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Recruitment of members of Dutch noble and high-bourgeois families to elite positions in the 20th century

Abstract. This article offers a counter-example of the modernization theory by looking at the elite positions of the nobility in the Netherlands in the 20th century. We compare the elite positions of the parents and the children, and between noble families and high bourgeoisie families. The likelihood of achieving an elite position has not decreased for different generations of the nobility or in comparison with the high bourgeoisie. An important factor is their social and cultural capital as indicated by the noble titles of their mothers and parents-in-law. This suggests that the modernization theory may apply to the middle classes, but far less to the elites.

Key words. Elites – Nobility – Social capital – Social mobility

Résumé. Cet article propose une remise en cause de la théorie de la modernisation dans le cadre de l'étude des positions d'élite occupées par la noblesse aux Pays-Bas au XXème siècle. Les auteurs comparent les positions d'élite des parents et des enfants, dans la noblesse et la haute bourgeoisie. La probabilité pour les nobles d'obtenir des positions d'élite n'a pas diminué au fil des générations ou par comparaison avec les familles de la haute bourgeoisie. Un facteur d'importance est le capital social et culturel que constituent les titres de noblesse de la mère ou des beaux-parents.

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Ce qui suggère que la théorie de la modernisation pourrait mieux s'appliquer au cas des classes moyennes, mais beaucoup moins bien à celui des élites.

Mots-clés. Capital social – Elites – Mobilité sociale – Noblesse

Sociological research rarely addresses the position of nobility in 20th-century European societies. On the other hand, historical publications are numerous and some seem to demonstrate that the nobility no longer has a role to play in modern society. The studies by Lieven (1992) and Wehler (1990) on the European nobility end with the misfortunes inflicted by the two world wars on the old-style nobility. After the First World War the nobility was abolished in several countries, for instance Germany, and with the disappearance of its separate legal status, noble privileges vanished as well. The British historian Cannadine (1990) advances a similar thesis with his erudite description of the British aristocracy's decline during the first half of the 20th century. But he does not systematically chart the life-courses and careers of a representative number of British aristocrats during this period. By merely showing the disappearance of obsolete social and cultural capital, he overlooks the sometimes profound but successful adaptations made by some members of the nobility to the new circumstances. Therefore he may underestimate the present importance of the nobility's modernized social and cultural capital. Detailed histories of a particular family offer insights into this modernization process. Two excellent examples are the studies of a German family by Conze (2000) and a Dutch noble family by Schmidt (1986).

Today there are still families living in countries like Germany and France who are fully aware of their noble pedigree and continue to organize social activities in the hope that their children will find a noble spouse. The study by the French sociologist Monique de Saint Martin (1993) presents a sociological explanation of how these noble lineages have been able to retain their high social status in 20th-century republican France. She emphasizes their lasting symbolic and social capital. Because France is a republic, a comprehensive overview of members of the French nobility is almost impossible because there are no official registers. Saint Martin had to settle for samples from two sources. One is the optional association for the French nobility, the Association d'Entraide de la Noblesse Française (conservative, Catholic and provincial); the

other is the *Bottin Mondain* (the French *Who's Who*), which lists well-known and successful individuals. Although these types of source are not ideal, the study is an inspiring example because we do not know of any other sociological study that can compete with it for theoretical and empirical scope.

The study of separate groups like the nobility or the high bourgeoisie is of interest to social scientists because the exceptional position of these groups can function as a counter-example to the more frequently studied general trends in modern society. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a still rather large number of people of noble descent occupy elite positions in business and government in the present-day Netherlands. This appears to contradict the assumption that the nobility has become completely obsolete in an open society where meritocratic qualifications are the key to attaining a high function. In this article we will explore this matter systematically by looking at the careers of members of families of the Dutch nobility and high bourgeoisie in the 20th century. We will use the members of Dutch high society without a noble title (the so-called *Patriciaat*) as a control group. Again there are no sociological studies in which representative samples from nobility and the high bourgeoisie are systematically compared, but some studies by historians are worth mentioning. Although his data set suffers from the same problems as Saint Martin's (biased sample, selection on the dependent variable), Grange (1996) compared all kinds of demographical characteristics of successful persons from the nobility and the high bourgeoisie in France between 1903 and 1987, based on their registration in the *Bottin Mondain*. But this source made a comparison with the less successful members of French noble and high-bourgeois families impossible. Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot (1996) compared the rich French modern noble and high-bourgeois families in a more qualitative way, but without a comparison group of poor noble and high-bourgeois families. Reif (2001) edited a similar study for 20th-century Germany, with similar methodological drawbacks. Hartmann and Kopp (2001) do not have these methodological problems. They analyse the effect of social origin on the entrance into the German business elite of 6500 German engineers, jurists and economists who received a doctor's degree in 1955, 1965, 1975 and 1985. At our request, Hartmann and Kopp carried out a new multivariate analysis, adding nobility as another social origin variable to the equation of their Table 5 (2001: 449). Although the percentage of nobles is low (1.2%), this

unpublished analysis shows that a noble title has a stronger positive effect on entrance into the German business elite than the already positive effect of being from a high-bourgeois family (personal communication to second author).

The still up-to-date lists of the nobility in the current Kingdom of the Netherlands, which we will use in this article, are more complete than those available for France or Germany, where the nobility was traditionally far more important. The Netherlands is also one of the few European societies that has a widely accepted list of high-bourgeois families, which presents the same kind of information as published for the nobility. Therefore our findings on the Dutch nobility and high bourgeoisie may be used as an indication of the remaining importance of noble-related social capital in some other European countries, although the circumstances may be different in each of these countries.

The nobility and the high bourgeoisie

The nobility in the Netherlands has always been predominantly civil (*noblesse de robe*) rather than military (*noblesse d'épée*) or landed, whereas in Belgium, Germany, France and the United Kingdom the military and landed nobility dominated (Kuiper, 1993; Schmidt, 1986). The first reason for this difference is that, during the era of the Dutch Republic, the predecessor of the present Kingdom of the Netherlands, between 1580 and 1795, new appointments or additions to the domestic nobility were impossible (Israel, 1995: 337–41). Members of the Dutch military nobility were few and far between as officers were usually recruited from abroad. Nor was the position of a landed nobleman in the poorer rural provinces attractive to the wealthy citizens from the economically successful provinces of Holland and Zeeland. The second reason is the policy in the 1820s and 1830s with regard to nobility in the new Kingdom of the Netherlands (Bruin, 1992: 125). This policy was designed to disentangle the legacy of late-18th-century political disputes between the Orangists (supporters of Orange-Nassau, the new royal family) and the Patriots (republican citizens, see Schama, 1977). It tried to secure the loyalty of the urban Regents (rich merchant and banking families that ruled many cities throughout the Netherlands) by raising them to the status of aristocrats. New grants of Dutch noble titles have become extremely rare since the early 20th century,

and since 1997 new grants (even through acknowledgement or inclusion) have been made virtually impossible by law because the Dutch parliament believes that the nobility should be seen as an undesirable historical relic. Life peers (noble titles, valid only for the lifetime of the raised person) have never existed in the Netherlands, contrary to the United Kingdom and Belgium. Finally, sons or daughters can inherit a noble title from their father, but a mother cannot pass her noble title on to her children.

As a result of the policy of the first kings in the first half of the 19th century, members of ruling families from cities in the province of Holland were more often awarded a knighthood or baronetcy, whereas nobles from the rural provinces more frequently secured a peerage. Thus almost all the Regent families from Amsterdam in our sample have a baronetcy. In contrast with other European societies, this does not automatically make a knighthood or baronetcy an indication of lower social status than a peerage. Moreover, one of the major consequences was that many people owed their membership in the nobility to governmental or economic abilities rather than a noble past or culture. Accordingly, the Dutch nobility reflects a strong civil bias. This may explain why references to the Dutch nobility in Lieven's study (1992) are missing. The rules of the Dutch nobility are much closer to those in Germany and France than to the rules of the British nobility. Dutch noble titles and the way they are inherited (by both older and younger branches of a noble family) are in line with the German and French procedures. This resemblance is reflected in the fact that descendants of the British nobility are less likely to be included in Dutch nobility than members of continental nobility due to the different procedures in the United Kingdom.

Not all members of Dutch high society hold a noble title. Some Regent families, who took part in municipal, provincial and national government for many decades in the past, refused to accept a noble title because they did not value it (Bruin, 1981). At the end of the 19th century they still proudly called themselves patricians. Other families were members of this *Patriciaat* because they had the same socially recognized prestige as the nobility but for one reason or another were never granted a noble title. Even in the same family we can find separate lineages with and without a noble title. In general, the families who are nowadays registered as *Patriciaat* have participated in prestigious councils, governmental offices or other meritorious public positions for at least three generations.

