

Chapter 4

Becoming Successful in the Business and Law Sectors: Institutional Structures and Individual Resources



Elif Keskiner, Christine Lang, Ali Konyali, and Sara Rezai

4.1 Introduction

This present chapter zooms in on the professional trajectories of immigrant descendants who managed to achieve upward mobility – those whom Chap. 2 described as “climbers” and “thrivers”. We use data from the Pathways to Success and ELITES projects, both of which focused on descendants of migrants from Turkey who have achieved higher positions across different professions, occupational sectors and countries (see Chap. 2 for more details). The findings uncover crucial differences between successful pathways across occupational sectors and countries. In this chapter we focus on the trajectories of descendants of Turkish labour migrants into the business and law sectors in France and Germany. We highlight how these trajectories are shaped by the interplay between institutional contexts and different forms of resources or capital that individuals have at their disposal or are able to accumulate in the course of their careers. Further, we show differences between professional sectors and countries with regard to the resources that descendants of Turkish migrants relied on to achieve their position. They indicate differential opportunities

E. Keskiner (✉)

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

e-mail: e.keskiner@vu.nl

C. Lang

Universität Osnabrück, Osnabrück, Germany

e-mail: clang@uni-osnabrueck.de

A. Konyali

Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung (DeZIM), Berlin, Germany

e-mail: konyali@dezim-institut.de

S. Rezai

Erasmus-Universiteit Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

e-mail: sara@rezai.nl

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for these immigrant descendants to enter higher professional positions. The chapter is guided by the following research questions:

- What are common pathways of highly-educated descendants of Turkish migrants in the law and business sectors in Germany and France?
- In what ways have institutional contexts influenced these pathways?
- Which resources were relevant for them within these contexts that enabled them to achieve their improbable career pathways?

In recent years, studies have paid increasing attention to the success stories of descendants of migrants and underlined the growing number of descendants of migrants of a lower social class background acquiring higher education diplomas (Crul, 2015; Schnell et al., 2013). How these trajectories continue in the labour market has received much less attention (Agius Vallejo, 2012; Alba & Barbosa, 2016; Lang et al., 2018). Research on the labour market access of immigrant descendants regularly shows disadvantages (Brinbaum, 2018; Heath & Cheung, 2007) that are partly related to their social class background (Gracia et al., 2016; Kalter, 2011; Zuccotti, 2015) and provides evidence of hiring discrimination (Midtbøen, 2016; Zschirtl & Ruedin, 2016). More recently, a growing number of studies have investigated migrant descendants' access to and careers in specific established and more prestigious occupational sectors and examined the barriers they face (Keskiner & Crul, 2017; Konyali, 2017; Lang, 2019; Lang et al., 2022; Midtbøen & Nadim, 2019; Waldring et al., 2018). Yet the mechanisms that help or hinder immigrant descendants who have completed 'successful' educational trajectories in their efforts to find positions in the labour market that are commensurate with their qualifications, still demand closer scrutiny, especially by taking comparative perspectives. In this chapter 'successful professional pathways' refers to acquiring or being on one's way to acquiring higher or leadership positions in established sectors of the labour market.

Previously, Crul et al. (2012) showed that successful educational pathways of descendants of migrants vary across countries according to the institutional structures of their education systems. Using the international TIES Survey of the second generation from a Turkish, Moroccan and ex-Yugoslavian background in cities spread across eight European countries, they showed that even after controlling for parental social class background, descendants of migrants experienced distinct school pathways in different education systems. In this study, pursuing a comparable approach, we take these insights a step further and try to understand the trajectories of our respondents into and in the labour market by comparing their experiences in different occupational sectors in a number of cities in different countries. We assume that the professional trajectories of descendants of migrants are also structured by the distinct institutional contexts of occupational sectors and their national particularities. We have selected two occupational sectors, business and law, which are commonly perceived as influential and prestigious in today's societies. Jobs in these sectors offer both high salaries and social status. These sectors differ, however, as to the way in which access to positions is structured. The business sector provides career opportunities for people from various educational and

professional backgrounds, which may lead to powerful, highly-paid positions, e.g. in the banking and finance branches as well as in international corporations. Corporate business companies are at the centre of the global economy, accommodating the financial and managerial elite. Due to increasing internationalization in the corporate business sector, it is nowadays regarded as a more dynamic sector that is open to accommodating professionals from different backgrounds (Konyali, 2014; Savage & Williams, 2008). Compared to the business sector, the law sector is more embedded in and regulated by national institutional contexts. Traditionally, the legal profession has provided careers linked to high social status and prestige and given access to influential positions in the justice system, in public administrations, or in corporate law firms. While access to positions in state institutions as judge, state attorney or civil servant is nation state-regulated, the more business-oriented subfields, such as corporate law companies, share the business sector's international focus.

We compare access to these sectors in Germany and France, two countries that have often been compared in the sociology of education and the sociology of work due to their distinct institutional structures (Maurice et al., 1986). The French education system is more comprehensive while the German education system is more stratified, the French labour market supports on-the-job training, whereas in Germany occupational skills are gained more in the education system, particularly via vocational training (Müller & Gangl, 2003; Powell et al., 2009). Yet such comparisons have focused on the transition to the labour market for the entire population, and for all sectors and occupational levels. In this chapter we will investigate how distinct national institutional contexts play out in the occupational sectors of law and business and how this specifically impacts the professional trajectories of highly-educated descendants of migrants from Turkey. Empirically, we focus on individuals working in specific cities/city-regions: Paris, in the case of France, and Berlin, Frankfurt and the metropolitan Ruhr Area in the case of Germany. Thus, the experiences of our respondents may also be shaped by these city contexts. Nevertheless, by comparing these settings, we pursue the more general aim of illustrating how institutional structures in distinct sectors, and their country (or city) specific forms, shape the professional careers of descendants of migrants.

First, we will provide a brief overview of our theoretical framework, followed by the details of our methodology. In presenting our findings we will introduce profiles of selected respondents to illustrate recurrent patterns in professional pathways in the French and German business and law sectors that we have retrieved from our data analysis. We do not argue that the pathways we present here are the main or only pathways to professional success. Instead, we aim to point out how distinct institutional contexts shape the relevance of different types of resources and the opportunities and strategies of immigrant descendants to achieve higher positions in the labour market. The conclusion will discuss this relational relevance of different forms of resources in the course of the careers of descendants of migrants.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

According to the ‘Integration Context Theory’ of Crul and Schneider (2010), social mobility patterns of descendants of migrants vary across institutional settings. The authors argue that the “participation and belonging of the second generation in European cities is strongly dependent on the integration context” (p.1257). By “integration context” they refer primarily to national and local institutional structures in education systems, the labour market, housing, religion and legislation. Using this as a starting point, we assume that the structures of educational systems and occupational sectors in the respective national and local contexts are crucial to shaping the pathways of migrant descendants in law and business in Germany and France. To make sense of their pathways, we complement this focus on institutional arrangements with a focus on the forms of resources, or capital (Bourdieu, 1986) which respondents described as being significant for their careers in the given contexts. We argue that it is the interplay between institutional structures and the resources that descendants of migrants have at their disposal and are able to accumulate which shapes their professional careers (Keskiner, 2019).

