

# Getting Ahead: Educational and Occupational Trajectories of the ‘New’ Second-Generation in Switzerland

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**Abstract** This paper examines the educational and occupational trajectories among second-generation immigrants of Turkish and Western-Balkan origin in Switzerland. Using a representative sample of 1107 respondents in two Swiss urban areas, the findings reveal that descendants of immigrants have reduced chances to follow a constant successful path from education to occupation, which is mainly determined by parental socioeconomic status. However, young adults of Turkish and Western Balkan origin are significantly more often upward mobile than the majority group, a pattern that is robust against a range of controls. We find parental monitoring and family cohesion to be positively related with upward mobility. Moreover, second-generation immigrants are more likely to be upwardly mobile than starting high in the education system but subsequently moving downwards—a profile that is more frequent among Swiss origin youth. Our multivariate results indicate that a lack of intense parent–child communication and perceived discrimination in school are affecting this downward process.

**Keywords** Second generation · Trajectories · Social mobility · Switzerland · TIES

## Introduction

Within the second half of the last century, Switzerland has become a major immigration country. In 2012, the share of foreign citizens was 23 %, whereas the population of

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immigrant origin represented 35 % of all residents (Swiss Federal Statistical 2013). One third of all non-EU citizens are children of immigrants who are now leaving school and entering the labour market in increasing numbers. Since the experiences of native-born children of immigrant descent are crucial for the long-term prospects for integration into society, we focus on this second generation.

Most research on this topic in Switzerland has examined socioeconomic performances and intergenerational mobility by descendants from 'old' immigrant groups that arrived as labour migrants from Italy and Spain (Bolzman et al. 2003; Fibbi and de Rahm 1988), whereas these issues remain relatively under-examined for children of immigrants who arrived in the 1980s onwards from Turkey or Western Balkans. In this article, we turn to the topic of socioeconomic success and failures of this 'new' second generation. Immigrants and their descendants from Western Balkans and Turkey constitute the two of the largest immigrant populations from non-EU countries in Switzerland today. Nationals of the successor states of Yugoslavia represent roughly a quarter of the foreign population in Switzerland and are the second-largest group of immigrants, after Italians; the Turkish population in Switzerland accounts for 5.6 % of the resident foreign population. Both groups include a large and growing proportion of youth (Wanner et al. 2009).

Echoing the US debate on the historical variability of second-generation integration processes (Portes 1994; Waldinger and Feliciano 2004), this second-generation youth is new not because more recent but since immigration context and reception policies differ significantly from previous ones. In the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin wall and the subsequent globalisation surge, Switzerland revised promptly its admission policy by liberalising immigration from EU countries. Moreover, the introduction of a preferential admission policy for highly qualified people from non-EU countries working at the top levels of the occupational stratification severely restricted extra-European intakes. Moreover, both Turkish and the Western-Balkan immigration are characterised by mixed asylum and labour flows of people generally holding fairly low human capital. Additionally, they were stigmatised as culturally distant and religiously aliens because of the predominant Muslim affiliation (Piñeiro 2014). Given the combination of all those various circumstances, integration processes are expected to take place under rather unfavourable conditions.

Few recent studies investigated Turkish and Western-Balkan second generation's school performance reporting higher rates of early school leavers, lower performances in achievement tests (Dustmann et al. 2012, p. 168), more frequent participation in lower ability tracks (Liebig et al. 2012, pp. 54–57) and reduced chances of achieving tertiary education as compared with the majority population (Fibbi et al. 2011, pp. 126–128). At the same time, the few existing studies on labour market performance of the new second generation indicate an overwhelmingly low unemployment rate after school, a short transition period towards finding a first job and lower differences to their non-immigrant age mates in the occupational status in international comparison (Lessard-Phillips et al. 2012). This empirical evidence shows rather contradictory results in the evaluation of their socioeconomic attainment. Children of immigrants from Turkey and Western Balkans seem to catch up over time and experience upward mobility by the time they reach their final destination on the labour market. Thus, the ensuing questions are how are Turkish and Western-Balkan second generation upward mobile? If at all, through which avenues do they gain socioeconomic advancement?

What are the factors and determinants associated with their educational and occupational careers?

We address these questions by analysing trajectories that compound together the educational and occupational paths, from the beginning of school tracking until the current position in the labour market. Upward mobility is at the heart of this paper since previous studies predominantly focused on the causes of failure and downward mobility rather than on the mechanisms and trajectories of success. This study makes a second major contribution by identifying crucial explanatory factors that shape young adults' socioeconomic trajectories. First, we follow previous studies by including measures for parental human capital, family size as well as behavioural standards within the family of origin relevant for upward mobility. Next, we explore the role of individual characteristics of young adults that may shape their choices in educational and occupational trajectories. Among them, we analyse the effects of self-efficacy, attitudes towards compatibility of family and work and parental status. Navigating through the education system and entering positions on the labour market involves information that is provided by agents outside the family home, such as peers or teachers. Finally, perceptions of discrimination are considered as a roadblock towards upward mobility in socioeconomic trajectories.

## Theoretical Considerations

### The Family Home

The most powerful determinant of educational and occupational attainment is parental socioeconomic background, in particular for immigrant youth (Glick and White 2003; Kao and Rutherford 2007). Socioeconomically better-off parents obtain the relevant financial and non-monetary resources to better support their children's route to socioeconomic success. For instance, higher educated parents are likely to be more effective when trying to help their children to do well in school, have a better knowledge of how to motivate their children and might be more effective in influencing decisions of their children at important transitions points in school and towards the labour market. Moreover, parents with high socioeconomic status transmit greater means of cultural capital (better language skills or ways of interacting with others) rewarded positively by the educational system and might in turn influence the socioeconomic performance of the child, thus ensuring better socioeconomic outcomes to their offspring.

Yet socioeconomic family background is not all that counts. Parental school involvement and intergenerational proximity have been found to be positively related to educational and occupational outcomes by children of immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut 1994). Children can benefit from parental involvement through greater social control, encouragement and intergenerational transmission of values and aspirations (Turney and Kao 2009, p. 258). We anticipate that greater levels of family cohesion and parent-child communication are associated with socioeconomic success as these factors provide greater support and tighter monitoring of children's activities. Not only strong family ties or effective intergenerational cohesion is beneficial for socioeconomic advancement, stricter family control is a relevant explanatory factor as well. On the one hand, increased responsibilities in the family home may translate into

better behaviour in school and work and improved outlooks (Lopez 2003; Zhou and Bankston 2001). On the other hand, too heavy a share of responsibilities in the family home could undermine time for schoolwork and consequently reduce the chances for socioeconomic success (Feliciano 2012; Suárez-Orozco and Qin 2006).

