



**Different expectations leading to labor
exploitation and mistreatment of Brazilian
Au Pairs in the Netherlands.**

**Erasmus University Rotterdam
Master thesis in Sociology - Governance
of Migration and Diversity
Cecilia Groenwold 509195
Supervisor: Dr. Marieke Van Houte**



Abstract:

The au pair program is embedded in multiple ambiguities resulting from its portrayal of “cultural exchange”. Based on semi-structured interviews with 21 au pairs and 6 respective host families, this study aims to understand the different expectations that those parties may have while choosing to pursue the program and the au pairs’ experiences of labor exploitation and mistreatment due this expectation mismatch. The results demonstrate that families and au pairs are in search of different experiences; au pairs want to travel, experience a new culture and learn a new language, while the host families are in search of a more comfortable and flexible life. The findings also demonstrate that au pairs may experience different forms of labor exploitation and mistreatment; those experiences are demonstrated to be mostly shaped by the host families’ disinterest in investing in a fair and balanced relationship. The findings of this research may bring attention to the need for further changes to the au pair program’s regulations, in which the unclear definition that serves as the program’s foundation seems to leave too much room for inconsistent experiences and emphasis of the au pairs’ vulnerable position.

Key words: au pair; cultural exchange; experiences; labor exploitation; mistreatment

Preface:

After months of hard work, I finished my master's thesis, of which I am immensely proud. It was a demanding but rewarding experience that proved to be important to me not only as a master's student but also as a person.

The initial process of becoming acquainted with literature about domestic and migrant opened my eyes and made me even more eager to pursue my research and provide my own contribution to this field. While gathering data through interviews, I was able to travel and talk with many people; this was an enriching experience, which made me realize how fulfilling this process can be. The thorough data analysis complemented this intense learning process as discovered different nuances of my data. Through this procedure, I was able to read about, talk about and understand things on a deeper level.

I am grateful to all those that helped throughout the way, as they facilitated this route and made this challenge attainable for me. First, I would like to thank Marieke Van Houte. In addition to her vast and sensitive knowledge about migration, which helped me greatly during the theoretical framework construction, her analytical eye was essential for the whole structure of my thesis. She was also very kind and available to answer my questions. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to work with her. I also would like to thank Cox, Hess & Puckhaber, and Stenum, as their work was an important source for me. Finally, I would like to thank my Dutch husband and my family in Brazil, as without their support and sacrifices I would not have been able to complete this journey.

Cecilia Groenwold,

12/06/2019

1. Introduction

The decline of public childcare services and the rise of minimum wages for nationals and women's participation in the labor market, have encouraged the migration of women from the global South to fill the demand for childcare in richer areas. Castles, De Haas, & Miller (2014) argues that the supply for low-skilled labor has decreased dramatically, which in turn can explain the increasing reliance on low-skilled migrant labor. For example, the Swedish government has reduced its expenses for public care, leading to the individualization of care responsibilities. This situation is concurrent with an increasing reliance on migrant domestic workers, including au pairs (Platzer, 2010 in Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck, 2011b).

The au pair program, in general, has in its essence a frame of cultural exchange; however, it is also being used to fulfill care needs. Harsh policies of the states of the European Union (EU) regarding low-skilled labor migrants undermine these migrants' the possibilities of having easy access to domestic and care work. According to Stenum (2010, in Isaksen, 2010), a strategical au pair framing comes in handy; they are portrayed by politicians as "students" in a "cultural exchange" program; however, by the media and general public, they are seen as low-paid housemaids.

Cox (2015) argues that understanding the au pair program as a "cultural exchange" through the literal meaning of the French word— "equal"—is crucial for several reasons. "This ambiguous characterization can mask a range of contradictions and misunderstandings about what au pairing entails, it hides the value of the au pair's labor and makes campaigning for labor rights for au pairs, alongside domestic workers, more difficult" (Cox, 2015, p.24). However, girls usually see the program as an opportunity to fulfill broader expectations in their life, e.g., learning a new language and traveling. Many au pairs feel trapped in a domestic work position; therefore, research suggests that this program should be acknowledged as a domestic migratory service, because in practice the program often loses its original delimitations of cultural exchange (Cox 2015; Hess and Puckhaber, 2004; Isaksen, 2010).

The EU addressed au pairs' regulations in 1969 with the European Agreement on Au Pair Placement; however, it lacks regulation specificities and signatory states (Stenum, 2011). The EU members deal with the program in an uncoordinated manner. In the Netherlands, the legislation does not legally allow non-EU migration to the country to provide domestic and care work, therefore the au pair program assumes a central position to cover those necessities. Most of the au pairs in the Netherlands are from non-EU countries: 23% are from the Philippines, 21% are South African, and another 34% come from Latin America (Schans, Galloway, & Lansang, 2014).

Although the Dutch government has not ratified the European Agreement on Au Pair Placement, the country has a specific regulation on the au pair program within the "cultural exchange" frame through the Dutch Aliens Act and the Implementation Decree of Foreign Nationals (Employment) Act (Immigration and Naturalisation Service, 2018). However, it is still not clear to what extent divergent expectations of the program lead to labor exploitation and mistreatment in this scenario, especially for non-EU au pairs. In their cases, the externalization of mistreatment and exploitation is even more complicated, as their residence permit is directly dependent on the host family. "If an au pair ends the relation with her host family, she loses the right to stay in the Netherlands, unless she immediately finds a new host family" (Miedema, 2003, p.15 in Stenum, 2011, p. 92).

Brazilian girls often see the au pair program as an accessible way to have an experience abroad. Other kinds of exchange programs in a foreign country can be expensive. Therefore, the au pair program in the United States and Europe is an attractive option to pursue a desire of living abroad and makes these girls seek a full cultural exchange experience for a lower price. Brazilian au pairs are the main non-EU group currently

traveling from Latin America to the Netherlands. According to Schans, J. M. D., Galloway, M., & Lansang, L. (2014), Brazil is in the top three countries sending au pairs to the Netherlands, only surpassed by the Philippines and South Africa. The number of au pairs coming from Brazil has been constantly increasing throughout the years. The relevance of this group, combined with the fact that I share the same nationality, greatly influenced my research group choice.