In the cases investigated here, the institutional contexts include, first, the education systems which influence how educational credentials and required degrees can be attained. Most of our respondents in the French and German law and business sectors have a university degree since this is a formal entry requirement in the law sector, and important for achieving leading positions in many parts of the business sector. Thus, distinct features of tertiary education are visible in their pathways. Moreover, the institutional contexts of the careers include the requirements for access to jobs and positions within a professional sector, i.e. the qualifications, skills, experiences etc. that employing organizations (e.g. companies, law firms, state administrations) expect from prospective employees and that influence employment opportunities. Further important structural conditions of the occupational sectors include the national and local labour market context, i.e. whether it is a booming sector that provides jobs and upward mobility opportunities (e.g. the IT sector) or a stagnant occupation. Another important condition is the state of local supply and demand regarding professionals and services.

Relevant to the case of descendants of migrants from Turkey, is also the existence and size of the Turkish community in the city and the emergence of Turkey as a booming economy in the 2010s when this research was taking place, providing business and career opportunities in the business and law sector. Our data shows that both transnational career opportunities and access to a local migrant community as potential clients influenced careers in different ways across the sectors.

In relation to such institutional or structural contexts, certain resources, or forms of capital, may become significant for professional pathways. Drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), we can assume that two forms of capital in particular become important: cultural capital, in its

‘institutionalized’ form of educational degrees and ‘embodied’ form of skills and (implicit) knowledge (Nohl et al., 2014), and social capital, i.e. contacts to potential future employers, clients or to people who provide important information on possible career paths (Keskiner et al., 2022). Further, we assume that specific resources related to one’s ‘migration background’ may also become relevant for professional trajectories such as language skills, cultural competences or social capital in relation to the ‘ethnic community’ (Lang et al., 2018; Nohl et al., 2014; Schmidtke, 2010). For example, the social capital that descendants of migrants rely on when pursuing careers in fields where they frequently interact with immigrant clients is different from the social capital required for building connections in fields where they primarily deal with fellow professionals and clients without a migration background – yet both types of social capital are relevant in their careers (Lang et al., 2022; Keskiner & Waldring, 2022).

Focusing on the role of different forms of capital in a Bourdieu-inspired approach draws attention to two important aspects. First, according to Bourdieu, the relevant forms of capital, or resources, are not static and do not exist in a void but are defined by the structures of the respective fields (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Savage et al., 2005). The institutional structures of a professional sector in a specific national or local context require specific resources in order to successfully enter the field and achieve further positions. Comparing highly-skilled migrant descendants across the business, law and education sectors in Paris, Keskiner and Crul (2017) have shown that each sector values different forms of capital for reaching high status positions. Similarly, when investigating the access of immigrant descendants to positions in the fields of law and public administration in Germany, Lang et al. (2022), illustrated the varying significance of ‘ethnic’ or ‘cross-ethnic’ forms of social capital.

Further, the capital approach sheds light on individuals’ differential opportunities to access and accumulate the required resources. While some individuals can benefit from the transmission of relevant resources from their families, most of the descendants of migrants from Turkey in France and Germany had parents who were low-educated and had arrived in these countries via guest worker migration schemes to do low-skilled jobs. This implies that those who have achieved high-ranking positions could not draw on cultural and social capital from their families or had difficulties transforming this capital from their parents’ country of origin into the environment of the receiving countries (Keskiner, 2019). Nevertheless, certain resources, which are related to the ethnic background and transmitted from the parents (such as language capital) may function as valuable assets in the occupational trajectories. Further, individuals may also accumulate and convert resources in the course of their trajectories, for instance through deliberate educational or professional strategies or in contexts that provide favourable opportunities.

4.3 Methodology

This chapter is based on qualitative interviews from two studies: the ELITES Project in France and Germany and the Pathways to Success Project in Germany. Both studies concentrated on descendants of migrants from Turkey who had achieved upward social mobility and successful educational and professional careers. The ELITES project aimed to access respondents in leadership or high-ranking positions and focused on individuals with a minimum of five years of work experience in three professional sectors: business, law and education. Interviews were conducted in Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin, Stockholm and the Randstad area in the Netherlands. For the present chapter, we use the French and German interviews. The German Pathways to Success project also targeted respondents who have reached or are on the way to higher or leading professional positions but it did not have a strict requirement regarding the length of their careers. This project focused on four professional fields: law, business, teaching and public administration. Interviews were conducted in Berlin, Frankfurt and the metropolitan Ruhr Area. In spite of slightly different sampling strategies, both projects ended up with very similar samples. Through concentrating on respondents who had achieved a certain professional position (regardless of whether this was via higher education or through climbing the occupational ladder in the labour market), the Pathways to Success project mostly found respondents who had higher education diplomas. This is partly due to the choice of occupational sectors, as the law sector in particular requires university degrees, although the business sector is more open to persons without a higher education diploma.

Both studies only sampled respondents with low-educated parents, most of whom had arrived in France and Germany as labour migrants in the 1960s–1980s. Hence all of the respondents had achieved considerable levels of upward mobility considering their parents' socio-economic status. The fieldwork of both projects was conducted in 2012–2014. Both studies used semi-structured interviews and similar interview guides for the questions on the pathways into and in the labour market.

The following analysis draws on interviews with 23 respondents in the law sector and 23 respondents in the business sector in Germany (in Berlin, Frankfurt and the Ruhr Area), and with nine respondents in the law sector and 12 respondents in the business sector in France (in Paris). Among our respondents in the law sector, 18 were female (eleven in Germany, seven in France) and 14 male (12 in Germany, two in France), in the business sector, 12 were female (nine in Germany, three in France) and 23 male (14 in Germany, nine in France).¹

¹While gender affects professional careers in multiple ways, e.g. in specific forms of discrimination or gendered labour market and organizational structures, this dimension was not central to the analysis for this chapter, small case numbers in higher professional positions also made it difficult to systematically focus on gender differences. However, the French sample in particular, which focused on individuals who were more established in their professional fields, shows gender dif-

4.4 Pathways to Success in the Law and Business Sectors in Germany and France

In the following sections, we will juxtapose the pathways of our respondents in the law and business sectors in Germany and France and highlight how – in specific institutional contexts – different forms of resources, or capital, became relevant for helping Turkish migrant descendants to achieve certain professional positions. This interplay of institutional contexts and individual resources has shaped distinct opportunities and constraints for these successful careers. We will show this by first introducing the main institutional features for each sector in both countries and by sketching our respondents' career patterns. We will then illustrate the interplay of institutional contexts and the various forms of resources our respondents used and accumulated at different stages of their trajectory, by looking at several profiles of respondents.