### Individual Level Factors

Besides family-related factors, young adolescents develop beliefs about themselves through school, work and life experiences which have an influence on socioeconomic outcomes (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012). Self-efficacy is the belief they may have in their personal ability to do a task or activity and their capacity to overcome the challenges that they may face while travelling along educational and occupational trajectories (Bandura 1994). Higher levels of self-efficacy will contribute to greater socioeconomic success. Previous evidence indicates that second-generation immigrants in Switzerland obtain on average lower levels of self-efficacy (OECD 2006, p. 99), which might contribute to the explanation of unequal chances to follow more successful trajectories.

Educational and occupational trajectories are also determined by aspects of the individual life course. Among them, the most crucial factor is having children (parental status). Previous literature has shown that having children has a strong impact on individual socioeconomic trajectories, in particular for women since they still remain predominately 'responsible' for child rearing in today's societies (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001). Parental status accounts for variations in school and work interruption, completion rates and for changing career choices. Postponing decision about children may have a positive impact on successful educational and occupational trajectories. However, to what extent having children affects individual socioeconomic trajectories in the long run depends on individual gender-role attitudes (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005). Previous research on Turkish immigrant families shows a strong correlation between greater agreement towards compatibility of family and work and a fairer share of household chores, childcare and responsibilities among couples (Herwartz-Emden 2000). It is assumed that egalitarian work-family attitudes have a positive effect on educational and occupational trajectories (Goldscheider et al. 2011). At the same time, some studies indicate that attitudes and preferences about the gender balance of work and family among descendants of immigrants differ from those prevailing in majority populations in European societies (Huschek et al. 2011).

### Outside the Family Home

Previous studies revealed not only the importance of school structures in facilitating or hampering educational mobility (Crul et al. 2012b), but that outside-family networks can also provide important additional resources for upward mobility (Gibson et al. 2004; Meunier 2011) and for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and immigrant origin in particular (Cherng et al. 2013; Schnell 2014).

Firstly, teachers generally serve as mentors, feedback and advice givers. Strong student-teacher relationships are especially important for immigrant youth to overcome alienation or feelings of disconnection, which in turn can have a positive effect on their educational careers (Stanton-Salazar 2001). Secondly, teachers play a central role as a result of their ability to negotiate (directly or indirectly) institutional resources and

opportunities, such as information about academic tutoring, admissions and career decision making (Stanton-Salazar 1997). Institutional contacts to school personnel are also important for job placement. Employers are aware of the contacts they use and trust these teacher's recommendation of students, and youth who find a job through school contacts may be assigned to jobs that offer better trajectory possibilities and lead to higher occupational positions and earnings (Rosenbaum et al. 1999, p. 191).

Next to the role of teachers, research into the role of peers has long demonstrated that age mates and close friends play a crucial role in influencing adolescents' behaviour and cognitive processes, such as academic engagement and socioeconomic achievement (Campbell 1980; Duncan et al. 2001). Close friends are important for immigrant youth because they give them access to resources and information fostering socioeconomic advancement. Compared with majority students, they have to rely more on peer contact in their educational and occupational trajectories because of a reduced access to pro-scholastic networks and embedded resources in their own families (Gibson et al. 2004). It has also been found that having contacts with non-immigrant peers provide important resources and information that facilitate the employment chances of second-generation immigrants (Kanas et al. 2011).

Individual social mobility might be hampered, however, by unequal treatment and perceived discrimination (Skrobanek 2014), such as in school or on the labour market (Loury 2002, p. 99). Perceived discrimination may lead to discouragement and lowering of aspirations consequently blocking social upward mobility. At the same time, discrimination, in particular within institutional settings such as the school or the work place, might be perceived as a challenge to try harder to succeed, in particular for children of immigrants (Kasinitz et al. 2008).

## Methodology

### *Data*

Our data comes from the 'The Integration of the European Second-generation' (TIES) survey. TIES is a collection of data about the children of immigrants from Turkey, Western Balkans and Morocco in 15 European cities in eight western European countries, which was carried out between 2007 and 2008 (Crul et al. 2012a). The Swiss TIES sample contains data for descendants of immigrants from Turkey and Western Balkans, the largest non-EU migration flows to Switzerland. Respondents of immigrant origin were sampled regardless of their present citizenship(s), if they were born in Switzerland and at least one of their parents was born abroad. Additionally, the survey was conducted with a majority group of Swiss nationality whose parents were both born in the country. At the time of the interviews, all respondents were between 18 and 35 years old. The Swiss TIES survey was carried out in the urban areas of Basel and Zurich since the largest number of second-generation youth from Turkey and Western Balkans is living there (Fibbi et al. 2015).<sup>1</sup>

An onomastic sampling approach was applied to commune-level population register in order to produce a gross sample from which respondents of immigrant origin could

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<sup>1</sup> In 2007, 1290 Swiss-born people of Turkish origin and 18–35 and 2458 of Western-Balkan origin lived in Zurich; in Basel, the numbers were 833 and 768, respectively (Fibbi et al. 2015).

be first identified as such and be randomly selected and interviewed. The majority group has been selected on the basis of commune's registers of resident population. The target sample size was 250 respondents per group and urban area, and the response rate varied from 36 to 47.5 % among groups and study areas (Groenewold and Lessard-Phillips 2012, pp. 48–50).

Given that we focus on socioeconomic trajectories of young adults in Switzerland, we excluded all those respondents who were still in school at the time of the interview and had no labour market experience. This yields to a total sample size of 1107 respondents (374 of Turkish origin, 378 of Western-Balkan descent, 355 majority group), i.e. 82 % of the original sample.