This study aims to investigate experiences of labor exploitation and mistreatment suffered by au pairs and how these experiences are shaped by different expectations, as both the Brazilian girls and Dutch host families may have different points of interest for choosing the au pair program. To analyze this context through the measure of the expectations of the program seems logical, as they vary significantly between the actors. The expectations of the host families and au pairs should be considered, also paying attention to how those divergent expectations are shaped and how they influence the au pair's perception of exploitation and mistreatment.

This leads me to the following research questions:

To what extent do divergent expectations by the host family in the Netherlands and their Brazilian au pairs lead to experiences of labor exploitation and mistreatment?

This question can be split up into the following two sub-questions:

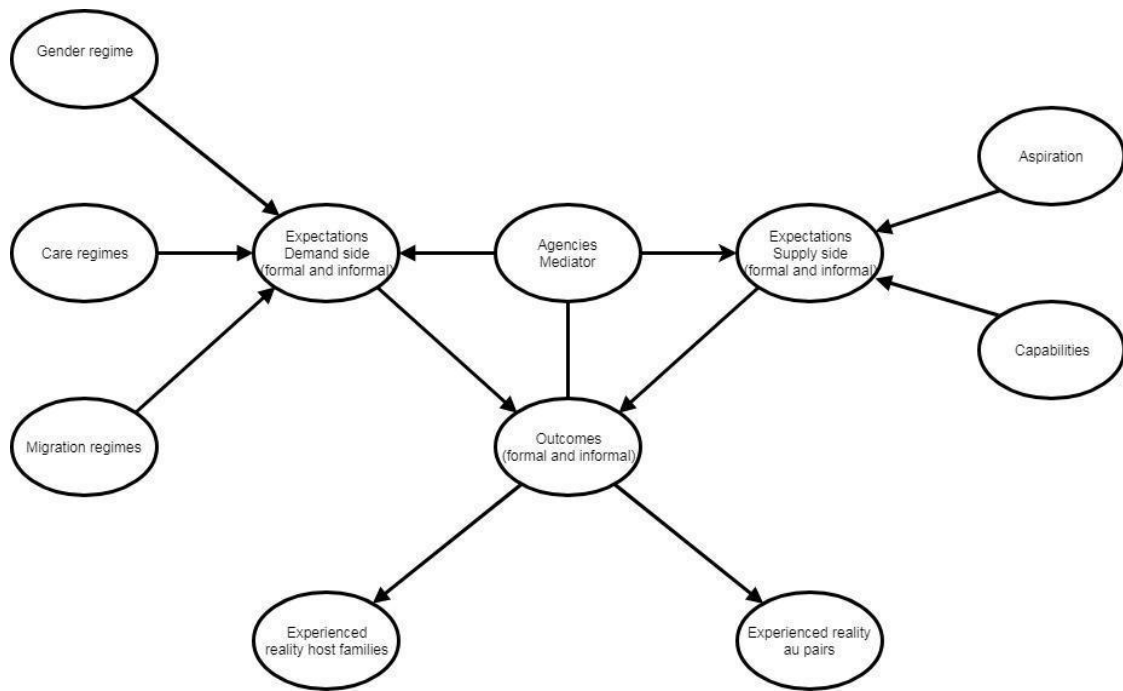
- **How do the expectations of the program differ between au pairs and host families?**
- **What kind of labor exploitation and mistreatment do the au pairs experience?**

Due to its focus on the au pairs' perceptions, the research will not conceptualize exploitation and mistreatment beforehand. Instead an emic approach will be taken, in which experiences of exploitation and mistreatment will be delimited empirically by the au pairs' input. The experience of labor exploitation will be defined as everything that was in discordance with the au pairs' rules and laws and was experienced as exploitative. The experience of mistreatment will be defined as "everything that the au pairs experience as inappropriate behavior directed towards them in the context of the rules of conduct of the au pair and host family".

The results will be beneficial for all involved actors. For au pairs, it is a way to gather helpful information, increasing their awareness of potential unfair situations. For agencies and host families, the study can improve their understanding of the current program rules and whether they are being followed. For migration scholars, this study can provide new insights into the gendered pattern of migration and may influence further research on the topic. Lastly, this study may be a useful tool to policymakers, who can use this research to improve the au pair program's regulations.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this study, I will examine to what extent those different expectations of the au pair program can lead to labor exploitation and mistreatment and how those divergent perceptions are configured within the interaction between Dutch host families and Brazilian au pairs. To better understand how divergent expectations are formed I will discuss theories that explain the demand and supply sides separately. Then, I will analyze the role of the agencies and how they can mediate those different expectations between actors. Lastly, I will integrate those conceptions through an analysis of previous research and discuss how the ambiguous portrayal of the au pair program, backed up by the "cultural exchange" framing, can lead to an experience of exploitation and mistreatment for the au pairs.



Theories on domestic care migration can provide an overview of the demand side regarding why families seek the help of au pairs. The au pair program is embedded in the notion of providing care and domestic work, despite it being mostly advertised within the “cultural exchange” frame. According to Lutz & Palenga-Möllnbeck (2011b) and Mellini, et al. (2006), the reasons behind the increased need of care in Europe by families can be considered a result of demographic changes (decreasing fertility rates and an increased elderly society), socio-economic factors (female labor force participation) and the shrinkage of the welfare state. On the other hand, it would be costly to meet this demand only through the internal labor market, due to the usually high European standards on wage (Isaksen, 2010). Therefore, having migrants perform those tasks seems a profitable solution. Migrants and minorities can be often be placed in a disadvantaged position and be exploited as a “reserve army of labor”, as their labor rights are often not formally delimited, due to lack of citizenship and not having access to important institutions and networks of power (Goldring and Landolt, 2011, in Castles et al., 2014, p.255).

Lutz & Palenga-Möllnbeck (2011b) propose an analytical framework that clearly defines the composition of transnational domestic work migration in Europe, combining approaches from several thematic areas: migration research (transnationalism), social policy analysis and gender studies. “The model is based on three analytical levels: the macro of social institutions (such as labor markets, welfare and migration policies); the meso level of social networks and organizations; and the micro level of individuals” (Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck, 2011b, p.350). The understanding of the macro level perspective gives a deeper insight into the demand for au pairs and care workers in Europe and the gaps they are expected to fill. Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck (2011b) analyze the macro level by connecting with three national regimes—gender, care and migration. Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck (2011b) use the term “regime” to refer to the “organization and the corresponding cultural codes of social policy and social practice in which the relationship between social actors, state, (labor) market and family is articulated and negotiated” (Williams & Gavanas, 2008, in Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck, 2011b, p.351).