4.4.1 *The Law Sector*

In both France and Germany, the pathways into legal professions are strongly institutionalized and have clear barriers that need to be passed. In Germany, future lawyers have to pass five years of law studies at university which are completed by a first state exam (*Staatsexamen*). This is followed by a mandatory two-year traineeship period (*Referendariat*) which includes placements in different legal professions and fields. All law students are guaranteed a placement, which gives them the opportunity to gain professional experiences and to make contacts in the field, in other words, to accrue relevant cultural and social capital. Their training is then completed by a second state exam. As legal education and traineeships are regarded as general training, all future lawyers, irrespective of whatever specializations they intend to take at a later date, have to complete this pathway. The two state exams, which are centrally organized by the federal state, have a reputation for being extremely difficult and failure rates are relatively high.² Candidates often prepare for these examinations for a year or longer and pay for private preparation courses, as their transition into the labour market depends largely upon their grades. If a candidate passes with 'distinction' (*Prädikat*), the door is open to prestigious, well-paid and secure professions as judge, state attorney or in a corporate law firm³ – if

ferences in the numbers of respondents, which might relate to gendered forms of discrimination or structural disadvantage, but any further examination of this is beyond the scope of this chapter.

²Around a third of the candidates fail at the first exam, around 15% at the second exam (BMJV, 2014).

³Achieving certain grades is a formal requirement for the judiciary (becoming judge or state attorney) and higher for positions in the civil service, and it is commonly expected by corporate law firms and in law departments in companies.

their grades fall much short of this threshold, there is not much choice but to become an independent lawyer.

In France, a law degree requires a four-year Bachelor study and a minimum one-year Master (*master 1 de droit*) degree from a university. Yet most candidates acquire a two-year Master (*master 2 de droit*). Having acquired a law degree, candidates then have to pass the Bar exam (*CRFPA, Centre Régional de Formation Professionnelle des Avocats*), which functions as a major threshold to accessing the profession. As with most state exams in France (*concours*), the Bar exam has an oral and a written part and only about a third of candidates will pass.⁴ Similar to the German context, candidates attend expensive private courses and spend considerable periods of time preparing for the Bar exam. In contrast to Germany, respondents did not mention grades being crucial for gaining entry into prestigious law firms as the Bar exam in itself functions as a major threshold. Those who pass the exam then attend a training course lasting 18 months and graduate with a CAPA (*Certificat d’Aptitude à la Profession d’Avocat*) diploma that gives them the right to practice as a lawyer. The 18-month course also includes a six-month internship in a law firm. These internships are crucial for building networks in the profession and obtaining your first job (i.e. accruing profession-related cultural and social capital).

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below illustrate the career patterns of our law respondents in these institutional contexts (light blue arrow, from left to right, the width of the arrow indicates the frequency of a pattern among the respondents). In our sample, we concentrated on trajectories leading to three sub-fields: independent lawyers, lawyers in corporate law firms and the judiciary (judges and state attorneys - only in the German sample). The vertical lines mark crucial institutionalized transition points in the careers, the boxes show the resources respondents accumulated and relied on at different points in their pathway (with dotted lines when these were

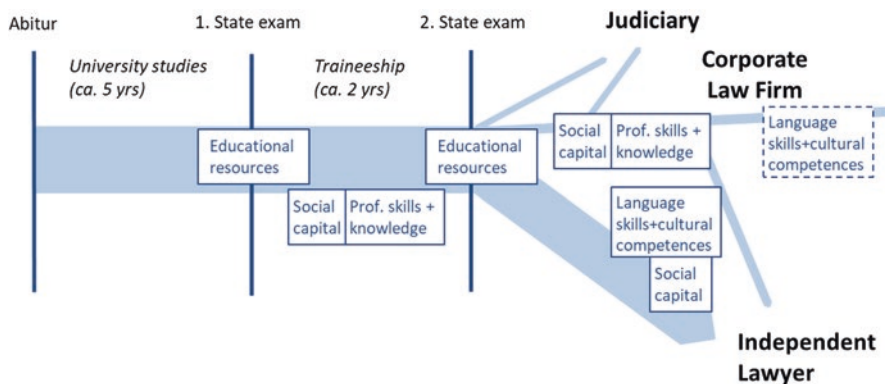


Fig. 4.1 Career pathways in the German law sector

⁴ <http://droit-finances.commentcamarche.net/faq/40997-devenir-avocat-en-france-diplome-et-concours>

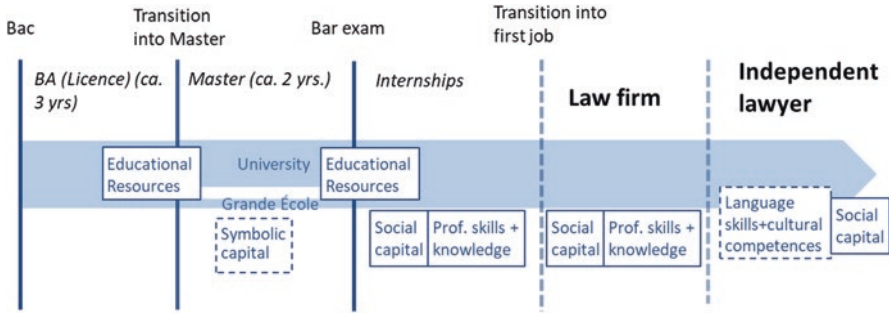


Fig. 4.2 Career pathways in the French law sector

optional or only applied in a few cases). These were educational resources, such as degrees and grades as a form of institutionalized cultural capital, in the case of France these also imply symbolic capital when a degree is from a prestigious institution, professional skills and knowledge as a form of professionally-relevant cultural capital, social capital, and language skills and cultural competences related to their Turkish background.

In Germany, our respondents’ career patterns reflected the importance of grades in the two state exams with ‘distinction’ acting as a threshold that either opened or precluded professional opportunities. While independent lawyers of Turkish descent have become more common in German cities, we found very few potential respondents in corporate law firms or the judiciary (Lang et al., 2018). This is related to the worse starting conditions of children of immigrant working class parents. Usually, they could not draw on family support in study-related issues and had to work in student jobs to cover their living expenses, which reduced the time available for studying. These conditions, as one of the few respondents who had managed to enter a corporate law firm emphasized, “just lead to the fact that you somehow pass the exam but often not beyond the nine points [the threshold for the ‘distinction’]” (Okan, associate in a corporate law firm in Frankfurt).

In contrast, one major pathway dominated the careers of our French respondents. All of our respondents initially worked in a corporate law firm, where they gained experience and developed their networks. But they all underlined the importance of becoming independent or a partner in a law firm in order to progress in their career.