## Variables

### *Dependent Variable*

**Educational and Occupational Trajectories** We use retrospective autobiographical statements on individual life courses collected in the TIES survey in order to explore various trajectories to gain socioeconomic advancement.<sup>2</sup> This design allows portraying trajectories from compulsory schooling until the current stage in the labour market. We focus on four stages to compile socioeconomic trajectories (for similar approaches, see Hao and Pong (2008) and Laganà et al. (2013)):

1. *Lower secondary education* is divided into school types with (1) elementary requirements (basic-level performance) and (2) extended requirements (advanced-level performance).
2. *Upper secondary education* is categorised on the basis of the International Standard Classification of education (ISCED) into (1) vocational training oriented (ISCED 3c, 3b—for a maximum length of 2 years) and (2) Baccalaureate oriented (ISCED 3a, 3b for 3 years and more) school types.<sup>3</sup>
3. *Tertiary education* includes all tertiary institutions (ISCED 5a, 5b) as one category since participation beyond upper secondary education is still relatively low in Switzerland (OECD, 2009).<sup>4</sup>
4. *Current occupational position* is measured on the basis of the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero (EGP) classification scheme (Erikson et al. 1979). Due to small sample sizes, the EGP classes were recoded into (1) unskilled workers (VIa, VIb), (2) skilled workers (V, VI), (3) routine workers (IIIa, IIIb, Iva, IVb) and (4) executives and professionals (I, II). Those who were not participating in the labour force at the time of the interview have been coded as (5) economic inactive.

<sup>2</sup> We are aware of several acknowledged limitations of retrospective studies. Retrospective data has a high potential for bias of their reliance on autobiographical memory. However, interviewing young adolescents about their educational and early occupational careers, events which have recently been finished, the data may have a high potential of obtaining faithful autobiographical details.

<sup>3</sup> The limited number of youth having attended ISCED 4a and 4b is classified with the same criteria.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed overview on the Swiss education system, see Fig. c1 in the Electronic Supplementary Material.

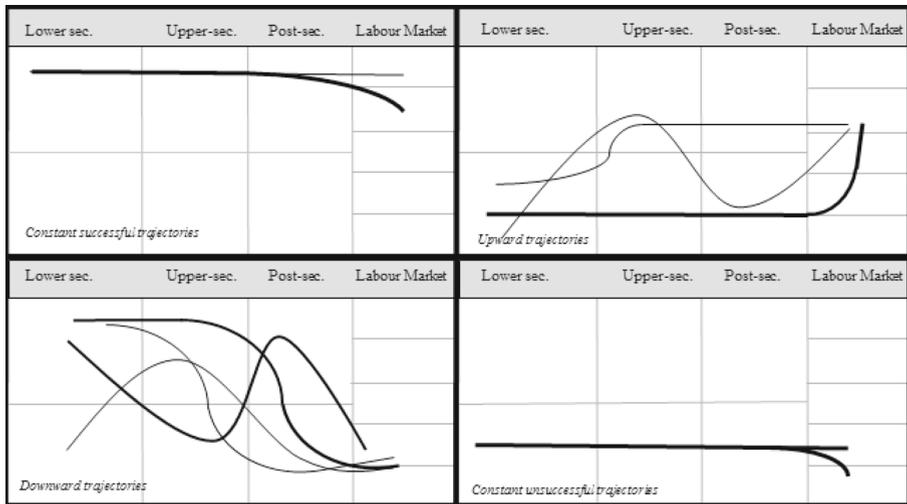
These four dimensions in our data yield to a total number of 42 combinations, each with a unique sequence of stages characterising an individual socioeconomic pathway.<sup>5</sup> For example, 111 respondents in our data started their lower secondary education in a school type with elementary requirements. Afterwards, they continued in a school track yielding to the Swiss ‘Baccalaureate’ diploma and are skilled workers today. Others, for instance, followed a longer pathway through the Swiss education system by attending tertiary education before entering the Swiss labour market as professionals. Related trajectories have been classified into a total number of four distinct families of trajectories (see [Electronic Supplementary Material](#) for a decision tree and additional information). The families of trajectories were defined as to build analytical meaningful groups in accordance with previous research (Hupka-Brunner et al. 2012; Laganà et al. 2013). Our final measure of socioeconomic trajectories has the following four categories: (1) The ‘constant successful trajectories’ summarises paths in which young adults successfully negotiate through more prestigious educational tracks with extended requirements leading to professional, routine and skilled occupational positions. (2) In contrast, the ‘constant unsuccessful trajectories’ start with elementary requirements in lower secondary education, vocational-training-oriented upper secondary education (at maximum)<sup>6</sup> and find its end in unskilled work or even inactivity. Next, (3) the group of ‘upward trajectories’ summarises avenues that lead to upward mobility. As shown in Fig. 1, upward mobility can appear in education, on the labour market or through a combination of both. The latter, for instance, classifies people who start their educational career in lower secondary education with elementary requirements, continue in baccalaureate-oriented or vocational upper secondary education and enter the labour market as professionals, routine or skilled workers. It is worth noting, however, that a very marginal group of people experienced upward mobility through a bumpy and discontinuous trajectory (compare Fig. 1). The last group classifies ‘downward trajectories’ (4). As displayed in Fig. 1, downward mobility might occur during education (starting high but then losing ground), on the labour market or through bumpy trajectories.

### *Independent Variables*

**Parental SES** We followed previous studies (e.g. Glick and White 2003; Portes and Rumbaut 2001) and created a composite measure to capture the parental socioeconomic status of our respondents by including the following information: Mother’s and father’s education and occupation, the number of books in the family home and a dummy variable indicating whether a quiet place to study for the child was available at home.

<sup>5</sup> We have to bear in mind that the grouping of educational and occupational trajectories does not include information on labour market careers after leaving the education system and before the current occupational status. The TIES survey allows tracing back educational trajectories in great detail (compare dimensions 1 to 3), but it does not contain comprehensive data on all occupational career steps. We therefore had to refrain from applying sequence or event history analysis. In additional analysis, however, we controlled for the number of prior jobs held before the current occupational position (available in TIES) but found this indicator to be highly correlated with age. Thus, we believe that our analyses do justice to differences in the number of prior jobs by holding age constant in all multivariate results. A detailed analysis of occupational trajectories would nevertheless strengthen our trajectory approach, in particular for occupational experiences.

<sup>6</sup> The Swiss VET system is very heterogeneous, offering programmes with a large range of learning requirements (Cortesi and Imdorf 2013).