Firstly, according to Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck (2011b), the gender regime refers to household and care work organization in which tasks and responsibilities can be labeled as feminine or masculine. Migrant women (such as au pairs) are expected to take over the domestic work of the native women, who proceed to emancipate themselves through the labor market; therefore, it is not a net increase in emancipation, just a transfer of the inequality to the migrant women (Isaksen, 2010). In this sense, host families may have a misconceived idea regarding which chores an au pair should complete, as they may be assumed to be a direct

substitute for the woman in the household who is expected to perform the main domestic chores. Au pairs are mainly expected to perform “light” domestic work around the house; however, it is not uncommon for their work to sometimes fit into the “heavy” category (Stenum, 2011).

Secondly, the care regime is a part of the welfare regimes. Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck (2011b) argue that the provision of care depends on “multiple state regulations according to which the well-being of national citizens is a responsibility distributed between the State, the family and the market.” However, the neoliberal restructuring of the welfare state has brought transformations “leading to a market driven service” and thus “a serious decline on state-provided social care”. This lack of state-owned service is likely to force European families to find other ways to access those resources. Countries that rely less on “open-handed” welfare states tend to incorporate more migrants in their labor market (Parrenas, 2001b; Milkman, et al., 1998, in Misra, et al., 2006).

Lastly, the migration regime dictates rules surrounding entry and departure for non-nationals. According to Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck (2011b), rights and privileges are granted to immigrants based on the notion of cultural desirability of said immigrants. The tightening of immigration legislation results in a demarked preference for high-skilled workers in the “developed” workforces, giving easier access to a structured settlement for those migrants while the need of care workers remains unrecognized (Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck, 2011b). The role of the au pair is in a central position to complement this gap; if there is no other way to obtain visas for domestic help, then this program may be an accessible way for families to legally do so. According to Isaksen (2010), the au pair work regulation is marked by the tension between public migration legislation, which aims mainly to exclude labor migration, and the loopholes found in the “cultural exchange” dynamics, where the relationship between the parties is regulated by the private law realm.

On the supply side, the au pairs have divergent motivations to pursue and expectations of the program. It is essential to have an overview of theories that explain people’s aspirations and capabilities affecting their decision-making process and leading to subsequent migration. Neoclassical theories on migration (see Borjas, 1994) based on cost-benefit calculations cannot alone explain the reasons behind the decision of an individual to pursue an au pair program, as other aspirations in life may be involved in the process of decision-making. Castles et al. (2014) argue that neoclassical theories often do not explore the world perceptions of migrants. Migration is not only based on a rational analysis of wages; other socially constructed ideas are also important in molding migration flows. (Truong, Gasper, Handmaker, & Bergh, 2013). According to Cox (2015), the drive to pursue the program is hardly monetary and mostly a way to achieve personal growth. For some girls, however, the au pair program is an opportunity to earn money and prospect to a better future (Bikova, 2008, Hovdan, 2005 in Isaksen, 2010).

Carling (2014) states that a person wishes to migrate either because migration has intrinsic value or because migration is going to be used as a tool to achieve another objective. In the latter, those goals that migration helps to achieve are often connected to a “person’s broader aspirations in life” (Clemens 2014, Czaika and Vothknecht 2014, de Haas 2007, in Carling 2014, p.2). For de Haas (2007), aspirations also have vital importance in the propensity to migrate. “Improved education, infrastructure, increases in wealth and access to media and other information sources tend to influence positively the desire to migrate because they raise people’s aspirations as well as their actual capabilities to migrate” (de Haas, 2007, p.833).

Carling (2014) argues that those “aspirations to migrate can be analyzed in two levels. First, the macro-level which is addressed to a particular emigration environment where a larger number of people wishes to migrate, encompassing social, economic and political contexts [...] The second analytical approach to aspiration is the micro-level question of who wants to migrate and who wants to stay.” It encompasses characteristics such as “gender, age, [...], social status, educational attainment, [and] personality traits [...]”. For example, the aspirations involving the au pair program seem to be generally situated in the micro-level spectrum. In many Brazilian blogs focused on the au pair program, young women mainly define their

motivations to become an au pair as way to learn or improve a language, to be immersed in another culture, to make new friends, to travel, to mature and develop self-understanding, and—less commonly—as a way to earn money.

According to Van Houte (2016), the decision to migrate can be an effort to match aspirations with capabilities. The au pair exchange program, therefore, can be understood as one instrument to achieve those capabilities based on an individual's aspirations. The internet and other information sources are fundamental in portraying the program as a less costly investment that provides an unprecedented opportunity for girls who always longed for this kind of experience. The au pair program may be a way to avoid involuntary immobility (see Carling, 2014) which entails the combination of aspirations to migrate and the inability to do so. Also, the explanations behind the aspirations to become an au pair may be embedded in both macro-level and individual-level influences, varying between the individuals.

In between the demand and supply sides, the au pair agencies are aware of the “cultural exchange” appeal for young women and use this rhetoric to make the program more attractive, while at the same time projecting to the host families the image of the au pairs as a solution to handle domestic life. Hess and Puckhaber (2004) affirm that the information provided by the agencies to the au pairs are often insufficient. According to Cox (2015), the au pair agencies are in the middle of a conflict of interests and more often prioritizing the host families' side. At the same time, the fear to lose their visas and the opportunity to live elsewhere are often in the way of the au pair's intentions to complain (Stenum, 2011; Hess and Puckhaber 2004).

Many studies on au pairs, (e.g. Hess and Puckhaber 2004, Cox, 2015) have discussed the lack of protection resulting from the ambiguous portrayal of the program. Hess and Puckhaber (2004) argue that “cultural exchange” framing leaves room for undervaluation of the au pair's work and neglect of their rights. This scenario also undermines the application of a minimum legal protection (Hess and Puckhaber, 2004). Most au pairs don't see their relationship as an employer-employee dynamic. They are influenced by the notion that domestic work is meant to be performed by women, having a “blurred line between workplace and home, working hours and free time, ‘working for money’ and ‘helping as one of the family’” (Hess and Puckhaber 2004, p.73). According to Cox (2015), the idea that au pairs are students who are having the experience of an “off-year” is used to block access to their rights as workers and limit the value of their wages.