However, there is one conspicuous difference between nobility and patricians. As we will see, all members of the nobility are officially registered, whereas the registration of patrician families is to a certain extent arbitrary and biased (Bruin and Schmidt, 1980). As a consequence of the strict criteria (meritorious public position for at least three generations), the inclusion of families in the *Nederland's Patriciaat* (especially families included after 1945) is biased towards these high-bourgeois families with more elite positions than the noble families because the strict criteria do not apply to the latter for their registration in the *Nederland's Adelsboek*. Thus if we compare Dutch nobility and high-bourgeois families using both registers, we have a conservative test of a noble advantage as a consequence of this bias.

Contradicting modernization theory

A basic assumption about modernization in western societies is that high positions and professions have become increasingly more open to people with capacities based on their own achievements. In this respect modern societies are successfully based on meritocratic qualities. Researchers on this topic rightly indicate a decline in the percentage of persons descended from the nobility who have acquired elite positions during the 20th century. With the loss of its separate legal status and therefore its ascribed privileges, a noble background is assumed to have become of less importance in gaining an elite position in modern society. This is indeed clearly the case with ascribed characteristics like gender and social class (Dronkers and Ultee, 1995; Ganzeboom et al., 1991; Lenski, 1984), and accordingly the level of education has become important (Rijken, 1999). However, the first empirical observation does not necessarily imply the second. The social importance of noble origin might decline if social circumstances changed so dramatically, for instance due to a revolution, defeat in a war or a serious economic recession, that the noble social and cultural family capital ceased to be of use in the new situation. Such a rapid and dramatic change in the social circumstances has never occurred in the Netherlands. We therefore assume that members of the nobility continue to use their – admittedly adapted – specific symbolic, social and cultural capital, and by exercising it are likely to maintain an advantage over their high-bourgeois competitors for elite positions.

Several studies have observed this continuing advantage in achieving elite positions in the Netherlands throughout the 20th century. The first study starts with the observation that Ivy League universities, *Grandes Ecoles* or an equivalent of Oxbridge are missing in the Netherlands, and therefore there are no academic institutions for select students. However traditional male fraternities (*Corps*, in Germany *Burschenschaft*), because they are both hierarchical and selective, might be seen as an institution designed to single out students in other ways (Dronkers and Hillege, 1998). Only a minority of all university students will become members. The authors examine the chances of the 1660 board members of these fraternities between 1920 and 1960 of holding a position in the Dutch economic and political elite between 1960 and 1980. One of the findings is that membership of the Dutch nobility increased the likelihood that these board members would in due time hold an elite position and that this likelihood has not become less over time. This conclusion is remarkable as the increased likelihood of board members from patrician families disappeared after controlling for academic discipline and chairmanship, unlike the significantly larger likelihood among the students of belonging to the Dutch nobility. Even when the data were expanded with the board members of the Protestant and Catholic fraternities (Dronkers and Hillege, 1997), the authors continued to observe greater opportunities for obtaining an elite position among board members who belonged to the nobility, whereas those from the *Patriciaat* were not more likely to do so. The board members of noble origin were just as likely to obtain an elite position in 1960 as in 1920, which clearly contradicts the modernization theory.

The second study is based on a sample of 10,529 students from all Dutch universities and *Athenea Illustra* (early universities without the right to confer the title of doctor) between 1815 and 1935. Dronkers et al. (1996) have examined whether those students served in high political offices and civil service positions between 1850 and 1995. The authors find that membership in the Dutch nobility increases the odds of being appointed to high political and administrative positions. Moreover, this likelihood does not decrease significantly during the 19th and 20th centuries. These results are completely in line with the studies on fraternities.

In a third study, Dronkers (2003) demonstrates that the continuing advantage of members of the Dutch nobility in achieving elite positions throughout the 20th century can be explained by its

effective way of adapting and modernizing its social and cultural capital. But Dronkers ignores the occupations and offices of the parental household in his analyses, which might lead to an underestimation of the social decline of the nobility or an overestimation of its lasting ability to gain elite positions. Dronkers and Schijf (2004) have elaborated on these missing aspects by adding characteristics of the parental household to the original cases. But even when parental background is taken into account, the advantages of a noble title remain stable throughout the 20th century.

Possible explanations for a noble advantage in modern society

This earlier research is the starting point for our general “constant noble advantage” hypothesis: Hypothesis 1 – *In the 20th century, members of Dutch noble families held more elite positions than members of Dutch high-bourgeois families*. This advantage might be explained by several processes. Broadly speaking, we offer four possible explanations for Hypothesis 1: “lingering relic”, “bourgeoisisation of nobility”, “noble homogamy” and “new relevance of distinctive noble capital”. For each of the explanations, several versions of specific hypotheses (Hypotheses 2 to 12) will be formulated and statistically tested. The first explanation does not contradict the modernization theory but only assumes that it is a slow process, while the second explanation contradicts only a radical version of the modernization theory, which assumes that old elites disappear instead of being integrated into rising ones. The third and fourth explanations, however, contradict the modernization theory because they state that an ascribed characteristic, like nobility, can continue to be advantageous in a society that is based on achievement.

The “lingering relic” explanation

The “lingering relic” explanation assumes that the advantage of members of the Dutch nobility is a relic of the 19th century which lingers on due to the ability of the nobility to mitigate their growing irrelevance in a modern civil society. But this advantage is gradually petering out as a consequence of the modernization of society

in which there is no longer a place for heritage-based groups. This explanation is comparable to the one advanced by Reif (2001) on German nobility: the *Hoch bleiben* effort of German nobility after 1918. If this version of the “lingering relic” explanation is correct, the following “rearguard fight” hypothesis should be accepted: Hypothesis 2 – *The large number of elite positions held by members of Dutch noble families in comparison to those held by members of the Dutch high bourgeoisie will become smaller for the generations born later in the 20th century.*

Another version of this explanation explains the lingering on of the noble advantage by assuming that fathers of the 20th-century nobility occupied more elite positions than fathers of the 20th-century high bourgeoisie due to noble advantages in the 19th century. Given the importance of intergenerational transmission of resources (financial, social and cultural) for both the nobility and the high bourgeoisie in reproducing this advantage, one might assume therefore that the advantage is stronger for the older generation than the younger one. If this version of the “lingering relic” explanation is correct, the following “intergenerational” hypothesis should be accepted: Hypothesis 3 – *The higher number of elite positions held by members of Dutch noble families in comparison to those held by members of the Dutch high bourgeoisie in the 20th century can be explained by the higher number of elite positions held by their fathers.*

The fourth hypothesis is yet another version of the “lingering on” explanation, even if the second and third hypotheses are not accepted. It assumes that intergenerational transmission of resources (financial, social and cultural) is more important for the nobility than for the high bourgeoisie and that the former is also more successful in this transmission than the latter. Given the pre-modern nature of the nobility, the family and its position are considered to be a more vital aspect of the individual identity of its members, and the longer pedigrees of noble families make each generation feel more obliged to transmit its advantages to the next generation. This “project” nature of the noble family compared to the high bourgeoisie can explain the greater importance and success of intergenerational transmission among the members of noble families in the 20th century. If this version of the “lingering relic” explanation is correct, the following “family project” hypothesis should be accepted: Hypothesis 4 – *The higher number of elite*

positions among members of Dutch noble families can be explained by the stronger effect of elite positions held by noble fathers, or the weaker effect of elite positions held by high-bourgeois families, on the chances of their children holding elite positions.

The “bourgeoisisation of nobility” explanation

This second explanation sees the advantage of Dutch nobility in the bourgeoisisation of nobility during the 20th century. A growing part of the nobility successfully incorporated the main characteristics of the high bourgeoisie into its own cultural capital and by doing so was able to maintain its position. The most important characteristic of the high bourgeoisie in modern society is its ability to achieve a university education, contrary to the noble upper class of the 18th and 19th centuries, which leads to the following “educational” hypothesis: Hypothesis 5 – *The higher number of elite positions held by members of Dutch noble families in comparison to those held by members of the Dutch high bourgeoisie can be explained by the difference in the number of university degrees.*

Another version of the “bourgeoisisation of nobility” explanation is that the old distinctive cultural capital of the nobility is revitalized by its combination with bourgeois characteristics. This combination of old and new cultural capital (title and education) gives the modern and highly educated noble an advantage compared to the equally educated high bourgeois. If this version of the “bourgeoisisation of nobility” explanation is correct, the following “combined old and new cultural capital” hypothesis should be accepted: Hypothesis 6 – *The higher number of elite positions held by members of Dutch noble families can be explained by the stronger effect of a university education for nobility in comparison to the weaker effect of a university education for the high bourgeoisie.*

Still another version of the “bourgeoisisation of nobility” explanation is the increasing number of intermarriages between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. The combination of old and new social and cultural capital in a noble–bourgeois household strengthens the social position of both partners, noble or not, which yields more opportunities to obtain elite positions. The combination of university education within the non-noble family-in-law and the noble title within the noble–bourgeois household could be seen as the best example of this combination of old and new social and cultural

capital. If this version of the “bourgeoisisation of nobility” explanation is correct, the following “intermarriage” hypothesis should be accepted: Hypothesis 7 – *The higher number of elite positions held by members of Dutch noble families can be explained by the university degree of their non-noble parents-in-law and spouses.*

The last version of this “bourgeoisisation of nobility” explanation is that members of high-bourgeois families have less distinctive social and cultural capital in their parental household than members of noble families. Therefore having a noble mother is more important for members of high-bourgeois families in order to learn this distinctive social and cultural capital of nobility than for members of noble families. If this version of the “bourgeoisisation of nobility” explanation is correct, the following “aristocratization” hypothesis should be accepted: Hypothesis 8 – *Having a noble mother has a stronger effect on the opportunities to obtain an elite position by members of high-bourgeois families than on those of members of noble families.* Hypothesis 8 partly contradicts Hypothesis 10.