Notes: Low-sec= Lower-secondary education; Upper-sec= Upper-secondary education; Post-sec= Post-secondary/tertiary education. Bold lines represent the most numerical trajectories in our data within the respective classification of trajectories.

Source: TIES Survey Switzerland (2007-2008).

**Fig. 1** Families of trajectories (dependent variable)

We applied polychoric principal component analysis to derive our standardised composite measure for parental SES from the four variables (Kolenikov and Angeles 2009). This final standardised scale ranges from 0.7 to 3.5 and is treated as a continuous variable in the statistical analysis. An increasing factor score indicates an increase in the level of parental SES.

**(Above-average) Family size** Is calculated on the basis of the total number of siblings and family members living in the parental home while the respondent went to school. Afterwards, this variable was coded into a dummy variable taking the value one if the family size is above population average and zero if otherwise.

**Family cohesion** Is an index that is taken from the sum of seven variables stating whether the respondents perceived conflicts (No=0, Yes=1) with his/her parents within the domains of friends, school, leisure time, relationships, going out, domestic work and money during adolescence. This additive index was reversed in order to achieve a measure of cohesion instead of conflict within the family. Our final family cohesion measure ranges from zero (lowest family cohesion) to a maximum of seven (highest level of family cohesion).

**Parent–child communication** In the family is a self-reported measure on the frequency of exchanges between children and parents about school or studies during secondary education. This variable ranges from ‘never’ (1), ‘rarely’ (2), ‘sometimes’ (3), ‘regularly’ (4) to ‘often’ (5).

**Exoneration from household obligations** Is measured by using the following survey item: ‘When you were in secondary school, how often did your parents let you do household chores or look after siblings?’ Answer categories are ‘often’ (1), ‘regularly’ (2), ‘sometimes’ (3), ‘rarely’ (4) and ‘never’ (5).

**Has children** Is a dummy variable coded as one if the respondent has children and zero for having no children.

**Attitudes towards compatibility of family and work** Are measured by using the survey item ‘Women should not work outside the house when there are small children in the family’. This variable ranges from ‘completely agree’ (1), ‘agree’ (2), ‘neither agree nor disagree’ (3), ‘disagree’ (4) to ‘completely disagree’ (5).

**Self-efficacy** Is a scale combining responses about how much interviewees agreed with the statements ‘It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals’, ‘I can solve most problems, if I invest the necessary effort’, ‘If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution’ and ‘I can usually handle whatever comes my way’. Answer categories were ‘not true at all’ (1), ‘hardly true’ (2), ‘moderately true’ (3) and ‘exactly true’ (4) (Cronbach  $\alpha > 0.75$  for all groups). The final variable ranges from one to four while an increasing factor score indicates an increase in the level of self-efficacy.

**Above-Average Support by Teachers** Respondents were asked to think about the teachers in their most important secondary school and to indicate to what extent they agreed on the following statements: ‘I got along well with most of my teachers’, ‘Most teachers really listened to me’ and ‘I received extra help from my teachers when I needed it’. Answer categories varied from ‘totally disagree’ (1) to (5) ‘totally agree’ (Cronbach  $\alpha > 0.80$  for all groups). Given that the distribution is skewed towards high agreements with these items, we generated a dummy variable out of this index taking the scales’ median as the cut point. Thus, above-average support by teachers is a dummy variable coded as one if the perceived support is above average and zero otherwise.

**Feeling of being discriminated against in secondary school** Is a dummy variable coded zero if the answer on the survey question ‘How often did you personally experience hostility or unfair treatment because of your origin or background while being in secondary school’ was ‘never’ and taking the value one for all other answer categories (rarely, occasionally, regularly and frequently).

**Ethnic Composition of Best Friends in School and Today** Interviewees were asked to give information on their three best friends (a) during the period of lower secondary education and (b) at the moment of the interview. They were asked to list their three best friends separately for each point in time as well as the ethnicity of each friend. We combined the information on scales as follows: Three dummy variables were generated (one for each best friend—separately for during school and today) indicating whether the friend was of Swiss origin or not. Afterwards, all three answer categories were added and divided through the total number of valid answers. We achieved two scales reporting the ethnic composition of the peer groups (a) in school and (b) today, ranging from 0 (all close friends are co-ethnics) to 1 (all three friends are of Swiss origin). Both

variables are treated as continuous variables in the statistical analysis with an increasing factor score indicating more Swiss peers among the circle of best friends.

**Control Variables** We further include *gender*, *age* and *urban area of residence* as control variables.

Descriptive statistics of our main independent variables of interest are displayed in Table 1. The sample used in our analysis contained some missing values in our independent variables of interest and we dealt with this through adopting a multiple imputation (mi) technique using the ICE module in STATA 11 (Royston 2004). We nevertheless replicated all analysis with listwise deletion. These additional analyses yielded substantially similar results.

## Results

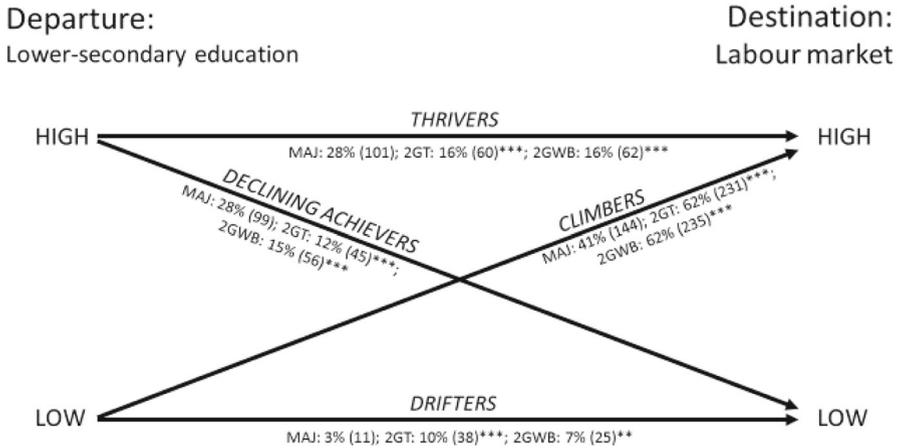
### Educational and Occupational Trajectories

Figure 2 presents frequencies for the four trajectories by groups. The first linear trajectory describes the ‘constant successful path’ in Switzerland. Young adults successfully negotiate