Unexpectedly, research shows (see Hess and Puckhaber, 2004, Cox and Narula, 2003) that au pairs who have the best adaptation to the host families often have more problems in externalizing complaints about their work and living conditions. “As ‘one of the family,’ employers could ask the au pairs to work more than the hours agreed upon, their argument being, ‘We are one family, you cannot leave us alone with the child care’” (Hess and Puckhaber, 2004, p. 73). This was also reflected in the study of Cox and Narula (2003), where host parents purposely constructed false kin relations with the au pairs; this was not a way to integrate the au pair into the family, but rather to reinforce both the negation of their worker status and the family's power.

3. Methods and Data

3.1. Data

This study is based on qualitative data from different semi-structured interviews with the au pairs and families in the Netherlands in 2019. The Netherlands was chosen due to its relevance, as a “considerable number of households hire paid domestic help, which a significant part consists of migrant women with or without legal residence” (Stenum, 2011, p.89). The purpose of the semi-structured interviews is to provide enough information to answer to main research question. The advantage of a semi-structured interview is its

flexibility and the possibility to gather useful information beyond the delimited questions and leaving more room for interaction between the interviewer and interviewees (Bryman, 2012).

The semi-structured interviews were undertaken between April and May of 2019. Responses were anonymous and voluntary. The interviews were undertaken with a sample group of 21 participants. They were contacted through snow-balling sampling, through a WhatsApp-group network of 92 girls, and a Facebook group page called “Au pair group Holland” with 6,920 members. The access to the snow-balled sampled girls was possible due a member of my family who was an au pair herself, but I joined this WhatsApp group before any intention to research this subject, therefore the content of this platform was not used as a data source, only as a way to find possible respondents. Through Facebook, I presented myself and my research topic in a post in the group, requesting volunteer respondents. The sample focused on au pairs longer than two months in their current position or finished their program no more than six months previously. This time frame ensures that respondents had enough experience to present their opinions and recall their experiences clearly. The girls did not necessarily have their first au pair experience in the Netherlands.

The respondents mainly reside with families in the regions around the Randstad and some had already returned to Brazil. This way, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in their native language both in-person and via Skype, depending on their availability and location. To gather information about the family's different expectations, semi-structured interviews were undertaken in-person and through Skype with 6 families connected to the girls. The sample of the au pairs and families were paired; this way, the perception of different expectations would be easier to. The au pairs were the intermediaries who reached the families; when the families agreed to participate in the research, the au pairs shared the family's contact information with me. Although 15 au pairs agreed to ask their host families to participate in the interview, only six families agreed to be interviewed. Reasons for non-participation were a lack of free time or disinterest in the topic. Because of the high non-response rate and selection bias, the interviews with the families could not be considered as representative. The interviews with both au pairs and families tended to last 25 minutes on average, ranging from 15 to 45 minutes. All interviews were recorded. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used in the results and all the participants read the informed consent form and agreed to participate in the research.

3.2. Analysis

The process of data analysis involved four steps:

- The initial process of data analysis involved the transcription of the interviews to clarify the participant's answers, also it showed to be helpful to get familiarized with the data and to identify key themes (see Bryman, 2012).
- Then the transcribed interviews were highlighted and notes on co-occurring events, contradictions and exceptions were taken, for patterns to be observed but also deviant occurrences. Notes taken during the interviews also were considered during this process, as they are an important source of extra information.
- While the classification of data through ATLAS.ti was done, the transcribed interviews were once again analyzed in detail and codes that would relate the main themes were inductively created and important quotes highlighted (e.g., “too many working hours” and “working during free time” were themes that related to labor exploitation). This method used the inductive approach, in which intends to notice frequently reported patterns and create categories that emerge from the data (Thomas, 2003).
- The next step involved the creation of a codebook where a table with the main themes, sub-themes, categories and interpretations/quotes was filled, following the analysis of the information obtained in the coding process. This process helped for a clearer visualization of the results and the formulation of a better structure for the subsequent analysis.

3.3. Limitations

One limitation is that the non-EU au pairs' expectations and experiences were delimited only based on the perception of small groups (Brazilian girls) and the family's expectations were only analyzed within the Dutch scope. Added to that, although the girls often mentioned they were comfortable being interviewed in their native language and by a co-national, they may have felt hesitant to give more details of certain situations, fearing the families would read the research. Additionally, many families were unwilling to cooperate, indicating that the families which had a better relationship with the girls were more willing. Therefore, the number of families are too few to be representative and the sample went through selection bias. As a result, the findings of this article will be based on experiences related to a specific context and actors and may not be able to be generalized.

4. Results

The results of the interviews are analyzed in three sections. The first is based on the au pair's point of view, in which their expectations and motivations for pursuing the au pair program are considered. Second, the au pairs' experiences of labor exploitation and mistreatment are discussed. Lastly, some of the main patterns are displayed in a pair analysis of au pairs and their respective families.

4.1. A way to travel abroad

For Brazilian girls, the au pair program is considered to facilitate a desire of living abroad. Seventeen out of twenty-one girls mentioned choosing to be an au pair because it is the cheapest way to have this kind of experience, and it is one of the most accessible exchange programs. For some girls, it was the only way to travel abroad or stay longer in Europe, as students' visas were also mentioned to be very expensive. *"Probably without the au pair [program] I would not have even left Brazil. Or [...] it might have taken much longer"*.

Besides this, ten out of the twenty-one girls affirmed that the au pair program also provides security, since au pairs live with a host family and have their necessities partially covered by this setting. (*"The au pair program offers [...] security despite all the anxiety to move, you know exactly where you are going"*.) To a lesser extent, the girls discussed advantages regarding a quick process with less bureaucracy.

Traveling around Europe was one of the central motivators for girls to pursue the au pair program and was mentioned by fifteen girls. Many of them had never had the opportunity to visit Europe. Added that they would also be able to learn a new language, live with a foreign family and interact with a new culture and people were also highlighted several times. This wish to travel was often influenced by personal reasons, such as unhappiness with their personal or professional lives in Brazil. The capacity to earn money through the program was not mentioned by any of the girls; therefore, this may not have been a relevant issue when deciding to participate in the program.