In both settings it was considered very prestigious to work at a corporate law firm where one could someday be made a partner. While we observed access to such corporate law firms among immigrants’ descendants, we only found two partners of Turkish descent in the cities we focused on, which may serve as an illustration of the high barriers to accessing this position. Below, we present four cases studies that illustrate how our respondents used and accumulated different forms of resources at different stages of their trajectory in order to achieve their positions. The first two profiles are independent lawyers in Frankfurt and Paris, the second two are lawyers in corporate law firms in Düsseldorf and Paris.

4.4.1.1 Independent Lawyers: Ferhat and Demir

Ferhat works as an independent lawyer specialized in business and tax law in Frankfurt. He was born in Turkey and came to Germany as a baby together with his mother and brothers to join his father. His father worked in an automobile factory while his mother was a housewife. After primary school, Ferhat was initially assigned to the vocational track in secondary education and only managed to go to Gymnasium after his Turkish teacher intervened (Turkish mother-tongue teaching was common at that time in German primary schools). Having passed his Abitur, Ferhat started studying political science, being interested in politics, but he found it “too theoretical” and soon changed to law like one of his older brothers.

Ferhat told how it came as a complete surprise when he passed the first state exam with ‘distinction’, which opened up career prospects he would never have previously considered. Before then, he had no idea what his studies might lead to: “I was always like [...] the main thing is that I study to calm down my parents so that they know their son has finished a degree and then I somehow will make my way.” Equipped with the institutionalized cultural capital of good grades, he easily found placements in an international corporate law firm and a large auditing company during his *Referendariat*. During this period, he made professional contacts and gained experiences that were to be of decisive importance to his professional trajectory. The partner of the audit firm offered him the opportunity to continue working for them – because “apparently I made a good impression there” – if he also achieved good grades in the second exam, which he did. When Ferhat’s contract was not extended after the first year due to staff cutbacks as a result of the financial crisis, he decided to start an independent law firm together with former colleagues, drawing upon the social capital he had established during his traineeship placement in the corporate law firm. This was also a career choice because he wanted to quit the corporate law sector.

As an independent lawyer, Ferhat specializes in business and tax law for migrant entrepreneurs. In our overall German sample of independent lawyers, the focus on migrant clients is a common pattern. Almost all of the independent lawyers interviewed reported having practically only Turkish or migrant clients. In the context of a large Turkish-German community in Germany and an increasing number of businesses run by migrant owners, having a Turkish/migrant background becomes a form of capital that lawyers can utilize as a ‘unique selling point’. For Ferhat, it is important, however, to underline that he is not just a common “Turkish” lawyer catering for any legal needs of the Turkish-German community but that he addresses a “niche” in the legal field as a specialist in business and tax law, building on the expertise he gained in his previous job. He has also acquired additional credentials in this specialization. He thus combines his accumulated professional experiences and competences with his resources related to the ‘ethnic community’. Both Turkish language skills and cultural knowledge are an important asset in his job, and have been converted into social capital in the form of clientele:

The typical legal profession in Germany is still dominated by established, conservative lawyers. [...] You have the lawyer sitting up there, who knows everything and [...] just tells it once, and [...] if you don't understand it – tough luck. Turks cannot deal with this, not at all. That's a question of mentality and I just have an advantage there compared to other colleagues. I have many clients who went to German lawyers before and it did not work out. [...] It's an enormous advantage to know the language and also the culture, yes, because I can probably assess the people a bit better.

It also becomes obvious, however, that 'ethnic' background is an ambivalent career resource. There is not much alternative for an independent lawyer of Turkish background than to focus on clients sharing their Turkish or migrant background because of the difficulties in attracting German clients without a migration background. This might be due to a lack of the necessary networks or to discrimination in the choice of a lawyer. Demir works as an independent lawyer in Paris, where he was born and raised. He set up his firm four years ago. Both his father and mother had primary school diplomas and worked in factories. They pushed him to study so that he did not end up 'like them'. Even though they were not able to help him with his homework or study choices he felt very much supported. In high school, Demir's interest in politics influenced his decision to become a lawyer as he thought this would be an influential and prestigious occupation.

After receiving his Master degree, while studying for the Bar exam, he did an internship which enhanced his knowledge and experience in the profession. When he received his CAPA certificate to practice law, he started working at the same law firm. Once again, this is an example of how social capital accumulated during internships facilitated access to a first job, as was the case for many of our respondents. He underlined that he learned a lot from his superiors, famous lawyers. When they left the company, he decided that it was the time for him to become independent. Like Ferhat, he drew on the social capital gained during his first job to establish his company together with a French colleague without a migration background. Once he started his own company, he and his associate actively enlarged their social circle by attending social events and meetings to gain a clientele that is both French and French-Turkish. Regarding social capital he underlined that he did not have a "pre-fixed" social network, meaning he did not have a lawyer father from whom he could derive support and clients. When building up his clientele he relied considerably on French-Turkish contacts. His Turkish language capital was crucial to his business as most of his clients did not speak French. At the time of the interview, more than 50% of his clients were of Turkish origin. Like Ferhat, Demir thus capitalized on his language skills and cultural competences in relation to the Turkish migrant community and converted these resources into social capital in the form of clientele, which was crucial for the survival of his business.

4.4.1.2 Careers in Corporate Law Firms: Rezzan and Emel

Similar to our independent lawyers, the trajectories of respondents pursuing a career in corporate law firms illustrate the crucial role of educational resources in gaining a position at a prestigious law firm and the subsequent accumulation of relevant social capital and professional experience. However, these careers differ regarding the role of resources related to the respondents' Turkish background. Below, we juxtapose the cases of Rezzan from Düsseldorf and Emel from Paris.

Rezzan works as an associate in a middle-sized corporate law firm in Düsseldorf. Her parents both came to Germany as teenagers to reunite with their parents. Both had left school with only a basic level of formal education, Rezzan's father was a manual worker in the steel industry, and her mother was a cleaner, but they both had high educational ambitions for their children. Rezzan's decision to study law was mainly influenced by her father who pushed her towards law because it is a reputable, prestigious degree with concrete job prospects. Rezzan was a good student and passed her first state exam with 'distinction'. When to her great disappointment her grade in the second state exam was just below 'distinction', she decided to re-take it (an attempt to improve one's grade is not uncommon among law students in Germany). She was supported by her father who paid the sum required to re-sit her exams, and this time she was successful. While preparing for the exam, she worked at a large international law firm where she had already spent part of her *Referendariat*. As in Ferhat's case, her grades in the first exam made it easy to work there and enabled Rezzan to accrue both professional experience and social capital, which led to a job offer at this firm after she passed the exam. However, Rezzan turned this offer down as she did not like the "inhumane working hours". She successfully applied to different law firms and attributes the fact that she had several offers to choose from to her high grades. Rezzan opted for the law firm she was working in when we interviewed her because of its "more appropriate" working hours and pleasant atmosphere. Unlike Ferhat and Demir, Rezzan has only recently begun strategically using her Turkish language skills and cultural knowledge to accumulate social capital related to Turkey and enhance her future career opportunities:

I've just started a bit with acquisition activities [...] and this regarding Turkish clients [...] I am still quite new here but I mean the partners are all entrepreneurs and they have to acquire clients [...] I do look around and also attend events when possible where I get to know Turkish businessmen or German businessmen who have relations with Turkey and I try to build up something for me. [...] And because Turkey is very interesting at the moment and it is just booming there, this also is an opportunity for me to use this. There are many university graduates in Germany, Turkish university graduates, there are many jurists, many lawyers, but not so many who are in bigger law firms.