**Table 1** Overview of key independent variables

Variable	Range	Majority group	Second-generation Turkey	Second-generation W.-Balkan
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Parental SES	0.7 (low)–3.5 (high)	2.80 (0.6)	1.98 (0.6)	2.09 (0.6)
Family size (above population average)	0 (no)–1 (yes)	0.37 (0.5)	0.31 (0.5)	0.51 (0.5)
Exoneration from household obligations	1 (often)–5 (never)	3.42 (1.2)	3.35 (1.3)	3.55 (1.3)
Family cohesion	0 (low)–7 (high)	5.22 (1.8)	5.12 (1.7)	5.29 (1.8)
Parent–child communication	1 (never)–5 (often)	3.60 (1.0)	3.70 (1.1)	3.63 (1.1)
Having children	0 (no)–1 (yes)	0.19 (0.4)	0.20 (0.4)	0.20 (0.4)
Attitudes towards compatibility of family and work	1 (completely agree)–5 (completely disagree)	3.36 (1.2)	3.01 (1.2)	3.05 (1.2)
Self-efficacy	1 (low)–4 (high)	2.96 (1.4)	2.36 (1.3)	3.07 (1.3)
Above-average support by teachers	0 (no)–1 (yes)	0.32 (0.5)	0.48 (0.5)	0.45 (0.5)
Feelings of being discriminated against (in secondary school)	0 (no)–1 (yes)	0.50 (0.5)	0.49 (0.5)	0.46 (0.5)
Proportion Swiss peers in school (all Swiss)	0 (only co-ethnics)–1 (all Swiss)	0.78 (0.3)	0.34 (0.3)	0.38 (0.3)
Proportion Swiss peers today (all Swiss)	0 (only co-ethnics)–1 (all Swiss)	0.81 (0.3)	0.31 (0.3)	0.37 (0.3)

Notes: Total  $N=1107$ . For dichotomous variables, mean values reported are actual percentages. *SES* socio-economic status, *SD* standard deviation. Source: TIES Survey Switzerland (2007–2008)



Notes: MAJ: Majority group, 2GT: 2nd Generation Turkey, 2GWB: 2nd Generation Western Balkan. Statistical significance: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Source: TIES Survey Switzerland (2007-08)

**Fig. 2** Four common types of trajectories, in percent (*N*)

through more prestigious tracks in the Swiss education system leading to professional or at least routine occupational positions. We called those following this path ‘thrivers’. They encompass 20 % of the total respondents in our data. A closer look at group differences reveals that respondents of the majority group outperform second-generation young adults on this path (28 % compared with around 16 and 20 %, respectively).

The second linear path displayed at the bottom right of Fig. 2 includes young adults who move along the bottom line of the socioeconomic spectrum. Those ‘drifters’ start low in lower secondary education and (if at all) complete compulsory education at maximum with a vocational degree. Afterwards they are either unemployed or enter the labour market as unskilled workers. Drifters are, however, a marginal group comprising only 7 % of our sample. Turning to the distribution by group we find, albeit with caution due to the small sample sizes, second-generation from Turkey most frequently being drifters (10 %), followed by second-generation from Western Balkans (7 %) and the majority group (3 %).

Another 55 % of our sample can be classified as ‘climbers’ since they travel along certain trajectories that lead towards upward mobility. The second-generation of Turkish and Western-Balkan descent is significantly more often climbing upwards (62 % in each case) compared with majority respondents (41 %). The difference in upward mobility is in favour of the second generation. Children of immigrants achieve their mobility most frequently through the apprenticeship which enables them to reach routine and skilled work positions in spite of their elementary lower-secondary school attainment (17 % for Turkish, 25 % for Western-Balkan and 11 % for majority youth) or directly on the labour market (32 % for Turkish, 24 % for Western-Balkan and 19 % for majority youth).

Finally, about a fifth of our sample experiences downward mobility—the second non-linear family of socioeconomic trajectories. These ‘declining achievers’ start high in the education system but either lose ground already within the course of their educational career, on the labour market after completing education or experience ups and downs before reaching lower segments on the Swiss labour market as final destination or stepping out of the labour market. Declining achievers are twice as frequent within the majority group (28 %) as among second-generation youth (12 and 15 %, respectively).

Gender differences are also observed (not shown in Fig. 2). Women significantly outnumber men among the constant successful path within all groups (18 % compared with 15 % for Turkish, 21 % compared with 12 % for Western-Balkan and 32 % compared with 26 % for majority youth). On the contrary, males are more frequently ‘declining achievers’ among Turkish origin youth (13 % compared with 10 %) and the majority group (33 % compared with 22 %), while no significant gender differences are observed among climbers (drifters have not been analysed by gender due to small numbers).

### Being a Thriver

The discussion now turns to socioeconomic trajectories comparing second-generation youth with those of the majority group while considering the explanatory factors outlined above. Being a ‘thrivers’ and following the constant successful path in Switzerland is our first dependent variable. It is a dummy variable set equal to 1 when respondents followed this constant successful pathway and 0 otherwise (including all other remaining socioeconomic trajectories). Logistic regression was used for the analysis and their determinants. Four models of increasing complexity were estimated. In the first model (model 1), only group status and our control variables age, gender and place of residence are entered. In the second step (model 2), we account for family level factors (parental SES, family size above average, family cohesion, parent–child communication and exoneration from household obligations). Afterwards, we hold individual level factors and attitudes constant (model 3) and we introduce above average support by teachers, peer group composition and feelings of being discriminated against in the last analytical step (model 4).<sup>7</sup> We refrain from using multinomial logistic regression due to small numbers in the drifting path category (but see Electronic Supplementary Material, Model B1). Instead, we examine theoretically meaningful comparisons of trajectories. Coefficients are average marginal effects (AME) since they are comparable across models and groups (Mood 2010).

Table 2 gives regression results for following the constant successful path (being a thrivers) over all other remaining paths (upward, downward and drifting). Figures in the first column (model 1) indicate that Turkish and Western-Balkan descendants have a 12 percentage point lower probability of being a thrivers than the majority group. Adding family related variables to the analysis shows that parental SES exerts the strongest effect on predicting the constant successful socioeconomic path (model 2). Exoneration from household obligations is also positively related to following the constant successful path indicating—albeit at a weaker level of significance—that fewer household obligations in the family home increase the probability of being a thrivers. Most

<sup>7</sup> In order to test for differential effects we estimated interactions among our study groups and core independent variables based on Model 4. We report significant results in the text.