4.2. Part of the family or a professional relationship?

Fourteen girls were expecting to be treated as a family member. Most reflected on the importance of being included in familiar activities such as dinners, birthdays and travels. Additionally, being able to talk and interact, they would often see the au pair program as a cultural exchange both for them and the families. They would sometimes mention this inclusion as a way for them to get more comfortable with the environment. While they did not necessarily feel the need to be a member of the nuclear family, they at least wanted to feel like a close friend or a distant cousin: *"I need to be close enough to be comfortable with the experience"*. The agency and other information sources were also noted to have helped the au pairs to construct this idea of a closer relationship between au pair and family.

Seven au pairs did not have the wish for a familiar relation and said they were prepared for a purely professional relationship. They may have been influenced by information gathered through other people's experiences, by their own previous au pair experience or by the latest au pair of their current host family: *"I was [an] au pair in the United States, and I had three families, I already knew the style of the program [there, the] au pair is just like a nanny mask"*.

Interestingly, three au pairs liked the idea of a more distant relationship. For them, not participating at all or only in the activities that happened while they were working was the best option as it would maintain their free time intact, with more respect to rules and their privacy. In a more professional relationship, there was less of a chance for them to be asked to work more.

5. Experiences

Although the au pairs had a positive perception of the au pair program overall and stated that it met their expectations, six girls saw the program as a balance of ups and downs, and others had specific points regarding their unmet expectations. In the next section, I will go in detail about what the au pairs perceived as experiences of labor exploitation and mistreatment, issues which varied greatly depending on the family.

5.1. Experiences of labor exploitation

To better understand what the au pairs perceived as labor exploitation, the delimitation used was "everything that was in discordance with the au pairs rules and laws on labor and was experienced as exploitative". Also, tasks that were in the contract but were overused by the families based on the au pair's perception were considered. Experiences of labor exploitation were divided into four categories: too many working hours, extra favors/working on free time, too many domestic chores and working for third parties.

5.1.1. Too many working hours

The IND defines the daily and weekly work hours of an au pair as up to 8 hours a day and up to 30 hours a week (Immigration and Naturalisation Service, 2019). Although most of the au pairs felt they were working a fair number of hours, four girls relayed problems regarding this issue. One au pair thought her work schedule was sometimes too tiring and in discordance with the rules established by the IND as she mentioned that during the kids' vacations, *"there were days I started at 8 AM and finished at 1 AM"*. For another au pair, the problem was that her family sometimes asked her to work more hours, justifying it by the fact that they sometimes sent her home earlier. For both girls, it was especially unfair, because they did not receive any kind of reciprocity or extra payment from the families.

*Every once in a while they say 'we're going to travel and leave the children for a day or two with me', and there's no kind of financial compensation of any kind, no time off, I've already worked two weeks without any day off and I complained and they did not like it, because they said, ah' but sometimes we let you go a bit earlier' as if one thing compensates for another. **Rafaela***

Not all breaches of the rules regarding work hours were perceived as labor exploitation. Five au pairs also mentioned the fact they would sometimes work more hours, but it was due their own difficulty to impose limits. This would occur when they were still getting used to the routine, or because they wanted to finish things on time or because they liked to stay busy. This scenario suggests that it was hard for some au pairs to understand the amount of time they should be working as they "blurred" the line between work and free time (see Hess & Puckhaber, 2004). In this case, they felt it was their own choice to work extra hours and not a family demand.

Surprisingly, nine au pairs mentioned that they were sometimes asked to work extra hours and would receive more money for it. Although this practice is illegal in the Netherlands, as “additional babysitting for your host family or taking on a job on the side is also not allowed” (Au pair world, 2019), they would argue that this extra work would earn them a bit more money, since their pocket money was often perceived as insufficient and unfair in the context of the labor market in the Netherlands. Therefore, they would see those extra hours as a way to improve their earnings.

*My hosts would travel sometimes on the weekend and I would stay with the children alone for two or three days. I would stay about 100 hours with the children. So, we made a deal she would pay me extra, I do not know if that was allowed, but this was the agreement between me and my host **Vivian***

5.1.2. Extra favors/Working during free time

Ten au pairs mentioned they did not like to be asked favors while they were off; e.g. staying with the children for a few hours while the parents had other obligations or staying home to receive a package. A few au pairs mentioned they needed to be out of the house during their free time so they would not be available: “*Often I had to make an excuse, or something to do just so that I will not be there on my days off*”. Others affirmed that the families tended to ask for more when the au pairs were too nice: “*When you give them an inch, they will take a mile*”. The example below illustrates this perception and demonstrates how the host families may use false kin relations (see Cox and Narula, 2003) to make the au pairs work in their free time. In the case of Eduarda, she was disappointed to be invited to one of the children’s birthday parties and still be asked to help during the time she was there:

I thought I would be in the birthday [as a guest] not to change diapers or something. I felt they were taking advantage of me for a little bit, asking me to do things. I did not mind helping but with time my friends told me I was being asked to do things not because I was part of the family, but because I was an au pair. Eduarda

However, while some au pairs perceived these favors during free time as exploitation, those with a close and healthy relationship with the families would often mention they did not mind doing extra favors sometimes, such as staying with the children while they slept. However, they emphasized the need for these favors to stay reasonable. They would also expect some other kind of compensation or flexibility in return. Cox (2015) affirms that this type of relation between au pairs and host families is embedded in a rare character of sharing and reciprocity. Also, an important condition for those favors to be well-received was the respect of the au pairs’ availability in case they had another appointment.

5.1.3. Too many domestic chores

The definition of which domestic chores the au pair should do is not delimited in detail by IND; therefore, the agencies often have different interpretations of what “light domestic work” should entail. One of the agencies states in their contract that “*If work 30 hours a week, housework should take a maximum of 30% these hours. That is, between 7.5 hours to 9 hours of light housework per week*” (HBN Aupair Services, 2018).

The amount and kind of domestic work was mentioned as an issue by nine au pairs, and it was presented in many ways. Some au pairs stated that the families would start doing less as they knew someone would clean afterwards. Others noted that the amount and kind of domestic chores was different than what was previously arranged by the families: “*When they did the remodeling of the house I had to vacuum way more and I did not like it because it was not agreed beforehand*”. The amount of laundry was often mentioned as a complaint: “*The amount was insane and daily*”. Others thought the au pair program in the Netherlands focused too much on domestic chores. They often had to cook daily and do chores involving not only the children but also the parents, such as ironing the host father’s clothes. As one girl expressed, “*I think they*

changed the meaning of what an au pair is". Interestingly, a few au pairs also mentioned they offered to do "heavier" household chores to earn extra money.