The “noble homogamy” explanation

The third explanation assumes that the social and cultural capital of the nobility can maintain its old relevance for obtaining elite positions in modern society as long as it remains distinctive and is not watered down. This explanation can be seen as the opposite of the bourgeoisisation of the nobility. One of the most important means to keep the social and cultural capital of the nobility distinctive is to promote marriages among the nobility themselves and to avoid mixed noble/non-noble marriages: Hypothesis 9 – *The higher number of elite positions held by members of Dutch noble families in comparison to those held by members of the Dutch high bourgeoisie can be explained by the higher number of noble families-in-law of the former.*

Maintaining the distinctive social and cultural capital of the nobility by avoiding mixed marriages will be possible only for members of noble families and not for members of high-bourgeois families: Hypothesis 10 – *Having a noble family-in-law has a stronger effect on the opportunities to obtain an elite position of members of noble families than on those of members of high-bourgeois families.* Hypothesis 10 partly contradicts Hypothesis 8.

The “new relevance of the distinctive noble capital” explanation

The last explanation assumes that the distinctive social and cultural capital of the nobility still has relevance in modern society, which cannot be explained by the past or by bourgeoisie. Several reasons for this relevance of the distinctive social and cultural capital of the nobility can be formulated. (a) In a society with an abundance of qualified persons, ascribed characteristics (like nobility) once again become important for selection and allocation because they are the easier way to make the necessary selection between too many qualified people. (b) The rise of the service sector together with the decline of industry increased the demand for distinctive social and cultural capital as a requisite for success in this service sector. Members of noble families could offer more distinctive social and cultural capital than members of high-bourgeois families because the former had preserved more of this capital than the latter thanks to the “noble family project”. (c) Nobility is a characteristic which, owing to its pre-modern background, has clearer international recognition and tradition than the fame of the bourgeoisie, which is more confined to the Dutch nation-state. The stronger international dimension of the noble title will be an advantage in a more internationally oriented Europe. Our data do not allow for testing the possible reasons for the relevance of the nobility’s distinctive social and cultural capital, but if the “new relevance of distinctive social and cultural capital of the nobility” explanation is correct, one might expect that more social and cultural noble capital would be more helpful in obtaining elite positions than less social and cultural capital. The best way to obtain this distinctive social and cultural capital is to learn it from the noble mother, even if the father is a member of a high-bourgeois family. This argument leads to the “socialization by noble mother” hypothesis: Hypothesis 11 – *The higher number of elite positions held by members of Dutch noble families compared to those held by members of the Dutch high bourgeoisie can be explained by the higher number of noble mothers of the former.*

Another version of this “new relevance of a noble title” explanation assumes that more noble titles in the parental household give more opportunities to acquire the distinctive social and cultural capital of the nobility. Therefore having a noble mother gives members of noble families an extra opportunity to learn the distinctive social and cultural capital of nobility than members of

high-bourgeois families with a noble mother. This argument leads to the “socialization by noble parents” hypothesis: Hypothesis 12 – *Having a noble mother has a stronger effect on the opportunities to obtain an elite position of members of noble families than on those of members of high-bourgeois families.* Hypothesis 12 partly contradicts Hypothesis 8.

Data

Information on the life-course of all members of the Dutch nobility has been published by the Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie in The Hague. In compiling the various editions of the *Nederland's Adelsboek* (the so-called “Red Books”), the Bureau uses all information available on the genealogies of Dutch noble families (see, for the origins of the *Adelsboek* in 1903, Bruin and Schmidt, 1980). The Bureau also invests considerable effort in tracing all members of a given family, even if emigration or social decline has reduced the need for listing them in the *Nederland's Adelsboek*. We believe that the Bureau's approach has yielded far more complete and representative data for this group than even the best questionnaire or a survey would have produced. The members of the nobility themselves, or their direct relatives, report their university degrees, occupation and area of employment, public offices, memberships in major governmental councils, positions at the Royal Court, and their own memberships in knightly orders and those of their spouses. The Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie verifies many of these data from sources such as the *Staatsalmanak* (State Directory). Since all parties involved are aware that the collected data are intended for publication, it is unlikely that people provide unreliable information. Moreover, family pressure will deter a member from reporting a university degree that was not actually obtained, or public offices or other functions not actually held. Although people are obviously more inclined to report the peak of their careers than the lowest point, this practice will certainly not distort our analysis, which is focused on elite positions. On the other hand, we have also observed less honourable places of employment and offices in the *Nederland's Adelsboek*. For instance, nearly all members of one of the oldest noble families in our sample born in the 20th century are farmers, blue-collar workers or low-level employees with no connection to their noble past.

From our sources, we selected a research population that consists of those persons born after 1899 but before 1951 who belong to a family whose name starts with a letter between “G” and “Na”. The genealogies of these lineages are published in the volumes of the *Nederland's Adelsboek* that appeared between 1993 and 2000. They provide the most recent and complete information on the life-course of the sons and daughters. We have not included the royal family and its branches (including de Bourbon de Parma) because of their special status within Dutch society. We have not added or omitted any information with respect to these easily available publications either. Because the first letter of the surname is not connected with any social characteristic, our research population can be seen as a random sample of all nobles born between 1899 and 1951. However the process of gathering data about the life-courses did not end at the same moment for all persons: the gathering of information on individuals whose surname starts with a “G” ended in 1992, while data on individuals whose surname begins with an “M” were gathered until the year 1999.

We restrict our analysis to those persons born before 1951 because we assume that these members of the nobility have had enough time to obtain an elite position. Given the data-gathering period of the processed volumes, a person born in 1950 with a surname starting with a “G” was 42 years old at the moment of registration of his current occupation, while a person born in 1950 with a surname starting with “Na” was 49 years old. This young age might lead to an underestimation of the obtained elite positions by those born in the 1940s because most people will normally reach an elite position at an age older than 50, but we prefer to keep those born between 1940 and 1950 in our analysis because it is the first generation born after the Second World War. With this selection, we follow the same procedure as Dronkers (2003) and Dronkers and Schijf (2004). We also deleted those persons who died before their 40th birthday in order not to underestimate the intergenerational transmission of social and cultural capital. Differential death-risks might produce a bias in the estimation of this transmission. We included all persons irrespective of the country in which they were born, lived or died because a noble title (as a pre-modern characteristic) does not depend on nationality or place of birth. This might lead to some underestimation of the importance of the social and cultural capital of the nobility because we do not exclude branches

of families that emigrated a long time ago and thus have left behind to a large extent their Dutch social network and lifestyle. These selections result in a data set that contains 1872 persons from 113 noble families. In order to distinguish them from their parents, we will call them sons or daughters (or children), as they are our units of analysis. We have used the same volumes again to collect information on the parents, spouses and parents-in-law of the sons and daughters. By definition, the data for the fathers are as complete as those for the children. The data on the mothers have nearly the same quality and comprehensiveness. The data on spouses have the same comprehensiveness as those on the mothers. But sometimes these data are missing and it is not always clear whether this is due to a lack of information or simply because children have remained unmarried. The data on the parents-in-law of the sons or daughters have the lowest comprehensiveness because we have only their names, and their academic and noble titles. Therefore it might well be that the titles of parents-in-law are under-reported.

The Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie also publishes the *Nederland's Patriciaat* (the so-called "Blue Books"), our source for the high bourgeoisie. The first volumes appeared in the year 1913 (Bruin and Schmidt, 1980), and the independent policy of this Bureau concerning the selection of the families to include has at present become somewhat more open than at the beginning. The way these volumes are compiled differs from the *Nederland's Adelsboek* because there is no clear-cut rule regarding the families that should be included in the publications. Nowadays inclusion in part follows tradition, but new meritorious criteria have been introduced as well, based on particular elite positions attained by members of a particular family. Nevertheless the fact that a family is mentioned in the *Nederland's Patriciaat* is still a reliable indication that it belongs to the well-established and traditional high bourgeoisie of the Netherlands. But some families with a high social status may be missing because they do not want to be included or they do not value it enough to contribute financially to the publication of "their" volume. We have sampled families from the volumes published between 1993 and 1999, which covers roughly the same period as the volumes of the *Nederland's Adelsboek* used. Each of the volumes lists in alphabetical order the complete genealogy of a number of families. The large majority of the genealogies in the volumes used are updated versions of the family genealogies

published in earlier volumes. Our sample is thus not biased towards newer patrician families. This sample contains 78 families with a total of 2860 members. Nothing in the way our source is compiled suggests a valid reason to believe that these families deviate from the entire population of patrician families. The completeness and quality of the information on each person in these volumes are entirely equivalent to those provided in the *Nederland's Adelsboek*. Therefore we are able to use completely comparable variables for both groups of families in our analyses.

Unfortunately neither the *Nederland's Adelsboek* nor the *Nederland's Patriciaat* gives any information on the occupation or the wealth of the families and their members. Nor are there any reliable sources of information on their wealth elsewhere in the Netherlands. But given the history and background of the Dutch nobility and *Patriciaat*, there is no reason to believe that the wealth of the Dutch nobility is larger than that of the high bourgeoisie. One will hardly find any noble person on the recent lists of the 100 richest people in the Netherlands.

The following variables will be used:

1. *Nobility or Patriciaat of son or daughter*. We collapsed all noble titles into the highest category and the *Patriciaat* in the lowest category of this dichotomous variable, which compares Dutch nobility with patricians.

2. *Decade in which the son or daughter was born*, from the first decade (1900–9) until the decade 1940–50.

3. *Tertiary education degree of the son or daughter, his or her spouse, parents and parents-in-law*. These variables reflect the university or other tertiary education degrees of the son or daughter, his or her partner, his or her parents and the combination of his or her parents-in-law. In the case of mothers, parents-in-law and, to a lesser degree, spouses, these variables have to be derived from their academic titles, which may lead to an underestimation of the vocational college diplomas. We were able to use the profession or occupation, which gave additional information on vocational college diplomas, for a more precise coding of the acquired educational level of the sons or daughters and their father.

4. *Noble title of the spouse and of the mother of the son or daughter*. These are also dichotomous variables, which compare those with a noble title with those without such a title. These variables are also applicable to patrician children.

5. *Highest noble title of both parents-in-law of the son or daughter.* This is also a dichotomous variable, which compares spouses whose father or mother carries a noble title with those whose parents do not. Again this variable is also applicable to patrician sons and daughters.

6. *Elite position of son or daughter, of his or her spouse and of both parents.* To establish whether the individual has an elite position involves his or her place of employment, public offices and the like. In this study we apply both a restricted and a broad description of the elite position concept in order to demonstrate that our results are not confined to a specific operationalization of elites. We also try several other operationalizations, but all produce analogous results. The restricted description is already used by Dronkers and Hillege (1997, 1998), Dronkers (2003) and Dronkers and Schijf (2004). It comprises government ministers, members of both houses of Parliament and the Council of State, the highest-ranking civil servants of government departments, commissioners of the King for a province, mayors of the provincial capitals and of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the most important Dutch ambassadors, members of the Royal Court, and managers or members of the boards of directors of large companies, banks and industrial enterprises. Together these positions form a mixture of political, administrative and business elite positions. The broad description of elite positions includes in addition: the second highest-ranking civil servants of departments; members of the provincial executive; city council members; mayors; ambassadors in less important posts; high-ranking officials in international organizations; military officers holding at least the rank of general or vice-admiral; professors and senior managers of large companies or banks. The broad description of elite positions therefore comprises the layer immediately below the one defined by the restricted description. Occupations and positions of which the social significance could not be established unambiguously have been omitted from this broad description to avoid distorting the analyses. These include unspecified heads of departments and universities, managers of little-known or small firms, unspecified entrepreneurs, merchants and bankers, advisors and self-employed individuals. Therefore our list of elite positions is a conservative estimate of the elite positions held by the sons and daughters.

7. *Elite position in the household of son or daughter and his or her parental household.* We have constructed these two variables through

a combination of the elite position of a son or daughter and his or her partner, respectively, by combining the elite position of his or her father and mother.

Elite positions of children and parents of noble and patrician families

Tables 1a and 1b give the characteristics of the noble and patrician children, their spouses, their partners and their parents-in-law.

Nobility

The columns with a letter “N” in Tables 1a and 1b show, among other things, the presence of noble titles among sons or daughters, parents, spouses and parents-in-law. To simplify the presentation, we have merged all noble titles into one category. Sons and daughters and their father possess by definition a noble title, but mothers are not always in possession of such a title. The mother of the son or daughter has a noble title (25.7% for sons and 27.1% for daughters) more often than the spouse of the son or daughter (12.9% for sons and 18.2% for daughters). However, one of the children’s parents-in-law has a noble title (15.7% for sons and 21.2% for daughters) more frequently than these spouses. From these findings we can conclude that, among the generation of the parents, noble homogamy among the Dutch nobility was still fairly high in the 20th century but there is a decline in noble homogamy among the sons and daughters. Nevertheless we can still see a higher tendency among female nobles to marry an aristocrat than among their male counterparts. From Table 1a it also becomes clear that the sons have attained elite positions less frequently than their fathers (15.5% versus 24.4%; broad and restricted elite positions together), but their sisters attain elite positions more frequently than their mothers (1.4% versus 0.5%). This decline of male nobles in attained elite positions refers to the broad elite position but not to the restricted positions, as can be seen in the table. We can also observe that the sons and their wives hold more restricted elite positions than their parents (4.3% and 0.5%,

respectively 3.3% and 1.1%). This concentration of the decline in the broad elite positions could be due to the loss of locally based elite positions (for instance mayors of small municipalities). The daughters (Table 1b) attain less elite positions than their fathers (1.5% versus 26.1%). Their husbands hold fewer elite positions as well (17.1% versus 26.1%). But if we consider only the restricted elite positions, the result is quite different: the husbands of the daughters attain a restricted elite position more often than the daughters' fathers (5.4% versus 3.6%). This might again reflect the inclination among women to marry upwards or the wish of ambitious men to marry a noble wife in order to increase their own social capital and thus arrive at an elite position. The fact that daughters attain an elite position more often than their mothers (1.5% versus 0.5%) can be seen as an indication of a more general female emancipation in modern society.

Patriciaat

The columns with a letter "P" in Tables 1a and 1b show, among other things, that the mothers, spouses and parents-in-law of patrician sons and daughters sometimes are of noble descent. Patrician sons and fathers are by definition not in possession of a noble title. Noble mothers (6.4% for sons and 5.0% for daughters) do not always occur more often than a noble spouse of the children (4.1% for sons, but 5.6% for daughters) in these patrician families. These percentages suggest that patrician daughters have a slightly higher preference for marrying a noble partner than patrician sons. This finding certainly does not contradict the general inclination among women to marry upwards.

From Table 1a, it becomes clear that the sons have attained fewer elite positions than the fathers, by both broad (11.9% versus 14.1%) and restricted (1.1% versus 2.1%) definitions. But the sons' wives hold more broad or restricted elite positions than their mothers-in-law (1.2% versus 0.4%). Patrician daughters (Table 1b) gain substantially fewer elite positions than their fathers (0.8% versus 17.5%), but a slightly higher percentage than their mothers (0.8% versus 0.4%). Their husbands held fewer elite positions than their fathers-in-law as well (11.3% versus 17.5%).

TABLE 1a
Percentages of characteristics of noble (*N* = 952) and patrician (*N* = 1478) sons born between 1899 and 1951 who did not die before their 40th birthday, and of their parents, wives and parents-in-law

	Son		Father		Mother		Wife		Parents-in-law	
	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
Noble title										
None	–	100.0	–	100.0	74.5	93.6	87.1	95.9	84.5	94.7
Baronet	63.9	–	63.9	–	16.3	4.7	8.8	2.6	8.4	3.2
Baron	32.2	–	32.2	–	7.9	1.6	3.3	1.0	5.5	1.7
Count	3.9	–	3.9	–	1.4	0.1	0.8	0.5	1.5	0.4
Elite position										
None	84.5	87.0	75.5	83.3	98.9	99.6	98.8	98.8	–	–
Broad	11.2	11.9	21.1	14.1	–	0.3	0.7	1.0	–	–
Restricted	4.3	1.1	3.3	2.1	1.1	0.1	0.5	0.2	–	–
Tertiary education										
None	67.9	60.6	67.8	59.9	98.9	96.9	92.8	92.2	80.9	83.1
Vocational college diploma	3.5	4.3	3.4	2.3	–	0.1	–	0.4	0.1	0.2
Master's	25.5	29.0	20.5	28.8	0.9	2.6	6.7	6.5	12.8	10.9
PhD	3.2	6.2	8.4	9.0	0.1	0.4	0.5	1.0	7.2	5.8

N = noble; P = patrician.

