

Being one of the few: Professionally successful descendants of migrants from Turkey

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Propositions

1. The individualization of success and failure is crucial for the (re-)production of group disadvantage. This is exemplified by individualistic achievement narratives of exceptionally successful individuals that downplay the impact of structural inequality on life chances, while they emphasize the importance of personal efforts.
2. Emerging alternative career paths for descendants of lower educated migrants from Turkey indicate the need for individuals from disadvantaged groups to circumvent restrictive national conditions that favour social reproduction.
3. The international business context and the professional standardization within provide a framework in which (perceived) difference due to ascribed group belonging can be beneficial as an indicator of specific competences, even for individuals from disadvantaged groups.
4. The employability of ethnic background resources is a two-sided phenomenon. On the one hand, it can enable individuals from disadvantaged groups to contradict expectations. On the other hand, it can also lead to a contestation of their professionalism.
5. Due to their transnational ties, descendants of migrants have to deal with continuous contestations of their national sense of belonging. Successful professionals can turn this condition of 'in-betweenness' into an advantage by framing it as an adaptability to the market-driven requirement to be mobile.
6. Successful professionals are reluctant to depict themselves as victims of discrimination, although they experience encounters that can be understood as such. The fact that many instances of discrimination remain subtle, poses an additional difficulty to address this (cf. Waldring, Crul, & Ghorashi, 2015).
7. The infamous 'glass ceiling' seems the only means to talk about inequality in terms of access to leading professional positions. However, the 'glass ceiling' is rarely attributed to individuals and thereby it becomes an almost mystical notion that draws attention away from actual processes of discrimination and exclusion.
8. The naïve belief in the value of meritocracy is in itself a mechanism that justifies inequalities. Such a perspective is not able to convincingly explain why certain groups remain continuously underrepresented in privileged positions.
9. Descendants of migrants remain vulnerable subjects of apparently indefinite integration demands by members of the alleged 'majority society'. This is true regardless of their socioeconomic situation.
10. The dichotomy between 'migrants' and 'normal citizens' is also continuously reproduced in the scientific literature which often theoretically constructs 'parallel societies' before it attempts to explain how they come into existence.
11. Intentionally dropping one's microphone at the end of a performance indicates success. In the best-case scenario, it can break through a glass ceiling.