One girl mentioned that she had a great relationship with the family and did not count the hours of her work. However, she felt that she was doing mostly all the domestic chores of the house on her own and was expecting her host mom to take the initiative to help more. The quotation below demonstrates the difficulty that an au pair may have in speaking out, especially when she has a close relationship with the host family. Similar scenarios were also discussed in the research of Hess and Puckhaber (2004).

*I ended up doing everything, like waking up to vacuum the [entire] house, ironing clothes, laundry and folding, making dinner every day, Monday to Friday. And, sometimes [the host mom] went out with her friends so I had to take care of the kids, put them to bed, do the laundry, clean the kitchen. And I thought that [...] the domestic work was very heavy for me. It was just me doing it. **Fernanda***

Overall, extra domestic work tasks or even the focus on domestic work in the au pair program in the Netherlands was not well received by the au pairs, as some of them expressed they would expect their jobs to be mainly linked to the kids' necessities: "*The au pair's job should be only regarding the children*".

5.1.4. Working for third parties

Although most of the participants mentioned issues regarding work hours, free time and domestic work chores, two other participants described situations in which, in their perception, the families tried to or effectively break the program's rules as they involved working for third parties. One girl mentioned that her host mom suggested that she could work at someone else's house to fill up her schedule, since she was not working the full 30 hours with her own host family. This way, her host mom would earn extra money for the hours worked by the au pair in the other house. The au pair knew this was not right and she did not accept it; she defined it as "crazy ideas". Another girl had a similar experience, but in her case, she had to take care of other children for a considerable period:

*I already had to take care of children that were not mine, in a house from my host family's friends with children that I did not know about behavior, I did not know anything, and I took care of these four children at the same time. To put to sleep and so on. **Isis***

These experiences suggest that the families sometimes may not be aware of the au pair program's regulations or that they use the general misunderstanding of the au pair program to take advantage of the au pairs' positions.

5.2. Mistreatment

In this section, experiences of mistreatment are analyzed through the au pair's perception of "everything that the au pairs experience as inappropriate behavior directed towards them in the context of the rules of conduct of the au pair and host family". Therefore, not only perceived breaches of law in terms of work definition were considered, but also the disrespect of other regulations/codes of conduct as defined in the contract, or mentioned negative experiences resulting from power dynamics between the au pair and host family. Experiences of mistreatment were divided into feelings of exclusion/inappropriate behavior by the host families and privacy breaches/food supply.

5.2.1 Feelings of exclusion

The inclusion of the au pair in familiar activities is emphasized by many Dutch agencies, as they mention the families must "commit to treating the au pair as a family member" (Triple C, 2019). However, four au pairs mentioned a distant relationship established by the host families made them feel bad, as it made their employee position too clear. One of the au pairs said, "*I felt like a maid for the family*". For the girls that

expected at least a minimum amount of involvement, never being invited to anything or being included less than expected created a sentiment of frustration and exclusion (feeling in a lower position) regardless of how their host family respected the program's rules and other agreements. This feeling of inferiority is often perceived when contact with the family is restricted only to "work-related" interactions, as discussed by Mellini, et al. (2006).

One of the au pairs externalized the feeling of spatial segregation, which made her feel like an intrusive person in the house: "*They just gave me a little space in their house [the bedroom], it was really bad, I could also not invite [anybody] there as well*". She could also only shower until a specific time defined by the host mom. Another girl gave details about her experience with a distant family relating to an event which seemed to have affected her emotionally:

I was never invited to family anniversaries, dinners, or commemorative dates. [...]. It even had a day, closer to the end of the au pair year, I was shopping for the house, and one day I bought a chocolate bar, a liquid soap and a can of condensed milk. But that day the host mom came to me and said, 'Please, when you go to buy your personal things, please do not buy with the house money, buy with your money'. But am I not part of the family? I work extra for you, when you leave home at 6 and start working at 8, but from 6 to 8 I stay with the kids when you go out to work...I felt really bad, I cried a lot, I am not the kind of an emotive person, but that hurted me a lot **Laura**

Four au pairs that were somewhat prepared for a more distant relationship with their host families mentioned being positively surprised when this relationship turned out to be closer and more familiar. On the other hand, one au pair mentioned not minding a total separation between her and the host family, as her privacy and free time were respected.

When they travel, they did not invite me, when the parents were at home it was a moment of the family, but it was something that did not bother me, because they respected my privacy, so if I was working, ok, but by the time I was off they never would bother me, and the kids also understood that. **Manuela**

5.2.2. Inappropriate behavior by the host families

Three au pairs mentioned that the host families behaved inappropriately with them. One girl said that during the au pair year, "*I went through unfair times and humiliations that I had never experienced before in my entire life*". She mentioned that unfair situations happened more than once and gave details about a day where she felt the family treated her unfairly, mentioning their unfriendly tone while a conversation about her routine: "*I wouldn't say it was the our most friendly talk*". Another girl mentioned that besides not being included in the family realm, the host family made her feel bad in other ways, which also contributed to her decision to ask for a re-match:

She raised her voice with me. Well, I did not get it because I was already doing a favor outside my work hours, and she treats me badly? Then I told her what happened, saying that I did not like it, I felt bad. Then it happened again, she raised her voice with me... Later when I asked for a rematch it was not well accepted, because I did not tell them anything before, they were so angry. The father of the child was always sarcastic, he would make jokes, so I found that kind of uncomfortable. **Emilly**

One girl mentioned problems when she was sick, especially after she fell from her bike and was injured. Her host dad asked her something which she thought was unbelievable, as the family suggested she could still perform her chores normally:

*I got sick, had a cold, and I kept working [before I fell from the bike]. I was extremely upset in a situation, last year I fell off the bike and I broke my elbow. I had to do physiotherapy. I kept working, but obviously I could not ride a bike and do domestic work, but the family still had the courage to suggest that I could ride a bike but only one hand. **Valentina***

Overall, experiences regarding exclusion and the behavior of the host families were more frequent for the au pairs that felt their host families had a total or partial disregard for a two-sided interaction in the au pair program. The au pairs who perceived their experience without or almost without any kind of mistreatment often called themselves “lucky” or “privileged”. In those cases, their families were often interested in them as people or/and in the cultural aspect of the au pair program; therefore, they were often invested in a more balanced relationship.