TABLE 1b
Percentages of characteristics of noble ($N = 920$) and patrician ($N = 1382$) daughters born between 1899 and 1951 who did not die before their 40th birthday, and of their parents, husbands and parents-in-law

	Daughter		Father		Mother		Husband		Parents-in-law	
	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
Noble title										
None	–	100.0	–	100.0	72.9	94.9	81.7	94.4	78.8	92.2
Baronet	62.0	–	62.0	–	17.8	3.3	9.8	3.0	10.8	3.7
Baron	33.3	–	33.3	–	7.6	1.5	6.4	1.9	7.6	3.1
Count	4.8	–	4.8	–	1.6	0.2	2.1	0.7	2.9	0.4
Elite position										
None	98.6	99.3	73.9	82.5	99.5	99.6	82.9	88.5		
Broad	1.1	0.7	22.5	15.4	–	0.3	11.7	10.6		
Restricted	0.3	0.1	3.6	2.1	0.5	0.1	5.4	0.7		
Tertiary education										
None	94.2	91.3	68.9	63.1	99.1	97.9	64.8	61.8	78.1	84.9
Vocational college diploma	–	0.6	2.1	2.3	–	0.1	0.7	2.3	0.3	0.4
Master's	5.3	7.5	19.1	27.1	0.9	1.8	27.6	28.5	15.5	10.2
PhD	0.4	0.7	9.9	7.6	0.1	0.1	6.9	7.4	7.6	4.5

N = noble; P = patrician.

Nobility versus Patriciaat

The first striking difference between the noble and the patrician families is the respective percentages of elite positions. In general noble sons, their fathers and the husbands of noble daughters held more elite positions than their patrician counterparts. This is a first but not yet decisive confirmation of our Hypothesis 1 (“constant noble advantage”). But the differences in these percentages are not entirely uniform. While there is very little difference between noble and patrician sons as far as broad positions are concerned, there is a substantial difference in the restricted elite positions (4.3% versus 1.1%). For the fathers, there is a rather large difference with respect to the broad elite positions (21.1% versus 14.1%), and for the husbands of noble daughters the percentage of restricted elite positions is also higher than for the husbands of patrician daughters (5.4% versus 0.7%). The second difference is the tertiary educational level of both types of families, both for the sons (32.2% versus 39.5%) and the daughters (5.7% versus 8.8%). Similar differences are not seen for the fathers, although in general patrician parents have a somewhat higher educational level than noble ones. There is also a difference between the educational level of noble and patrician husbands (35.2% versus 38.2% with tertiary education). These differences in educational level between noble and patrician families contradict our fifth educational hypothesis.

Intergenerational transmission of elite positions by noble and patrician families

Table 2 shows that children of parents who held a restricted or broad elite position are more likely to obtain an elite position or to live in an elite household themselves.

The relation between elite positions of noble parental households and children’s household is statistically significant (the correlation is 0.15). But this relation is stronger for sons than for daughters (correlations are respectively 0.20 and 0.11). For patrician families we see the same significant relation, but the correlation is lower (0.09). Again the correlation is higher for sons than for daughters (respectively 0.13 and 0.04). But both correlations are lower than those for noble children, especially for daughters. This is a first but not yet decisive confirmation of our fourth, family project

hypothesis. The next question is whether the intergenerational transmission of elite positions within the nobility has weakened during the 20th century. When the son or daughter was born before 1940, this transmission has hardly changed, as can be seen in Table 3.

The correlation for all noble generations is around 0.15. The correlation for the youngest decade is slightly lower (0.13), but this might be explained by the relatively young age, from 40 to 50 years, of this birth cohort at the period the information on their occupations and positions was collected. The young age will have caused right-censored occupational careers, i.e. they are still too young to have reached the peak of their career. For the patrician households we see a similar pattern, but particularly the correlation for the oldest generation is much smaller than for its noble counterpart. In the middle generation the correlation increases slightly but it is still lower than for noble households and it remains stable for the youngest generation. These results are preliminary indications that our second, “rearguard fight”, hypothesis must be rejected.

Methods

To test our hypotheses statistically, we need to control for differences in social background (education, spouses, parental background, parents-in-law) among noble and patrician children. We will present two groups of logistic regressions.

Table 4 presents the likelihood of attaining any elite position (broad or restricted) as dependent variable, whereas Table 5 is restricted to the likelihood of attaining a *restricted* elite position as dependent variable. Both the constructed variables “elite position within the household of the son or daughter” and “parental elite position” are included.

This first makes it possible to include both sons and daughters in the same analyses and, although daughters obtain an elite position far less often than sons, they have a married partner with an elite position more often than sons, as Tables 1a and 1b have shown. Thus the variable “elite position within the household” measures whether sons or daughters have obtained this position by their own labour or by marriage with someone having an elite position. The importance of the household as a way of achieving elite positions and the intergenerational transmission of these positions can be studied in some detail with this procedure. The constructed

TABLE 2
Numbers (percentages) of elite positions in the households of noble and patrician children and in their parental households

	Elite positions in parental household							
	None		Broad		Restricted		Total	
	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
None	1224 (77.4)	2120 (84.2)	305 (19.3)	354 (14.1)	52 (3.3)	45 (1.8)	1581 (84.3)	2519 (88.1)
Broad	125 (60.4)	234 (74.5)	70 (33.8)	64 (20.4)	12 (5.8)	16 (5.1)	207 (11.0)	314 (11.0)
Restricted	51 (58.0)	19 (70.4)	30 (34.1)	5 (18.5)	7 (8.0)	3 (11.1)	88 (4.7)	27 (0.9)
Total	1400 (74.6)	2373 (83.0)	405 (21.6)	423 (14.8)	71 (3.8)	64 (2.2)	1876 (100.0)	2860 (100.0)
	Elite positions in sons' households							
None	632 (79.0)	1093 (85.5)	143 (17.9)	164 (12.8)	25 (3.1)	21 (1.6)	800 (84.0)	1278 (86.5)
Broad	60 (55.0)	129 (70.9)	42 (38.5)	42 (23.1)	7 (6.4)	11 (6.0)	109 (11.4)	182 (12.3)
Restricted	25 (58.1)	14 (77.8)	14 (32.6)	3 (16.7)	4 (9.3)	1 (5.6)	43 (4.5)	18 (1.2)
Total	717 (75.3)	1236 (83.6)	199 (20.9)	209 (14.1)	36 (3.8)	33 (2.2)	952 (100.0)	1478 (100.0)
	Elite positions in daughters' household							
None	590 (75.7)	1027 (82.8)	162 (20.8)	190 (15.3)	27 (3.5)	24 (1.9)	779 (84.7)	1241 (89.8)
Broad	64 (66.0)	105 (79.5)	28 (28.9)	22 (16.7)	5 (5.2)	5 (3.8)	97 (10.5)	132 (9.6)
Restricted	25 (56.8)	5 (55.6)	16 (36.4)	2 (22.2)	3 (6.8)	2 (22.2)	44 (4.8)	9 (0.7)
Total	679 (73.8)	1137 (82.3)	206 (22.4)	214 (15.5)	35 (3.8)	31 (2.2)	920 (100.0)	1382 (100.0)

N = nobility, P = patrician.

All noble children: $\Phi^2 = 42.4$, d.f. = 4, $p < 0.00$, Spearman corr. = 0.15.

All patrician children: $\Phi^2 = 34.7$, d.f. = 4, $p < 0.00$, Spearman corr. = 0.09.

Noble sons: $\Phi^2 = 38.0$, d.f. = 4, $p < 0.00$, Spearman corr. = 0.20. Patrician sons: $\Phi^2 = 30.8$, d.f. = 4, $p < 0.00$, Spearman corr. = 0.13.

Noble daughters: $\Phi^2 = 11.2$, d.f. = 4, $p < 0.02$, Spearman corr. = 0.11. Patrician daughters: $\Phi^2 = 19.3$, d.f. = 4, $p < 0.00$; Spearman corr. = 0.04.