This illustrates that in a context of increasing business relations with Turkey, having a Turkish background can become a career resource in a corporate law firm. Rezzan, however, seems to have far more flexibility and scope as to whether or not she chooses to use these resources than the independent lawyers. Emel was born and raised in Paris, where she works as a senior lawyer in a corporate law firm specializing in mergers and acquisitions. Both of her parents came to France through the

guest-worker scheme and worked in the manufacturing industry. Although they were unable to help Emel with her studies, they always encouraged her to continue and provided full emotional support. At first, Emel was not sure whether she really wanted to study law, but discovered that she liked it, especially corporate law. During her bachelor years she read about a prestigious Master degree in business law in a law magazine, which required high grades. She studied hard to get the grades required for this master and succeeded. During her Master, she saw that all of her classmates were preparing for the Bar exam, so she also subscribed for the Bar exam competition and passed it right after gaining her Master's 2 degree. Her initial plan was to practice law for a couple of years and then work in the business sector as legal consultant. To her surprise, she was accepted by a prestigious corporate law firm just two months after graduation. She thinks that gaining her Master's degree from a prestigious institution, i.e. a particular form of symbolic capital, played an important role in getting this job. Emel had also completed two internships during and after her studies, which were crucial, not only for expanding her professional knowledge and meeting other lawyers but also for enhancing her self-confidence and learning the behavioural and verbal conduct in the field, i.e. acquiring the relevant habitus:

It's not that things were strange but it was more that I didn't know how to behave towards an associate, how to behave towards other employees, how to behave towards other interns, with secretaries, everyone has their own place, so voilà, I don't know how to say.....It's just knowing how to behave.. Then I learned by observing, I think it's like every person, when you're a child as well you observe what you do, what you don't do, you observe: that is how you learn. In the beginning you act like you think you should and once we master the environment you act like how you really are and voilà....

At the time of the interview, Emel had been working for the same employer for 6 years. As a senior lawyer, she was in a leadership position working with junior lawyers, with whom she had a good relationship. At work, she mainly spoke French and English, and contacts in Turkey or the Turkish language skills had not been relevant so far. Yet, as in Rezzan's case they could become instrumental for her future career. Emel wanted to become a partner in her firm or, alternatively, to work as an independent lawyer. Therefore, she had started to build a clientele that also included the French-Turkish community and her parents' contacts. The pathways of these four respondents illustrate how different forms of resources became significant for their careers in the given institutional contexts of the law sectors and how the relevance of these resources varied throughout the course of their career. Thus, the pathways are reminiscent of the relational and temporal nature of forms of capital. Although our respondents were professionally successful, their trajectories also revealed barriers for immigrant descendants' careers.

First, in both country settings, specific educational resources – passing highly-demanding exams (in both countries), with good grades (Germany) or attending prestigious law schools as a form of symbolic capital (France) – were crucial in order to access the law sector and obtain well-paid, secure positions. While access to the sector is formally guided by the meritocratic idea embodied in exams, our respondents from immigrant working-class families were structurally

disadvantaged as they could hardly rely on concrete support from their families or social environment and often had to work next to their studies. Passing these ‘meritocratic’ exams often required following expensive private courses and/or possessing the correct information about the entry requirements (i.e. that the grades mattered). Such resources were not likely to be at the disposal of working-class immigrant families.

Second, social capital and professional knowledge and experiences accrued during internships/traineeships were important for job offers and accessing one’s first job. In both countries there are opportunities to accumulate this capital during mandatory training programmes, which is beneficial for individuals who did not ‘inherit’ profession-relevant social capital from their families.

Third, once having entered the field, resources related to one’s Turkish background could become important. This was particularly the case for independent lawyers who, in both countries, strategically used these resources to build up a clientele and secure their professional survival. The fact that they were based in big cities with a large Turkish migrant origin community supported this. Compared to the independent lawyers, the respondents employed in law firms relied less on clientele with a Turkish background, but later they invested in their social capital in the community and also in Turkey in order to expand their assets. However, Turkish names, language skills and cultural competences are ambivalent resources. While they helped to attract clients with a Turkish background, they did not attract ‘German/French’ clients without a migration background – something that both Ferhat and Demir mentioned. This also poses the question of whether easier access to the migrant population was an additional asset for these independent lawyers or the only source of clientele they could realistically count on.

4.4.2 *The Business Sector*

Compared to the pathways in the law sectors in Germany and France, the careers in the business sector are far more diverse and less shaped by rigid formal access requirements. Theoretically, it is possible to become a successful entrepreneur even if you dropped out of school. However, to access high-ranking positions, it is crucial to acquire formal educational resources. The two countries differ to some degree in this respect.

In Germany, work experience and contacts were key resources for our respondents’ transition to the labour market. In several cases, these could be acquired via institutionalized channels, e.g. during vocational training (a highly recognized pathway in Germany, which combines vocational school and working in a company and leads to a range of qualified occupations) or in mandatory internships and ‘working student’ placements during university studies (especially at universities of applied science). However, a relatively large number of our respondents had also completed a higher education degree or obtained other additional qualifications at some point in their career, which indicates that formal educational resources are also a career

asset in this sector. Compared to the pathways in the law sectors, the transition between the educational and professional pathway was often more dynamic as gaining educational credentials alternated with accumulating professional experience.

The French business sector proved more rigid with regard to the qualifications required for high-ranking managerial positions. All of our respondents in France held a Master's degree. This also has to do with the way in which education and labour market institutions are designed in France. In Germany, vocational training and universities of applied science are highly recognized educational options that allow students to gain occupational skills and become acquainted with the labour market during their educational trajectory, whereas in France occupational skills are mostly acquired via on-the-job training (Keskiner, 2019). Vocational tertiary education is not as recognized, though it exists and was also preferred by second-generation respondents if this was an option (Keskiner, 2019). This had two consequences for the labour market entrants to the business sector: due to the limited opportunities for dual training they had to attain a university degree and to arrange their internships on their own to gain relevant skills and develop contacts in the labour market. While internships were also relevant experiences in France, they were not institutionally supported or provided as part of the educational trajectory. Furthermore, in France prestige differences between higher education institutions created an additional structural barrier, graduates with *Grande École* diplomas had better opportunities to both enter the labour market and to achieve upward mobility. Attending a *Grande École* allowed students to develop various resources, on the one hand our respondents acquired valuable educational credentials (institutionalized cultural capital), on the other hand they developed social capital in the form of networks of people in leadership positions, and gained symbolic capital which signals their value and capacity in the labour market. Respondents with *Grande École* degrees had much steeper upward mobility and rapid access to leadership positions. Those who had a Master degree from a 'normal' public university (*Fac*) had to make extra efforts, such as conducting internships, going abroad for their studies, etc., to increase their chances in the labour market. Despite children of immigrants' increased participation in higher education, they are still under-represented in the *Grandes Écoles* (Brinbaum & Guégnard, 2011; Keskiner, 2019).