5.2.3. Privacy breaches and food supply

Events relating to privacy breaches were reported by eight au pairs in different contexts. This seemed to be a recurrent issue and was mentioned by girls with different kinds of relationship with their families. Some au pairs felt uncomfortable because their rooms were in the middle of the house and they heard a lot of noise. Others did not like that the parents would enter their rooms without their consent while they were not home. The fact that some also had to share their bathrooms with the kids was also a point of discomfort; one girl expressed: “*She said (the host mom) that the children hardly used the toilets, but it was not true. They would take my shampoo to play*”. Au pairs who had a room outside the house would often have better experiences in this regard, as their space would be separate from that of the host family. However, for Olivia, although she had a room outside the house, her host family would be uncomfortable if she stayed home during her free days. This put her in an awkward situation, as she did not want to feel obligated to always leave the house when she was free:

*My host came to talk to me, because sometimes she was bothered by the fact that on my day off, I stayed inside my house [a small house in the backyard]. This for me was invasion of privacy, because it was my day off and I do what you want in it. If I'm at home watching tv, it's my problem. So, she was very uncomfortable with it, that was something that I never understood [...]. We don't earn so much to stay always out. **Olivia***

Seven au pairs mentioned an issue regarding food in their houses. It seemed to be a well-known topic between them and was mentioned regardless of the au pair's relation with the host family. The families would sometimes not ask about their preferences or would not buy what the girls liked or even question their eating behaviors. The au pairs would also mention that the families would sometimes forget to leave food for them in the case of babysitting or trips. Also, some au pairs stressed that the amount cooked for family meals was little and not enough for everybody. One mentioned: “*I have a friend who could not eat the food, because the family would say it was for the children*”.

The au pairs expressed that they were too shy to ask for the families to buy what they liked. Among the au pairs who had a strong relationship with the families, those who did the shopping themselves or received the money for food separately usually had the best experiences. Hess and Puckhaber (2004, p.74) also discuss the food available to the au pairs, noting that “*the quality of the food varied greatly as groceries were bought and meals prepared according to the dictates of the host family. Some completely disregarded the likes and*

dislikes of their au pair". The quote below exemplifies the disregard of families for the au pair's food preferences:

*This point was complicated, in the beginning there was no food for me, I asked for some things, but they would say it was expensive and say they would not buy even for themselves. And then I lost 7 kgs during this program, although I lose weight easily and they did offer alternative food, they did not literally starve me. **Giovanna***

6. Pair analysis

In this section, a pair analysis between two au pairs and their respective families is made. The pair was chosen from a sub-sample of six families who agreed to participate in the research. In this case, those families had a strong relationship with the au pairs, as they were easier to reach. Therefore, the sample cannot be considered representative. All au pairs contained in this sub-sample mention that their families often respected the rules, their previous arrangements and codes of conduct; as a result, only minor issues were reported. On the other hand, for most of the host families, the cultural aspect was not the main reason they pursued the help of an au pair. Although the findings of this analysis cannot be generalized, they can provide insightful information. It provides a different perspective than just one-sided analysis; when considering pairs, we can see how the expectations of the family and the au pair interact and shape their overall experiences.

6.1. Mariana and Peter

For Mariana, the opportunity to visit Europe, continue improving her English and get to know the Dutch culture were the main reasons for her to enter the au pair program for the second time. In addition, it is an inexpensive investment to have this kind of experience. For Peter (Mariana's host dad), the reason to have an au pair in the house was mainly practical and they did not mention the cultural aspect as a main interest, although he wanted Mariana to have the opportunity to experience the Dutch culture and for his kids to be exposed to other cultures. He mentions that an au pair program's "*main thing is to take care of the kids and a big beneficial thing is the cultural exchange*". For his family, it would bring more flexibility into their busy lives and would make their schedule more relaxed and comfortable, since the kids would go to less day care. He explains that with "*a normal nanny program you don't have the same flexibility as an au pair*".

Mariana was not looking for a close familiar relationship; she wanted to be more independent. However, she was expecting to be included in familiar activities. The fact that Mariana was independent was noted positively by the host family as the family would have more privacy; Peter mentioned the fact that she went upstairs when she was finished working and was "*not hanging out a lot downstairs*". Interestingly, for Mariana, privacy was an issue between her and her host family as she was bothered by the fact that her host parents were interested about the details of her personal life "*They sometimes were not content with short answers and asked more [specially about romantic dates or gatherings with her friends]. This bothered me a lot*". Therefore, the family appreciated that Mariana respected their privacy, although she did not feel respected the same way.

Mariana thought that the 30 hours of the au pair program were "*ok and enough (free time) to travel and study another language*". She mentioned that her family always followed the program's rules in this sense; however, at the same time, she expressed her frustration at feeling disadvantaged compared to her friends because she earned one of lowest monetary compensation stipulated by law.

*I thought my friends were much luckier because they had a lot more privileges than me (higher pocket money and train card paid by the family), so they could have an easier life **Mariana***

On the other hand, Peter felt the rules of the program were too strict. He felt it would be interesting if the au pairs could work more hours to bring more flexibility to the families.

*I think the Netherlands is a country where we have too many rules, yes well sometimes and because they have to work only 8 hours a day and 30 hours per week I think it sometimes does not work out that well, so if they let that go, 30 hours per week is ok but with a bit more flexibility would be fine. I think the law is a bit too tight. **Peter (host dad)***

Although the host father's main interest was not the cultural exchange part of the au pair program, he did not disregard a two-sided interaction which contributed positively to the au pair's experience (in addition to his respect of the working time rules). On the other hand, a positive relationship does not automatically free the au pair from feeling disrespected regarding some issues, which was discussed by other girls in this research; in this case, the au pair felt the family did not respect her private space, which made her feel uncomfortable. As the host dad was more interested in the service provided by the au pair, he expressed the need for more flexibility in the au pair's schedule; at the same time, the au pair already felt she was being underpaid and devalued in her current position. In this case, the host family needed more hours but did not effectively ask for it, as in the case of other girls mentioned in the previous section. Conversely, they paid one of the lowest monetary compensation delimited by law for the au pair as compensation for the standard working hours of the program.

