chapter utilizes these secondary source data sourced from publications and public records whereas the fourth chapter provides a literature review. The fifth and sixth chapters utilizes register data provided by Statistics Netherlands. These administrative register data from the System of Social Statistical Datasets (SSD) are compiled and provided by Statistics Netherlands (Bakker et al., 2014). The SSD combines many thematic registers with the population registers (*Basisregistratie Personen*, BRP) resulting in longitudinal datasets containing individual-level demographic information including birth date, migration background, gender, and information on education, income, employment, and welfare benefits. The individual-level data of the children can be linked to the information of the parents and the household, such as the income and the household structure.

Although these data provide sizeable opportunities to study education as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, these come with limitations. First, children of immigrants and their families are assigned and categorized by third parties, therefore overlooking relevant categories of self-identification among children of immigrants in their educational trajectories, acculturation, or integration processes. At Statistics Netherlands, the country of birth and the country of birth of the parents are key in differentiating between migrant groups. This holds for most secondary-source data too. Such categorizations overlook individual agency and intergroup variation since the categorizations of migrant groups are solely based on the country of birth of their parents. However, I acknowledge that children of immigrants are by no means a monolith and that this categorization overlooks intergroup variation and self-categorization or self-identification. Differences between migrant groups, but also between generations, cities, and countryside – i.e., local identities such as “Amsterdammer” -, boys, girls, and other genders and hyphenating identities – i.e., “Dutch-Moroccan” or “Surinamese Dutch” - demonstrate some of the many layers in which self-categorization can be constructed. Utilizing (parental) country of birth as a marker for categorization does not necessarily reflect the religious, ethnic, or cultural minority groups within migrant groups studied here. Among these are Kurdish and Assyrian communities with family history in Turkey, Amazigh people from Morocco, Afro-Surinamese, Marrons, Hindustani, Javanese, and Chinese communities with roots in Suriname, and island identities for people from the Dutch Antilleans. In this dissertation, I contrast the educational trajectories of children of immigrants with children of non-migrant families. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that cultural and financial capital or family mobilization aspirations may vary between cultural minority communities. These intra-group differences are disregarded when the country of birth is the marker for migration background. I did not study ethnic identification or self-categorizations, however, the statically assigned categorization is an impediment to this study.