TABLE 3
Relations between elite positions in the households of children and those in their parental households, for birth cohorts 1900–19, 1920–39 and 1940–50

	Parental household							
	None (%)		Broad (%)		Restricted (%)		Total (N)	
	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
Children's households for birth cohort 1900–19								
None	75.5	86.0	22.3	12.2	2.2	1.8	583	898
Broad	58.1	78.0	36.6	15.9	5.4	6.1	93	132
Restricted	57.4	75.0	36.2	16.7	6.4	8.3	47	12
Total	72.1	84.4	25.0	12.8	2.9	2.4	723	1042
Children's households for birth cohort 1920–39								
None	79.5	84.9	17.6	13.4	2.8	1.7	562	933
Broad	60.6	73.6	33.3	22.3	6.1	4.1	66	121
Restricted	64.3	70.0	28.6	20.0	7.1	10.0	28	10
Total	77.0	83.5	19.7	14.5	3.4	2.1	656	1064
Children's households for birth cohort 1940–50								
None	77.3	80.8	17.4	17.3	5.3	1.9	436	688
Broad	64.6	68.9	29.2	26.2	6.3	4.9	48	61
Restricted	46.2	60.0	38.5	20.0	15.4	20.0	13	5
Total	75.3	79.7	19.1	18.0	5.6	2.3	497	754

N = noble, P = patrician.

Noble families: Spearman corr. is 0.16 (1900–19), 0.15 (1920–39), 0.13 (1940–50).

Patrician families: Spearman corr. is 0.08 (1900–19), 0.11 (1920–39), 0.11 (1940–50).

TABLE 4
Likelihood of a broad or restricted elite position in households of married children
(*N* = 4017) born before 1951 (effect parameters of logistic regression)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Nobility	1.32**	1.26*	1.15	3.42*	3.65**
Birth cohort 1900–9 (ref.)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
1910–19	1.19	1.05	1.16	1.13	
1920–9	0.99	0.92	0.93	0.88	
1930–9	0.75*	0.65**	0.69*	0.66*	
1940–50	0.66**	0.51**	0.49**	0.46**	
Parents any elite position		1.42**	1.30*	0.87	
Male		0.57**	1.08	0.24*	0.19**
University degree of son or daughter		5.19**	4.00**	1.61*	
Father university degree		1.35**	1.14	1.10	
Mother noble title		2.07**	1.67**	1.22	
Partner with university degree			3.63**	3.67**	3.76**
Parents-in-law noble title			2.11**	2.14**	2.09**
Parents-in-law university degree			1.81**	1.76**	1.78**
Nobility * birth cohort				1.05	
Nobility * parents elite position				0.98	
Nobility * university degree of son or daughter				0.57**	0.59**
Nobility * noble parents-in-law				1.01	
Nobility * non-noble university-educated parents-in-law and spouse				1.11	
Nobility * mother noble title				1.53**	1.86**
Male * university degree				1.92*	2.51**
Male * parents elite position				1.27*	1.21**
Nagelkerke R ²	0.01	0.09	0.14	0.14	0.14
–2 log likelihood	3384	3044	2835	2816	2823

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

variable concerning the parental household is, of course, dominated by father's elite position, but it also takes into account the few elite positions held by mothers (Tables 1a and 1b). Because we include characteristics of the partners of the children as well, these regression analyses will be restricted to married children.

In order to clarify and validate these analyses of the “elite position within the household”, we also computed regression analyses for married sons with their individual elite position as dependent vari-

TABLE 5
Likelihood of a restricted elite position in households of married children born before 1951 (effect parameters of logistic regression)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Nobility	4.98**	4.37**	3.97**	14.77*	3.47**
Birth cohort 1900–9 (ref.)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
1910–19	1.06	0.91	1.06	1.15	
1920–9	0.79	0.73	0.82	0.95	
1930–9	0.58	0.52*	0.61	0.79	
1940–50	0.44**	0.38**	0.40**	0.55	
Parents any elite position		1.62*	1.38	1.11	
Male		0.60*	1.09	1.09	
University degree of son or daughter		3.77**	2.84**	4.02**	
Mother noble title		2.01**	1.54	1.85	1.55*
Partner with university degree			2.81**	2.64**	5.09**
Partner with noble title			2.66**	2.00*	2.46**
Parents-in-law university degree			1.72*	1.59*	1.90**
Nobility * birth cohort				0.89	
Nobility * parents elite position				1.27	
Nobility * university degree of son or daughter				0.62	
Nobility * noble parents-in-law				1.35	4.99
Nobility * non-noble university-educated parents-in-law and spouse				1.17	
Nobility * mother noble title				0.78	
University degree son daughter * birth cohort					1.19*
Male * birth cohort					0.84
Male * university degree					1.35**
Parents any elite position * birth cohort					1.09
Noble parents-in-law * birth cohort					0.84*
University degree partner * birth cohort					0.19
Nagelkerke R ²	0.08	0.14	0.19	0.20	0.20
–2 log likelihood	936	881	835	831	830

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

able. The steps in this model are shown in Table 6. (Comparable analyses for daughters are statistically unreliable, due to the small number of elite positions held by daughters.) We also made a comparable analysis for all married and unmarried sons with their individual elite position as dependent variable and without the characteristics of partners or parents-in-law. These results are not shown because they are very similar to those for married sons in Table 6. They can be obtained from the second author. A comparison between Tables 4, 5 and 6 illustrates the difference between a household perspective and an individual son's or daughter's perspective.

The different steps in the models in Tables 4 and 5 clearly show which variables contribute to the explanation of elite positions within children's households when their own characteristics and those of their parents, partners and parents-in-law are taken into account. The first model explains elite positions by noble title and birth cohort of the children. The first decade (1900–9) is the reference category, and the consecutive parameters indicate whether sons and daughters born in a particular decade have a higher chance (parameter larger than 1.00) or a lower chance (parameter lower than 1.00) of an elite position than children born in the first decade. Secondly, the characteristics of the children (gender, university degree) and the parental characteristics (parental elite position, university degree of father and mother and noble title of mother) are added. Parental elite position is included in the model as well, irrespective of the significance of its parameter because our interest is focused on intergenerational transmission of elite positions. Finally characteristics of the partners of the children (partner's noble title, university degree) and of the parents-in-law (university degree of parents-in-law and the highest noble title of parents-in-law) are included. Because all other characteristics of children and parents are only control variables for our hypotheses, only characteristics with significant parameters are shown. An interaction variable (nobility*birth cohort), which indicates whether the effect of noble title is different for nobility and patricians born in the different birth cohorts, is also added. If the parameter is significantly higher than 1.00, it means that the effect of having a noble title on the chance of obtaining an elite position is larger in the younger birth cohorts than in the older ones. If the parameter is lower than 1.00, it means that the effect of being a patrician son or daughter on the

TABLE 6
Likelihood of an elite position of married sons ($N = 2133$) born before 1951
(effect parameters of logistic regression)

	Broad or restricted		Restricted	
	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5
Nobility	9.67**	8.74**	15.12	3.33**
Birth cohort 1900–9 (ref.)	1.00	1.00	1.00	
1910–19	1.30	1.39	1.19	
1920–9	1.01	1.13	1.15	
1930–9	0.64	0.74	0.93	
1940–50	0.46**	0.54**	0.44	
Parents any elite position	2.00**	1.95**	0.71	
University degree of son	8.85**	8.70**	4.61**	
Mother noble title	0.73	–	0.12	
University degree spouse	–	–	–	6.25**
Parents-in-law noble title	2.79**	3.82**	2.45	2.50**
Parents-in-law university degree	1.62**	1.63**		
Nobility * birth cohort	1.00		0.74	
Nobility * parents elite position	1.00		1.63	
Nobility * university degree of son	0.41*	0.42**	0.68	
Nobility * noble parents-in-law	0.63	–	1.07	
Nobility * non-noble university-educated parents-in-law and spouse	2.65*	2.65**	2.22	
Nobility * mother noble title	2.77**	1.98**	3.29	1.30**
Mother noble title * birth cohort			1.80*	
Noble parents-in-law * birth cohort		0.79		
University degree son * birth cohort				1.56**
University degree spouse * birth cohort				0.51**
Nagelkerke R^2	0.15	0.15	0.18	0.17
–2 log likelihood	1466	1464	423	429

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

chances of obtaining an elite position has expanded in the younger birth cohorts. Given our second hypothesis, we included this nobility * birth cohort interaction variable in the model, irrespective of the statistical significance of its parameter. Given our fourth hypothesis, we also added, irrespective of its statistical significance, the interaction variable nobility * parental elite, which indicates whether the effect of having parents with an elite position is stronger

for nobility than for patricians. If the parameter is significantly higher than 1.00, it means that the effect of having parents with an elite position is larger for nobility than for patricians. Given our sixth hypothesis, we also added, irrespective of its statistical significance, the interaction variable nobility*university degree, which indicates whether the effect of a university degree is stronger for nobility than for patricians. Given our seventh hypothesis, we also added, irrespective of its statistical significance, the interaction variable nobility*university degree of parents-in-law*non-noble parents-in-law*university degree of spouse, which indicates whether the effect of having university-educated non-noble parents-in-law and spouse is stronger for nobility than for patricians. Given our 10th hypothesis, we also added, irrespective of its statistical significance, the interaction variable nobility*noble family-in-law, which indicates whether the effect of a noble family-in-law is stronger for nobility than for patricians or vice versa. Given our eighth and 12th hypotheses, we also added, irrespective of its statistical significance, the interaction variable nobility*mother noble title, which indicates whether the effect of a noble mother is stronger for nobility than for patricians or vice versa.