**Table 2** Logistic regression predicting the likelihood of following the constant successful versus all remaining (upward/downward/drifting) paths (average marginal effects)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Ref. majority group				
Second-generation Turkey	-0.120***	-0.051	-0.039	-0.039
Second-generation W. Balkan	-0.122***	-0.060	-0.054	-0.051
Female	0.057*	0.057*	0.053*	0.048*
Parental SES		0.078***	0.068***	0.069***
Family size above average		-0.019	-0.017	-0.019
Exoneration from household obligations		0.018 <sup>+</sup>	0.018 <sup>+</sup>	0.018 <sup>+</sup>
Family cohesion		-0.006	-0.007	-0.008
Parent-child communication		-0.003	-0.004	-0.004
Has children			-0.067*	-0.069*
Attitudes towards compatibility of family and work			0.026*	0.026*
Self-efficacy			0.004	0.001
Above-average support by teachers				0.061*
Feelings of being discriminated against				0.001
Proportion Swiss peers in school				0.021
Proportion Swiss peers today				0.002
Adj. $R^2$ (McFadden)	0.05	0.08	0.09	0.10
% correctly predicted	79.9	79.7	79.0	79.4
Observations	1107	1107	1107	1107

Notes: All models are controlled for age and urban area of residence. Source: TIES Survey Switzerland (2007–2008)

<sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.10$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ —statistical significance

importantly, the inclusion of these family level variables results in a dramatic reduction of ethnic differences. Now, Turkish and Western-Balkan youth have a 5 to 6 percentage point lower probability of being a thriver as compared with non-minority peers while group differences are no longer statistically significant.

Model 3 adds levels of self-efficacy, gender-role attitudes and individual parental status to the equation. Among this group of covariates, having children is negatively and attitudes towards compatibility of family and work is positively related to following the constant successful path. Next, we find that those who received teachers support above average have a 6 percentage point higher probability of being a thriver than those who did receive lower levels of support by their teachers (compare model 4). The coefficients of the peer-group composition indicators and perceived discrimination in secondary school are not statistically significant at conventional levels.

### Climbers Versus Thrivers

The group of climbers and their trajectories of upward mobility are at the heart of this paper. The reasons for this analytical focus are twofold: Previous studies predominantly

focused on the causes of failure and downward mobility rather than on the mechanisms and trajectories of success. Moreover, they constitute the most numerous group among children of immigrants in our data.

We begin by examining patterns of upward mobility among climbers (1) in contrast to thrivers (0) who followed the constant successful pathway. Similar to our previous analysis, logistic regression was used for this binary dependent variable ( $N=833$ ). We again estimate four models of increasing complexity by adding the above presented list of determinants in a stepwise manner to our analysis. The most important results can be summarised as follows (Table 3): First, descendants of immigrants are significantly more likely to be a climber than to follow the constant successful path. Turkish and Western-Balkan descendants have an 18 percentage point higher probability to climb upwards rather than being a thriver as compared with the majority group. This second-generation advantage is slightly reduced when adding the set of independent variables stepwise to our analysis. However, even after holding the full set of covariates constant (model 4), second-generation groups have still a 9 (Turkish) and 8 (Western-Balkan) percentage point higher probability of being a climber than the majority group.

Second, we do not detect any significant role of the self-assessed importance of teachers or peers nor for perceived feelings of discrimination for upward mobility.

**Table 3** Logistic regression predicting the likelihood of following the upward mobility *versus* the constant successful pathway (average marginal effects)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Ref. majority group				
Second-generation Turkey	0.185***	0.101*	0.090*	0.083*
Second-generation W. Balkan	0.188***	0.107*	0.099*	0.092*
Female	-0.060*	-0.059*	-0.051*	-0.049
Parental SES		-0.103***	-0.098***	-0.098***
Family size above average		0.037	0.037	0.039
Exoneration from household obligations		-0.016	-0.017	-0.016
Family cohesion		0.012	0.013	0.013
Parent-child communication		0.012	0.012	0.012
Has children			0.058	0.059
Attitudes towards compatibility of family and work			-0.030*	-0.031*
Self-efficacy			0.003	0.005
Above-average support by teachers				-0.045
Feelings of being discriminated against				-0.013
Proportion Swiss peers in school				0.047
Proportion Swiss peers today				0.020
Adj. $R^2$ (McFadden)	0.08	0.12	0.13	0.14
% correctly predicted	72.9	73.7	74.6	74.3
Observations	833	833	833	833

Notes: All models are controlled for age and urban area of residence. Source: TIES Survey Switzerland (2007–2008)

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ —statistical significance

Finally, in line with previous findings, higher parental SES is positively related to following the constant successful path. While children from better-off family backgrounds make it right away into the constant successful path, the children from lower socioeconomic family backgrounds may start at a lower level but climb upwards in their socioeconomic trajectories.

The principal story of this comparison is that although second-generation youth in Switzerland hardly get the chance to enter the constant successful trajectories from the beginning (compare Table 2), they catch up as time passes and start to move upwards in upper secondary education and on the labour market.

### Climbers Versus Declining Achievers

Socioeconomic trajectories may take various shapes and, as confirmed in our descriptive analysis above, are more often uneven, characterised by ups and downs for children of immigrants than for the majority population (Nicholas et al. 2008; Schnell et al. 2013). Within this section, we therefore focus on two uneven trajectories: upward versus downward socioeconomic trajectories. We ask what the factors are associated with becoming a climber rather than being a declining achiever in Switzerland, our next dependent variable ( $N=810$ ). We estimated a series of logistic regression by applying the same analytical strategy as in the previous analysis.

In model 1, the coefficients for children of Turkish and Western-Balkan immigrants indicate a significant advantage over the majority group to be upward mobile. The positive effect for the Turkish and Western-Balkan second generation of being a climber is larger at 17 and 13 percentage points, respectively, as compared with the majority group. As shown in Table 4 (model 2), large family size, family cohesion and parent-child communication are positively associated with upward mobility. When adding levels of self-efficacy, gender-role attitudes and individual parental status to the analysis (model 3), only self-efficacy is statistically significant among this group of variables. An increase by one unit on this scale (e.g. from low to medium level of self-efficacy) increases the probability to climb upwards by 2 %. Model 4 finally includes measures for peer group composition, above-average support by teachers and feelings of being discriminated. Coefficients reveal that perceived discrimination is negatively associated with upward mobility. After holding all these variables constant, young adults of immigrant origin in Switzerland still have a significantly higher probability of being upward mobile than the majority group.