Our respondents' career patterns in the business sectors in Germany and France are illustrated by the following figures. Once again, the vertical lines mark the transition points, while the boxes show the different forms of resources that they accumulated and relied on at different points in their career (Figs. 4.3 and 4.4).

To illustrate the relevance of different forms of capital in these contexts within a career perspective, we will once again present four profiles. Since the careers of the respondents in France and Germany are shaped rather distinctly, we will present two cases of children of Turkish immigrants working in the business sector in Germany (in Berlin and Essen) in juxtaposition to two cases from France (Paris). For the comparative angle, we selected cases of individuals employed in larger companies.

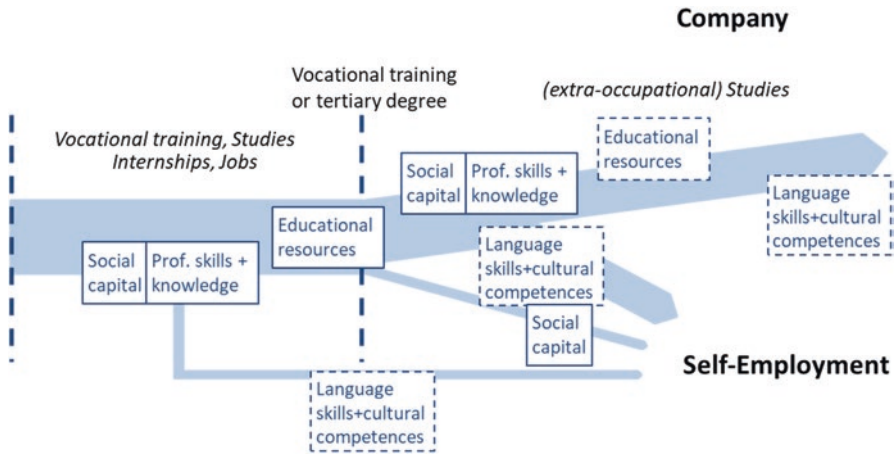


Fig. 4.3 Career pathways in the German business sector

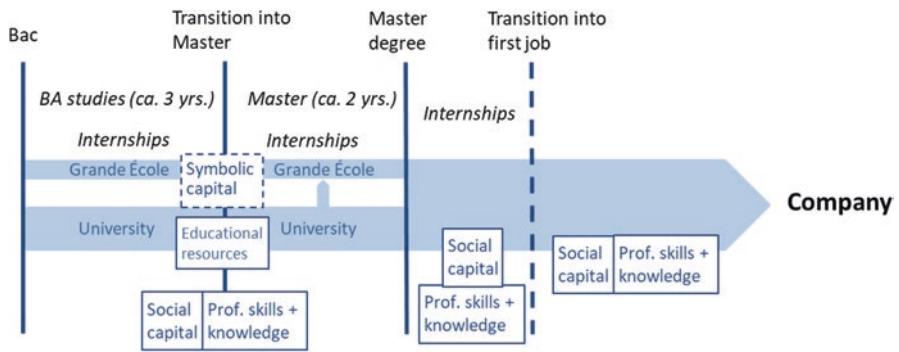


Fig. 4.4 Career pathways in the French business sector

4.4.2.1 Careers in Business in Germany: Ayca and Esra

Ayca works as HR manager in a global player in Berlin. She was born in Istanbul and came to Berlin at the age of two. Her father owned a small restaurant, her mother was a housewife. Ayca grew up in Berlin-Kreuzberg where she spent the first three years of primary school in a ‘foreigner class’, i.e. a class solely for immigrant children. Later she attended a comprehensive school, where she passed her *Abitur*. She hesitated between university studies or vocational training and opted for the latter because she wanted to earn her own money (trainees receive a salary) and become independent from her family as soon as possible. Ayca completed a three-year vocational training as an industrial clerk at a large logistics company, which offered her a job straight after she graduated. From this secure position, she applied for further jobs in the HR sector where she aspired to work. After one year in her

first company, she found a new job as a HR assistant at a start-up in Berlin. Step-by-step, she moved to more responsible positions in the HR sector while gradually accumulating professional experience and qualifications. Ayca successfully applied for new positions and changed company several times because she wanted to “advance”. She combined working with additional training as a HR assistant, followed by a tertiary degree in business and commerce, mainly for the “certificate”. She thinks that her work experience and expertise were the determining factors that led to her career advances, including the position she held at the moment of the interview. However, before this job she had also worked as freelance HR consultant and capitalized on networks she had established over the years. She had worked in Istanbul for some months, combining occupational and private interests:

I somehow wanted to do this because until then, Turkey was always a holiday destination for me. And these former colleagues who I was well connected with, they had invested in Turkey [...] and asked if I could somehow support them building this up, finding personnel etc. And one thing led to the other and then I said “Okay, I always wanted to do Istanbul, why not?”

Apart from this period, Ayca’s Turkish background did not seem to feature in her occupational pathway. It thus appears as a flexible resource which she was able to mobilize when an interesting opportunity came up but which she did not rely on in order to advance her career. However, she could convert her Turkish language and cultural capital into the symbolic capital of work experience abroad and highlight this in her CV. While Ayca’s case illustrates a smooth entry into the labour market and a step-by-step career, the case of Esra reveals barriers to the transition into the labour market and higher positions. Esra works as an HR consultant in a large, internationally operating corporation in the Ruhr Area. Born in Turkey, she came to Germany at the age of five with her mother to join her father who was working in an automobile factory. Esra grew up in a small village in South Germany. After primary school, she first attended secondary school in vocational track for two years before changing to *Gymnasium* after her father had intervened with her teachers because she was such a good student. Having obtained the *Abitur*, she chose business studies partly influenced by her part-time job in a company where she was attracted to a managerial role. During her studies, she did not do any internships but always had a part-time job (e.g. as a waitress), as the state student loan (*BAföG*) was not sufficient. Unlike Ayca during her vocational training, Esra did not accumulate relevant work experience and contacts during her educational pathway. This turned out to be a problem after graduation. Esra applied for numerous jobs all over Germany but without success. This was a common experience for respondents who had applied for positions in the business sector without having built a network, several assumed that it was due to discrimination. Finally, Esra entered the labour market via an internship programme paid for by the job agency. She obtained an internship position after a neighbour who was working in the HR department at her current company recommended her. After completing the programme, Esra was offered a regular contract in the same department. Social capital at work was therefore crucial for accessing this job. Esra describes her disadvantage in this respect because she could not draw on family resources:

[The internship] was the only thing which worked. It was, if you want, through connections, but connections that I'd gathered myself. [...] What I see now is when parents introduce their children, their children apply and things are much easier for them than they were for me: then I think I would have loved to have had that as well.