We also added some other interaction variables to this fourth model: birth cohort*university degree of son or daughter; nobility*gender; birth cohort*gender; university degree son or daughter*gender; gender*parental elite; birth cohort*parental elite; birth cohort*mother noble title; birth cohort*noble title parents-in-law; birth cohort*university degree partner; university degree of parents-in-law*non-noble parents-in-law*university degree of spouse. These were added only to avoid a wrong estimation of the coefficients. Only variables with significant parameters are shown. Control variables, which became insignificant after the inclusion of other control variables in a subsequent model, are however not deleted. Table 6 gives only the results of the fourth and final model for married sons, but again the results of the other models can be obtained from the second author.

In order to estimate the possible bias produced by this order of inclusion of the independent variables in the equations, we also estimated the coefficients by a backward procedure with all variables in the equations and with the deletion of those not necessary for the best prediction of the dependent variable.

Testing noble advantages

The “constant noble advantage” and “rearguard” hypotheses

The parameter of the “nobility” variable in Table 4 is always larger than 1.00, which indicates that noble sons and daughters have a larger chance of obtaining a broad or restricted elite position within a household than patrician children with the same characteristics. This noble advantage can be explained by the characteristics of their partners and parents-in-law (Model 3): the university degree and noble titles of the parents-in-law in particular are significant predictors of an elite position. However Model 4 of Table 4 shows that the advantage of noble children is more than three times as large if we take into account that a university degree is less important for noble children to obtain an elite position than for a patrician son or daughter (interaction variable nobility* university degree of son or daughter). The results of Model 5 of Table 4 thus confirm the “constant advantage” hypothesis (no 1).

The advantage of the nobility becomes even more apparent when taking the restricted elite positions within households separately: noble children have about four times more chance of obtaining a restricted elite position within a household than patrician children with the same characteristics (Table 5). The same advantage was already evident in Tables 1a and 1b, but the present analysis shows that this cannot be explained by the differences in the other characteristics of noble and patrician children. Although this advantage seems to decrease in the younger birth cohorts, the decline is so far not statistically significant (interaction variable nobility*birth cohort in Model 4; its non-inclusion in Model 5), contrary to the “rearguard fight” hypothesis (no 2).

The advantage of noble sons and daughters in obtaining elite positions remains true if we focus on the married sons and their individual elite position only (Table 6). The advantage of noble sons is more than eight times as great for broad or restricted elite positions and more than three times as great for restricted elite positions, compared to a patrician son with the same characteristics.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 show that noble and patrician children born between 1940 and 1950 have a significantly lower chance of having an elite position in the 1990s than the children born earlier. As we mentioned before, this lower chance might be explained by the relative youth of this generation in the 1990s, which produces right-hand

censored data because their careers have not yet peaked. But it is also true that the sons and daughters born between 1930 and 1940 have a lower chance of obtaining an elite position, although in most cases the parameters are not significant. If we compare these parameters for either a broad or restricted elite position (Table 4) with those for a restricted elite position only (Table 5), the smaller chances of the children born between 1930 and 1940 are significant only for broad or restricted elite positions and not for restricted elite positions alone. We conclude that the likelihood of achieving any elite position, broad or restricted, by both noble and patrician children has decreased, but that the likelihood of achieving a restricted elite position by both noble and patrician children has not decreased. This difference between broad and restricted elite positions can be explained by the loss of locally based elite positions (for instance mayors of small municipalities) both by the nobility and the patricians as a consequence of the professionalization of local government and the disappearance of small municipalities.

All these results confirm our “constant noble advantage” hypothesis (no 1) and lead us to reject the “rearguard fight” hypothesis (no 2). The greater selectivity of the *Nederland's Patriciaat*, which should have produced a significant advantage of patrician children, is more than fully counterbalanced by the importance of having a Dutch noble title, and this advantage does not decrease significantly for the different generations, which contradicts our “rearguard fight” hypothesis.

The “intergenerational” and “family project” hypotheses

The intergenerational continuation of elite positions from noble and patrician parents to their children, as described in Table 3, cannot entirely be explained by the other characteristics of parents and children (education, parental elite position). Table 4 gives in Model 2 significant and positive parameters of the variable parental elite position for the likelihood of a broad or restricted elite position in a household. The inclusion of the parental elite position does not explain the larger number of elite positions of nobles compared to the high bourgeoisie because there still is a nobility coefficient. The effect of parental elite position remains significant in Model 3 of Table 4, despite the addition of characteristics of the spouse and the parents-in-law. In Model 4 of Table 4, parental elite position

becomes insignificant due to the introduction of a significant interaction variable, male*parents elite position. This interaction variable, which tells us that only a parental elite position gives sons (but not daughters) a higher chance of an elite position, is also significant in Model 5. But this does not mean the advantage of nobility has disappeared in this latest model of Table 4: on the contrary, it has become even more significant. This result clearly contradicts the “intergenerational” hypothesis (no 3). A comparable result reported for the intergenerational transmission of broad or restricted elite positions is confirmed for married sons only in Table 6. If we restrict ourselves to advantage of nobility for the restricted elite positions only (Table 5), we have also to reject the “intergenerational” hypothesis. The parameter of parental elite position becomes insignificant in Model 3 of Table 5 after controlling for the characteristics of partner and parents-in-law. But the significant parameter of nobility remains significant also in Models 3 and 4 and thereby contradicts the “intergenerational” hypothesis.

The insignificant interaction variable nobility*parental elite position in Tables 4, 5 and 6 indicates that the intergenerational transmission of these elite positions is no stronger among the nobility than among the high bourgeoisie, contrary to our “family project” hypothesis (no 4). Thus intergenerational transmission of elite privileges exists but it works only to enter a broadly defined elite and it works no differently for nobility than for the high bourgeoisie. It does not work to reach a more restricted elite position, probably because of the fiercer competition for those very scarce positions and the phenomenon of “regression to the mean”.

The “intergenerational” and the “family project” hypotheses as possible explanations for the “lingering on” explanation thus have to be rejected as invalid.

The “educational” and the “combined old and new cultural capital” hypotheses

The “educational” hypothesis (no 5), as one possible version of the “bourgeoisisation of nobility” explanation, must be rejected given the results reported in Tables 4 and 5. The addition of the university degree of son or daughter and that of the father (mothers’ education had no significant coefficient) to the equation in Model 2 does not make the advantage of the nobility on elite positions insignificant,

either in the broad or in the restricted sense. This does not mean that a university degree does not increase the chances of an elite position, it only means that this cannot explain the noble advantage.

The interaction variable nobility*university degree son or daughter is significant in Models 4 and 5 of Table 4 and in Table 6 for married sons only. But the direction of these significant coefficients is opposite to the direction assumed by the “combined old and new cultural capital” hypothesis (no 6). A university degree is less important for nobility in obtaining an elite position than for the high bourgeoisie, instead of the other way around. The interaction variable nobility*university degree son or daughter is insignificant in Table 5 and the restricted model of Table 6, but here too the direction of these coefficients contradicts Hypothesis 6. The “educational” and the “combined old and new cultural capital” hypotheses as possible explanations for the constant noble advantage also have to be rejected as invalid.

The “intermarriage” and “aristocratization” hypotheses

The “intermarriage” hypothesis (no 7), which assumes that marriage between nobles and their highly educated non-noble spouses and family-in-law is the most effective combination of old and new social and cultural capital, is not correct according to the results of Tables 4 and 5, although the direction of the insignificant coefficient of the interaction variable (nobility*non-noble university-educated parents-in-law and spouse) is as assumed by this hypothesis. However, the results of Table 6 (for married males only) support this hypothesis. Male nobles marrying a university-educated spouse with non-noble and at least one university-educated parent-in-law have 165 percent more chance of obtaining a broad or restricted elite position than male nobles marrying somebody without one of these characteristics. However, it is good to remember that these significant interaction variables are a part of equations in which the variables noble parents-in-law, noble title and university degree of the respondent have also positive and significant coefficients. This means that the acceptance of the “intermarriage” hypothesis (no 7) does not explain the constant noble advantage.