### Disentangling Upward Mobility

Until now, we investigated comparisons between climbers and young adults following remaining educational and occupational trajectories in Switzerland. In what follows, we look into the group of climbers in more detail by disentangling their main paths of upward mobility. As described above, the family of upward mobility trajectories consists of three main avenues potentially allowing for upward mobility in Switzerland<sup>8</sup>: within education (ED), on the labour market (LM) or through both channels (ED+

<sup>8</sup> We merged respondents of the 'bumpy upward mobility path' with 'climbers' on the upward mobility path through the labour market due to the small number of cases in the former path.

**Table 4** Logistic regression predicting the likelihood of following the upward mobility versus the downward mobility pathway (average marginal effects)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Ref. majority group				
Second-generation Turkey	0.178***	0.134**	0.136**	0.125**
Second-generation W. Balkan	0.137***	0.085*	0.088*	0.076*
Female	0.038	0.041	0.044	0.038
Parental SES		-0.054*	-0.062*	-0.059*
Family size above average		0.053 <sup>+</sup>	0.055 <sup>+</sup>	0.057 <sup>+</sup>
Exoneration from household obligations		0.008	0.008	0.010
Family cohesion		0.013 <sup>+</sup>	0.018 <sup>+</sup>	0.009 <sup>+</sup>
Parent-child communication		0.029*	0.027*	0.028*
Has children			-0.054	-0.052
Attitudes towards compatibility of family and work			0.006	0.005
Self-efficacy			0.019 <sup>+</sup>	0.016
Above-average support by teachers				0.046
Feelings of being discriminated against				-0.051 <sup>+</sup>
Proportion Swiss peers in school				0.055
Proportion Swiss peers today				0.058
Adj. $R^2$ (McFadden)	0.14	0.17	0.18	0.19
% correctly predicted	73.9	74.7	75.5	75.7
Observations	810	810	810	810

Notes: All models are controlled for age and urban area of residence. Source: TIES Survey Switzerland (2007–2008)

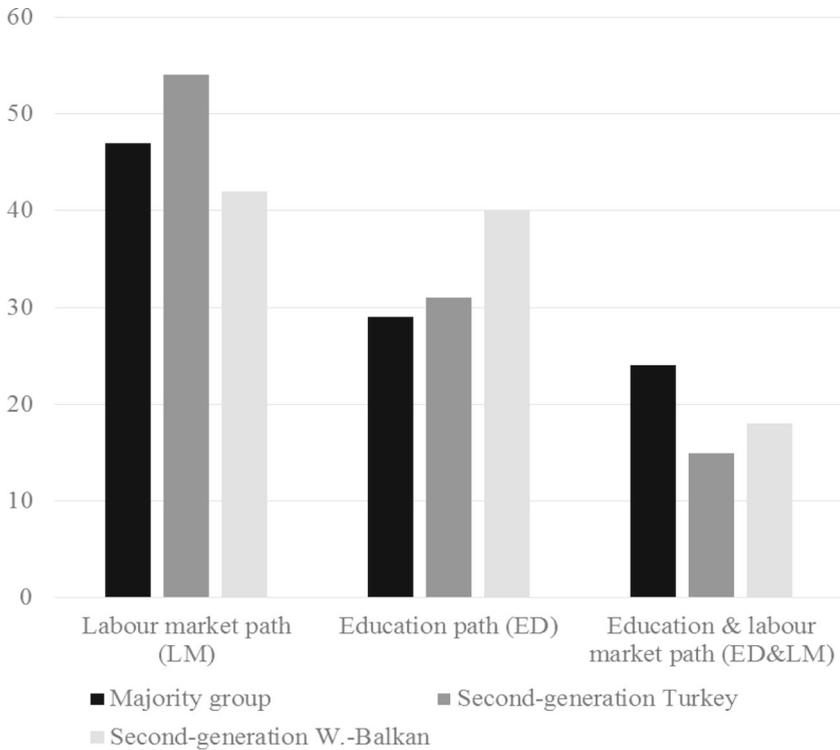
<sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.10$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ —statistical significance

LM). Figure 3 displays climbers separately by the three potential upward trajectories. Almost 50 % of all climbers are upward mobile through the Swiss labour market while roughly one third climbed upwards through the education system. Being upward mobile on both paths is least common among young adults in Switzerland.

We complemented our descriptive analysis through additional multivariate analysis by using multinomial logistic regression to predict the probability of being upward mobile through either ED or the LM as opposed to being upward mobile through both channels (ED+LM) (see Electronic Supplementary Material, Model B2). Results revealed that the three groups of interest do not differ significantly in the avenues through which they achieve upward mobility, holding all independent variables constant. In other words, all three groups of interest experience upward mobility more often through the labour market rather than through education or the combination of both.

## Conclusions

Our article focused on educational and occupational trajectories of descendants of immigrants from Turkey and Western Balkans. Those groups are interesting because



Source: TIES Survey Switzerland (2007-08)

**Fig. 3** Upward mobility through different paths (climbers), by group (%)

of their unbalanced results between their educational attainment on the one side and their occupational achievements on the other. Most studies report substantial educational disadvantages faced by the new second generation, particularly in their early educational career. On the other hand, recent studies examining their labour market participation report much lower rates of disadvantage as compared with education. How this new second generation experiences socioeconomic mobility in Switzerland was therefore at the heart of our analysis.