Esra also points to the importance of social capital for careers within the company. To her disappointment she had not yet been included in the company's internal career support programme, which depends on recommendations by senior managers, while several of her direct colleagues had been chosen. She said she experienced discrimination because of her background:

A glass ceiling is there. I don't know anyone in Germany [in her company] with a migration background who is head of a department. [...] I can only make assumptions but if you have a migration background you definitely have to be twice as good as someone else to get these opportunities. It's the same for women: you also have to be twice as good as a man before people even consider you for a higher position.

Esra has thus experienced her migration background as hampering her career. Her Turkish language skills and cultural knowledge could still become relevant, because her company had branches in many countries, including Turkey, and liked to temporarily assign employees who are familiar with the local language and culture to management positions. However, Esra doubted that it could be a long-term career resource in her company since colleagues who had taken this path had found themselves back in their former position upon their return to Germany. Both Ayca's and Esra's cases show the crucial importance of social capital in addition to educational resources, for the transition into the German business sector and making a career within a company. While our French cases reported similar findings, educational resources played a more important role in the French context. Attending a *Grande École* as a prestigious higher education institution improves the odds of success. Below we will present the cases of Sukran and Ali. Ali attended a *Grande École* and his account illustrates how this can be a game changer.

4.4.2.2 Careers in Business in France: Ali and Sukran

At the time of the interview, Ali was working as a manager in an IT company. He was born in Turkey and moved to Paris at the age of 5. His parents had migrated to France for economic reasons and neither his father nor his mother had received any formal education beyond a couple of years in primary school. His mother worked as a housewife, his father in the construction sector. Ali went to public middle and secondary schools in Saint Denis (a working-class *banlieue* of Paris) before deciding to study mathematics at a university in Paris. While he was at secondary school, a teacher advised him to do internships during the school holidays instead of going to Turkey with his family every summer. Ali accumulated several internships and shorter periods of employment. After obtaining his Master's degree from the university, he continued his education by enrolling in another Master programme at a business school (*École de Commerce*), a *Grande École*. He did so because it was difficult to find a good internship position after his studies:

And when I found an internship, all the other interns that were in the company with me came from Sciences Po, Chaussée, HEC- the Ivy League so to say. Only a few of those who came from an 'ordinary' university would do internships that were interesting. And I found that my friends indeed did internships which were less interesting, so taking a step back (...) I concluded that (...) all those that came from a 'normal' university would be put in a 'back office' position. Those positions that were not strategic. It was there at the end of my studies when I concluded that I had to do another year at least in an Ivy League school of business.

In addition to gaining contacts and professional skills, Ali's internship experiences were thus crucial in order to learn the rules of the game in the business sector – i.e. understanding the importance of attending a *Grande École* for future career options. After surveying all the schools, he found an institution that accepted students from public universities (the others required a bachelor degree from a *Grande École*). His degree from a prestigious institution and internships helped Ali gain entry into his current company where, with the help of 'many connections', he has managed to move up to a middle management position over the years. During the interview Ali repeatedly underlined the importance of social connections in making it in his profession:

How can one acquire a leading position? With connections. With many connections. Because we are in a profession in which you have to be open towards people and open to companies and all departments. We have connections and the capacity to receive training. This is how you rise from your starting position. The type of portfolio manager who is closed-up on himself, who sits in front of his computer screen, who does not seek to know what is happening behind his screen, or try to understand the firms and the departments: things will not work out well for him.

Hence Ali was still actively building social capital in order to advance his career. His family could never be instrumental in his pathway, but he initiated a networking drink among highly-educated descendants of migrants from Turkey in Paris every two months. Even though his contacts with the Turkish community have not helped his career so far, he likes to keep a large circle. In contrast to Ali's trajectory, Sukran's case typifies the pathways of young people who did not acquire a *Grande École* diploma and who try to accumulate different forms of capital through internships, part-time jobs and foreign study programmes to compete in the job market. Sukran was working in a middle management position at a large French Bank. She was born and raised in a suburb of Paris. Her parents also did not have any formal education beyond primary school in Turkey. Her father was employed in the construction sector, while her mother worked as a housewife. Sukran decided to study business administration, banking and finance at two different public universities in Paris. She said she couldn't attend an "École" because her family couldn't afford it. Therefore, she put even more effort into getting interesting internship positions during the summer holidays.

After high school I did not go on any holidays with my family. Yeah, I think that was the last time I had a long holiday. I didn't have any connections so I was making open applications to all companies, maybe I was lucky to find something but these experiences are important. I learned about my different options but also got to know a lot of people.

Thus, similar to Ali, Sukran realized that due to her family background she lacked contacts in and knowledge about the field. However, unlike him, she could not access *Grande École* credentials as a form of symbolic capital but had to rely on individual strategies to accumulate professionally-relevant social capital and work experience to advance in her career. Through recommendations and her self-developed professional network, she managed to attain a middle management position in an internationally operating French bank. Like Ali, she highlighted the importance of interpersonal relationships when advancing in the field. However, she was also aware that, in general, top-level managers in French firms have *Grande École* degrees and that it would be difficult to become part of the leadership positions without one. Since access to these private institutions is highly selective and very limited among descendants of migrants or working-class families, the selection to top management positions even precedes the labour market and begins much earlier in differential educational opportunities. At the time of the interview, Sukran was seriously considering moving into her company's international department in the expectation that this would give her more opportunities to climb the corporate ladder. But this would require English language skills rather than her Turkish language capital as the connection with the Turkish migrant community or Turkey could not be used as a resource in her current position. The comparison of these pathways in the business sectors in Germany and France shows similarities and differences in the forms of resources that became valuable and were accumulated by respondents in the course of their careers.

First, social capital and professional experience accrued by doing internships during one's educational trajectory proved crucial in both countries for the transition into the labour market and the later career. Educational programmes combining theory and practice through mandatory internships, such as vocational training or programmes at universities of applied sciences in Germany, could support this, especially for young people who could not rely on the transmission of professionally-relevant resources from their families (Keskiner, 2017, 2019). In France, where such institutionalized opportunities were less common, our respondents had to develop individual strategies to find relevant internships and accumulate the social and cultural capital crucial for their entry into the labour market. This also included acquiring knowledge about the rules of the game, which enabled them to adjust their career strategies accordingly (Keskiner & Crul, 2017). Contacts among future employers and networks in the company also played an important role for our respondents.