The “aristocratization” hypothesis (no 8), which assumes a greater importance of having a noble mother for the high bourgeoisie than for the nobility in obtaining an elite position, must be rejected

in full. The interaction variable nobility*mother noble title is significant in Tables 4 and 6 (both definitions of elite positions), but the direction is completely wrong. To support Hypothesis 8, it must be smaller than 1.00, but it is much larger in three of the four presented equations.

One version of the “bourgeoisisation of nobility” explanation (the combination of the educational capital of her high-bourgeois family with his noble title) is supported by our results, but the other (the combination of a noble mother and a high bourgeois) is not, and both explanations cannot explain the constant noble advantage.

The “noble homogamy” explanation

This explanation assumes that the social and cultural capital of the nobility can maintain its old relevance for obtaining elite positions in modern society as long as it retains its distinctive characteristics. Noble parents-in-law increase the chances of an elite position (Tables 4 and 6), while a noble partner increases the chances of a restricted elite position (Table 5). But the inclusion of these variables in the equations does not make the constant noble advantage insignificant. Thus the significant advantage of having noble parents-in-law or partners does not confirm Hypothesis 9 because it does not explain the constant noble advantage.

The other version of the “noble homogamy” explanation, which assumes that having noble parents-in-law increases the opportunities of an elite position more strongly for members of noble families than for those of high-bourgeois families (Hypothesis 10), is also incorrect. The interaction variable nobility*noble parents-in-law is insignificant in all tables. The explanation, that the distinctive and unblemished social and cultural capital of the nobility enforced by noble homogamy is responsible for the constant noble advantage, is not supported by our results and thus has to be rejected.

The “new relevance of the distinctive noble capital” explanation

Noble mothers increase the chances of a restricted elite position (Table 5). But the inclusion of this variable in the equation does not make the constant noble advantage insignificant. The same

holds for the interaction variables, which includes mother noble title in Tables 4 and 6; even if they are significant, their inclusion does not make the constant noble advantage insignificant. Thus the significant advantage of having a noble mother does not confirm the “socialization by noble mother” hypothesis (no 11) because it does not explain the constant noble advantage.

The other version of the “new relevance of the distinctive noble capital” explanation, which assumes that having a noble mother increases the opportunities of an elite position more strongly for members of noble families than for those of high-bourgeois families (Hypothesis 12), is correct. The interaction variable nobility*noble mother is significant in Tables 4 and 6 and the direction of these coefficients is larger than 1.00, thus confirming the “socialization by noble parents” hypothesis (no 12). The “new relevance of the distinctive noble capital” explanation, which assumes that a noble title has a new relevance in modern societies, is until now the best supported by our results, together with Hypothesis 7, the “inter-marriage” explanation.

Conclusions

The results of our statistical analysis confirm the first hypothesis, and this confirmation cannot be explained away by assuming that the noble advantage is a lingering relic from the past or a consequence of the bourgeoisisation of the nobility or due to a strong homogamy among the nobility. Dutch noble families have held more elite positions than high-bourgeois families during the 20th century. This advantage has not decreased for those generations that have a more or less completed life-course according to our statistical tests. Only for the youngest birth cohorts do we see a significant negative effect on the likelihood of holding an elite position; the effect is clearer for the broad elite positions than for the restricted ones, but this is true for both the nobility and the high bourgeoisie. Therefore we conclude that the likelihood of achieving an elite position has not decreased during the 20th century for several generations of the nobility compared to several generations of high-bourgeois families. All these results confirm the earlier finding that the probability of attaining elite positions in Dutch society by the nobility has changed very little during the 20th century (Dronkers, 2003; Dronkers and Schijf, 2004). Even more generally

speaking, the present results confirm once again the outcomes of other studies, which show the continuing advantage of Dutch noble titles in achieving elite positions in the Netherlands.

Possible explanations of this constant noble advantage were not supported by our data analyses, although a number of these explanations (straightforward reproduction of elites, the use of education as the modern way of reproduction by old elites, bourgeoisie of nobility, aristocratization of bourgeoisie) are fashionable in the 20th-century literature on nobility.

1. Members of noble families do not have more possibilities to transmit their own elite position to the next generation than members of high-bourgeois families, although the former obtain more elite positions, both broad and restricted.

2. University education does not give the nobility greater opportunities than it gives the high bourgeoisie; moreover the former have fewer university degrees than the latter.

3. A higher number of noble mothers and a larger number of noble parents-in-law do not explain the larger opportunities of nobles to gain elite positions, although members of noble families more often have noble mothers than members of high-bourgeois families.

4. Noble parents-in-law are of equal importance for nobility and the high bourgeoisie for explaining the greater opportunities of nobles to win elite positions, although members of noble families more often have noble parents-in-law than members of high-bourgeois families.

We have also found three indications for the mechanisms that make a noble title relevant in a modern bourgeois society.

1. A noble mother is still an advantage for obtaining elite positions in modern society, both for the nobility and for the high bourgeoisie. But it is truer for the former than for the latter, which clearly contradicts a simple "bourgeoisisation of the nobility" explanation. Neither is there any indication that the advantage of having a noble mother is smaller for the younger generations. Our interpretation of this result is that mothers, who are the main people responsible for the socialization of the next generation into their cultural and social capital, are still successfully transmitting this distinct and useful noble cultural and social capital to the benefit of the next generation. The success of this socialization seems to us the best explanation of the strong effect of mothers' noble title on the chances of obtaining an elite position in the next generation.

The extra effect of mothers' noble title for the nobility seems to us an indication that the noble homogamy within the parental family produces an accumulation of distinct noble cultural and social capital, which gives an extra advantage to the generation born to a homogenous noble family.

2. Noble parents-in-law or noble spouses are still advantages for obtaining elite positions in modern society, both for the nobility and for the high bourgeoisie and to the same degree. Our interpretation of this result is that the distinct social capital of the noble family-in-law is an equal extra advantage for both bourgeoisie and nobility because social capital does not require a long socialization (unlike cultural capital). The right social capital gives more or less direct entrance to closed influential circles and concealed useful information, thanks to the connections of the noble parent-in-law or their well-known name. There are indications that the advantage of having a noble parent-in-law is smaller for the younger generations.

3. Noble sons who married a university-educated spouse with non-noble but university-educated parents had better opportunities to obtain elite positions than those noble sons who married spouses without a university degree and with non-noble parents without a university degree, or high-bourgeois males who married spouses with the same characteristics. This special combination within a mixed marriage (her high educational cultural capital combined with his noble title) proved to give the son high chances of elite positions. But our results also show that it is only this specific combination which is effective. Having noble parents-in-law is not an extra advantage for the high bourgeoisie, it carries the same advantage for both the nobility and the high bourgeoisie. The same holds for university-educated parents-in-law: they give the same advantage to both groups. Thus only a strong and rather rare combination of nobility and educational capital produces the extra advantage of the combination of bourgeois and noble capital.

One way to combine our results showing the relevance of a noble title and the modernization theory is to assume that social inequality within modern societies is increasingly based on achievement, but that this is true only for the upper working and middle classes, which make up the vast majority of these modern societies. The higher classes investigated in this article are less affected by this modernization largely because the competition for scarce elite positions makes other characteristics, like social and cultural capital, more important than the usual achievement characteristics, like

education. These other characteristics remain important despite modernization because the number of scarce elite positions cannot increase to any great extent, contrary to the increasing size of the middle and the upper working classes. Modernization theory thus refers primarily to a population as a whole, while our results focus only on the more extreme positions within these modern societies. This difference in focus (middle or extremes) might explain and reconcile the contradictory results. Modernization theory would be true only for the large middle classes in modern societies, but not, or less, true for the extreme positions within these societies, either the elites or the unemployed and drop-outs.

Our research does not necessarily claim that the nobility still has an important role to play in Dutch society. What it does show, however, is that belonging to a group in the possession of specific combinations of symbolic, social and cultural capital, outdated as it may be, may still produce clear advantages in a modern bourgeois society like the Netherlands. Although this capital is partly based on ascribed qualities, the group is capable of maintaining its elite positions whatever the impact of modernization and meritocratization may have been in the 20th century. It also contradicts the assumption held by many educated observers that the nobility has become obsolete in present-day Dutch and other European societies. Saint Martin (1993) has already convincingly demonstrated the lasting ability of members of the French nobility to adapt. Therefore we would like to postulate that this lasting ability to combine old and new social capital may be found among nobilities in other western European countries as well, even where the nobility is no longer officially recognized. To conclude: all elite offices may be open to all people with the right qualifications in these modern societies, but they are more open to some people than to others, and a noble pedigree, with its specific social, cultural and symbolic capital, still helps.

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