Four large families of combined educational and occupational trajectories were found. First: ‘thrivers’ progress constantly through prestigious tracks in the Swiss education system leading to professional or at least routine occupational positions. Thrivers encompass roughly 20 % of our sample, and the majority group significantly outperforms second-generation young adults on this path. Our multivariate results largely support the findings of previous research on the degree of intergenerational educational mobility in Switzerland which found strong correlations between social origin and the highest and prestigious educational and occupational attainment due to intense differentiation and rigid selection of students into different ability tracks early in the education system (Coradi Vellacott et al. 2003; Laganà et al. 2013; Meyer 2009; Müller and Shavit 1998; Pfeffer 2008). The fact that early selection of students is detrimental to equality in educational opportunities for students, and in particular for

children of immigrants, has recently also been identified for a number of other Northwestern European countries. Educational disadvantages faced by children of immigrants are significantly larger in educational systems that more strongly stratify students into different tracks and at an earlier age (van de Werfhorst et al. 2014, p. 262). Rigid and early selection of students is said to magnify inequalities in educational attainment because it leaves children of immigrants little time to leave their disadvantaged starting positions. The theoretical explanations offered for this strong relationship presume an active role of parents in guiding and advising their children with their educational choices (Laganà et al. 2013; Pfeffer 2008). First, highly educated parents tend to have a good understanding of the school system which becomes a crucial resource when children are confronted with educational choices between tracks at an early stage (strategic knowledge). Second, higher educated parents might be better equipped to assist their children in their learning process by providing direct help, for example with homework, or relevant financial and non-monetary resources, such as books at home (content knowledge). Because the Turkish and Western-Balkan second generation in Switzerland originates frequently from less-advantaged families, who oftentimes lack the strategic knowledge of the workings of Swiss education system and the content knowledge which is associated with the successful completion of an educational degree, they seem to fail to enter and to ride along the highly performing path—a finding that has also been put forward for children of immigrants in other European countries (Moguéro and Santelli 2015; Santelli 2013).

Our findings reveal further that the support young adults receive from their teachers in school is a significant driver on this highly performing pathway. If young adults assess the support by teachers as above average, the chances to follow this path (opposed to all other remaining path) increases significantly. This finding, consistent with prior research, suggests that school staff can provide relevant resources for the successful navigation through the education system and for the placement on the labour market (Rosenbaum et al. 1999). Having children and perceiving family and work as incompatible are instead significant roadblocks on the constant successful path.

Given that the new second generation is predominately tracked down at the beginning of their educational career, they do not have the chance to be on the constantly successful trajectories and have further reduced chances to decline from this paths—youth who start high in the education system but then lose ground and constantly shift downwards. On the contrary, this profile is more frequent among Swiss majority youth. Our multivariate results indicate that a lack of intense parent–child communication and perceived discrimination in school are affecting this downward process.

Although the new second generation has reduced chances to enter the constant successful path from the beginning, young adults of Turkish and Western-Balkan origin constantly move upwards and get ahead through other trajectories. The major finding of our study is that second-generation youth of both origin groups are significantly more often *climbers* than the majority group. The family environment plays a crucial role in the upward mobility process. We found family cohesion and intense parent–child communication to be positively related with upward mobility resembling previous findings showing that socioeconomic achievement is associated with greater parental monitoring and family closeness (Feliciano 2012; Schnell et al. 2013). The observed second-generation advantage persists even after taking all independent variables in our multivariate analysis into account. One possible reason might be their higher levels of

educational and occupational aspirations. Several studies point to the importance of academic aspirations as achievement motivations predicting educational and occupational attainment and preventing downward mobility for second-generation immigrants as compared with non-immigrant youth (Portes et al. 2010 for a review). Our data do not have information on aspirations. Yet, evidence for this hypothesis in the Swiss context coming from a recent study indicates significant correlations between educational aspirations and successful educational trajectories among immigrant youth (Stamm 2013). Future studies should investigate the role of aspirations as a potential explanation of this second-generation advantage and their impact on upward mobility.

Given the importance of climbers in our sample, we further examined through which channels they achieve upward mobility (labour market, education or a combination of both) and whether the ways of experiencing socioeconomic advancement differ for children of immigrants and the majority group. Young adults are more frequently upward mobile through the labour market and the groups studied did not differ significantly in the avenues through which they achieve upward mobility. Our findings are in line with previous research indicating that a fair share of mobility out of low paid jobs exists in Switzerland (Sousa-Poza 2004). Thus, the Swiss labour market provides opportunities and avenues for upward mobility, in particular for children of immigrants.

The amount of upward climbers might even increase in the near future because efforts have been made to advance the vocational and educational training (VET) in Switzerland. Academically, weaker learners should now be integrated into the VET system, 'making it easier for people without post-compulsory qualifications to obtain a qualification by validating the skills they have acquired non-formally or informally and also creating attractive options for highly talented students' (SKBF 2014, pp. 121–122). This development might improve the chances for upward mobility of second-generation immigrants who start low and try to engage themselves in upward trajectories afterwards, particularly relevant for those respondents of our sample that were not included in our analyses because they were still in school at the time of the interview.

It is worth mentioning the impact of gender on the educational achievement of children of immigrants. Our analyses show that women are more likely to follow the constant successful path than any other trajectory, even under control of our independent variables. Yet their performance among climbers is not better than that of men of immigrant origin. Moreover, their upward path is not particularly based on education as the analogy with their outstanding presence among the thrivers might have suggested.

Studies on the 'old' second generation in Switzerland showed that naturalised children of immigrants outperformed autochthonous youth (Fibbi et al. 2007), a circumstance that is not supported by our analyses on the new second generation. This suggests that the very first native-born youth of non-European origin negotiate their place in the country under less favourable conditions than it is the case for youth of well-established European ancestry groups (Heath et al. 2008).

Previous studies on Switzerland have shown that upward mobility varies strongly in its extent (Levy 2013, p. 320). Thus, forthcoming studies should investigate more closely the range of upward mobility among climbers of immigrant descendants. That is, whether they achieved professional over routine and skilled occupational positions—an analysis that was beyond the scope of our paper due to small sample size. Besides, our results are based on retrospective data with a rather small sample size taken from two Swiss urban areas. Future studies should examine longitudinally the

educational and occupational trajectories on a large and representative sample and test whether our findings hold for Switzerland as a whole. Finally, more research is needed on the concrete mechanisms and factors that lead to upward mobility for children of immigrants on the Swiss labour market.

Albeit these limitations, this study makes a key contribution to the current discussion on the socioeconomic situation of the new second-generation in Switzerland. We showed that children of Turkish and Western-Balkan immigrants do not enter the prestigious constant successful path that leads directly to high occupations in the same numbers as the majority group, but that they are persistent and constantly improving their achievements through alternative routes as they move on through education and work. Against all initial odds, they slowly manage to climb upwards the socioeconomic ladder and achieve considerable success through various avenues in substantial numbers.

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