Second, educational resources were of varying relevance when we compare the two countries. While attaining a profession-related degree was a necessary but largely unspecified condition for accessing positions in companies in Germany, the pathways of respondents in France were overshadowed by the significance of attending a *Grande École* in order to build the required network and reach a leadership position. For our respondents, this constituted an important barrier. To begin with, most of our respondents or their immigrant parents had not even been informed of the existence of such institutions, and even if they knew they were unable to afford courses to prepare them for the entrance exams for a *Grandes École*. If they

somehow managed to surmount these obstacles, their families were not in a position to afford the high tuition fees for these institutions. Only a few of our respondents who were able to secure scholarships as high-achievers managed to enter these institutions, a move that paid off as they later attained top management positions.

Third, resources related to one's Turkish background were less relevant in all the profiles. Building contacts in the migrant community or transnational connections to Turkey were not particular assets, at least not for the types of careers we were looking at in large companies, despite their international orientation. In this context, resources related to one's migration background could become relevant for temporary assignments to Turkey but it is questionable whether this is helpful to a career in the long run.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we conducted a comparative analysis of the successful pathways of descendants of migrants to enter and work in the business and law sectors in France and Germany. The sectoral approach unravelled how these pathways are shaped by institutional contexts which required or enabled our respondents to accumulate different forms of resources at different moments in their career. These resources consisted of institutionalized cultural capital in the form of educational degrees and grades, professional skills and knowledge as forms of 'embodied' cultural capital, social capital, and language skills and cultural competences related to their Turkish background. This implies differential opportunities for children of immigrants who were largely unable to draw on career-relevant cultural and social capital in their families to achieve higher positions in these sectors.

We have seen that sectors in which the transition into the labour market is regulated by more rigid institutional structures primarily require institutionalized cultural capital. Acquiring the 'right' educational diploma (and grade) is thus crucial in order to access higher positions. This does not come as a surprise, yet the degree of credentialism in these sectors was also reflected in our respondents' experiences and influenced their educational strategies. This was clearly the case in the law sector in both countries, where entry into the profession is regulated by state-organized exams, which create high barriers. The accounts of our respondents in the law sector underline that passing the examinations or grade threshold that open up secure professional opportunities, is far from merely being a matter of individual effort as promulgated by the 'meritocratic' narrative. Instead, it depends on the available cultural and economic capital – the latter being used to pay for private preparation courses. This is capital that children of immigrant and working-class background are unlikely to 'inherit' from their families. While attaining these credentials is not an equal battle for everyone, once acquired they can open doors to prestigious areas in the law sector. The business sector seemed less rigid in terms of such credentials, yet in France we see that a *Grande École* degree is more highly valued than a degree from a public university. Acquiring a degree from such a prestigious

institution, which is still unlikely for children of immigrants (Brinbaum & Guégnard, 2011), functioned as symbolic capital and eased our respondents' pathways into leadership positions in both law and business. A similar condition was not observed in the business sector in Germany. Nevertheless, for all of our respondents in both sectors, educational credentials were not sufficient on their own, and they therefore had to accumulate other resources in order to succeed in the labour market.

Social capital was another crucial resource for all of our respondents. There is a long tradition of research into the significance of networks for access to the labour market (Granovetter, 1974; Keskiner et al., 2022). As the individuals we studied entered employment sectors and positions distinct from those of their parents, they could not inherit relevant social capital and had to accumulate it themselves by using different strategies such as doing internships or combining work and study. Especially in the German business sector, social capital seemed more relevant for entering the labour market than the type of educational credentials. Social capital worked in different ways. Connections to future employers smoothed access to the labour market. Having connections was also emphasized as being key to accessing leadership positions. Despite their considerably high educational achievements, many of our respondents reported situations in which they perceived disadvantages and discrimination, like Osman who tried to enter the business sector in Paris:

It is more difficult to get into a job interview, that's what I discovered, with this background. I see this with other colleagues who finished training and actually fulfil all the requirements but then receive a one-liner like "the position is already filled" (laughs) whereas you know that this is not true because the position is still being advertised.

Experiences of discrimination in recruitment processes were particularly reported by respondents in the business sector in both countries. Gathering social capital in the field before entering the labour market, e.g. via internships, thus became even more important because it allows one to 'prove' one's professional skills to potential employers and avoid having to go through recruitment processes as an 'unknown candidate'. Further, the trajectories show how the accumulation of social capital and institutionalized cultural capital are closely entangled: respondents converted educational resources that helped them to enter prestigious subsectors — such as a *Grande École* diploma in the French business sector or degrees with 'distinction' in the German law sector — into important social capital that further supported their careers. However, this also shows how in some fields, building relevant networks may require specific educational resources (e.g. attending a *Grande École*), which are more difficult to attain for children of immigrants. While for most respondents, useful contacts were professionals without a migration background, who still dominate the higher positions in the sectors investigated, in the law sector, contacts in the population of migrant background or transnational connections to Turkey also emerged as important social capital.

Most of our respondents possessed language skills and cultural competences related to their parents' Turkish migration background, yet these only became a

resource in some of the fields they entered. Primarily among independent lawyers in France and Germany, converting these resources into social capital was a key strategy. The respondents invested in their relations with the Turkish migrant population to build up a clientele. However, this was also a reaction to their experience of an 'ethnic bias', or simply discrimination, in the choice of a lawyer among clients both with and without a migration background. In that sense, the active, partly strategic use of their language skills and cultural competences to build up social capital proved an important ingredient for success.

Lawyers working in corporate law firms in both settings mentioned building up connections with Turkey as a lucrative career strategy, a specialization that could be flexibly deployed. In contrast, for those working in the business sector in large companies, Turkish language skills and cultural knowledge was hardly a resource. Our findings thus illustrate that labour market contexts define the value of the resources at an individual's disposal and that this includes contextual factors beyond institutional structures: notably the booming economy in and business relations with Turkey at the time of the research and the existence of a sizeable population of Turkish background in the cities where our respondents worked proved crucial.

The chapter pursued a relational approach, which made it possible to understand how the professional pathways and strategies of children of migrants from Turkey are shaped by the interplay between structural conditions and different forms of resources, or capital that individuals have at their disposal or are able to accumulate in the course of their careers. It is important to underline that this also has a temporal dimension, with different forms of capital becoming relevant at different stages of a career. This points to the importance of studying careers with a longitudinal perspective as the institutional structures and the resources they value or enable to be developed vary over time. The temporal dimension also relates to the convertibility between different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which was visible in different respects. On the one hand, it could be supportive for certain trajectories, when, for example, attending a prestigious university or achieving a degree with 'distinction' not only means accumulating institutionalized cultural capital and symbolic capital, but also makes it possible to convert this into social capital in the form of important contacts in the professional field. On the other hand, however, this convertibility is a mechanism that perpetuates the disadvantages of children of immigrants in accessing higher positions as they have fewer opportunities to obtain such required or valued educational credentials in the first place.

All in all, our research underlined the importance of looking at institutional structures and conditions not only in educational systems (see Crul et al., 2012) but also in different labour market sectors when investigating the pathways of descendants of migrants. Focusing on the resources that descendants of migrants rely on and are able to accumulate within these contexts and over time helps us to understand their professional strategies and opportunities.

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