6.2. Larissa and (Harriet/Jorn)

Larissa wanted to become an au pair because she wanted to learn English, finding the program through a friend. For Harriet (Larissa's host mom) the au pair was an opportunity to have a calmer and more flexible environment at home as her kids were going to day care four days a week due to their busy working lives.

Harriet also expected the au pair to be part of their household: "*So then sometimes, for example, even not being within the hours but help clean the table or things like that*". Although she was interested in learning about other people's cultures, she mentioned that the closeness of the au pair would be decided by the au pair herself: "*If you [the au pair] want to sit upstairs you sit upstairs, if you want to sit here, you sit here. On the other hand, we did articulate very clearly in terms of tasks to perform*". Larissa expected herself to be included and be treated "*not in a different way*". She mentioned that this would be stated in the program's description when she was researching its characteristics, as the program often portrays a familiar and closer relationship between the au pairs and host families. When she noticed the family was open to being closer to her, it made her feel more comfortable.

Harriet mentioned that she was aware of the number of hours per week and per day that an au pair could work. She said this rule made it a bit difficult for them, especially when their kids were not old enough to be in school. In this setting, they needed the au pair to work more hours each day as the kids would be at home more and they would have to leave home early to get to work: "*We were happy that the au pairs [the previous au pair and Larissa] could work more hours in one day as long as the total hours were still fine*". Larissa said this kind of flexibility was ok for her since "*at the same time that I am a very flexible the family is too*". She said the family would often take her requests into consideration.

Larissa mentioned the importance of asserting herself in situations when the family asked for extra favors, such as "*Ah, can you stay a little bit here? [outside my work time]*". In her opinion, those situations were

annoying but were not so serious in her household as the family, in her view, did not increase the frequency of those requests: “*The au pair has to speak for herself, but of course sometimes it was annoying, to ask if I could extend a bit [my work hours] or to have dinner a bit later, but nothing too serious*”. In addition to minor situations regarding food supply and privacy, Larissa also said that the state she would find the kitchen sometimes made her feel disrespected. However, the father received this positively, suggesting a gap between their expectations, as both Larissa and Jorn perceived the domestic help in different ways:

It is one of my tasks to organize the kitchen. What annoys me a little is the state that I find the kitchen sometimes, and I do not know if it is something cultural, but for me this is disrespect, to leave it messy like this. I think because [they know] someone is going to clean afterwards. Larissa

At the same time, the domestic help was a point emphasized by Jorn (host dad) as a “*life saver*”:

By the time we had put kids in bed, Larissa has already cleaned up the kitchen...I did not think upfront that it would make so much the difference also helping to fold the laundry, for example. It sounds a simple thing, but it's a good help. Jorn

Overall, although both parties had different expectations regarding the au pair program's intent, they had similar expectations of the au pair's inclusion in the family realm, which made the au pair feel more comfortable and helped her to build a relationship of trust. In this case, the family was also conscious of the program's rules, and extra favors that disrespected those rules would be based in reciprocity, creating a sentiment of fairness for the au pair. On the other hand, the au pair felt annoyed and disrespected in some situations, as the confusion of her role opened the door to even more favors being asked of her outside of her work time. At the same time, her own tasks were perceived to be overused by the family, which made her feel disrespected. This situation also relates to what other girls mentioned previously: they noticed the families doing less and less in the house, putting the au pair most in charge of those domestic chores.

7. Discussion and conclusion

The main objective of the research was to study how the expectations of the families and au pairs were different regarding the au pair program, and which kind of labor exploitation and mistreatment the au pairs experienced, since the families and au pairs are embedded in an asymmetric power relationship.

The results indicate that families and au pairs have different expectations when deciding to participate in the program. For the au pairs, the expectations involve the wish to explore abroad and obtain new experiences in life, e.g. travel, improving a language and experiencing another culture. The au pair position is attractive due its ability to immerse the girls in a new cultural setting. Therefore, not surprisingly, most of the girls came expecting a somewhat more familiar relationship as the program has the label of “*cultural exchange*”. On the other hand, a considerable number of girls mentioned being aware of the “*real face*” of the au pair program and its actual demands. Furthermore, the results also demonstrate that the au pairs themselves may prefer a more professional relationship in order to avoid unbalanced relations. For the families interviewed, the expectations mainly involved having someone at home to care for the children to have a more flexible and comfortable life. It was mainly presented as a practical decision influenced by the setting of their busy lives and careers. The cultural exchange was an extra advantage of the program for most of the host parents in this study, but not their main interest. Therefore, the different understandings of the au pair program between host parents and au pairs found in these results align with those of other previous au pair program researchers (see Cox, 2015, Hess and Puckhaber, 2004 and Isaksen, 2010).

According to the results, the experiences of labor exploitation were defined as too many working hours, extra favors/working during free time, too many domestic chores and working for third parties. The

experiences of mistreatment were divided into feelings of exclusion, inappropriate behavior of the host families, privacy breaches and food supply. Regarding labor exploitation, some girls would work more hours than the number delimited by the rules of the program; conversely, the conversation with the host families revealed that they often did not see the 30 hours per week and 8 hours per day as realistic. On the other hand, not all extra hours would be perceived as exploitation, only when the work became too tiring and/or did not involve any kind of reciprocal arrangement with the family. The au pairs that worked more hours because they wanted to or received extra payment for it did not mind the extra work. At the same time, girls seemed to be asked to perform chores when they would be off (usually for a short period of time) as a result of their blurred role (family member or worker?). The families also seemed to use what Cox and Narula (2003) call strategies of false kin relations. Nonetheless, those girls involved in a more reciprocal relationship with their host families would often not mind those kinds of favors as they knew they would receive compensation in return; these reciprocal strategies are also noted by Cox (2015). In addition, the quantity and kind of domestic chores would also be perceived as “too much” for some au pairs. The results demonstrate that the au pairs were less tolerant of this kind of extra work as it was mostly not perceived as their obligation.

Furthermore, the results reveal that the feelings of exclusion and inappropriate behavior by the host families within the scope of mistreatment were mostly reported in settings where the host families did not seem to recognize the “cultural exchange” appeal; rather, they saw the au pairs as mainly labor without much interest in them as people. At the same time, issues regarding food and privacy were mentioned in many contexts regardless of the kind of relationship (whether closer or more professional) that the au pair had with their host families. Overall, it seems that the families are mainly responsible for setting the tone of those experiences.

The results reveal that the au pairs are at imminent risk of mistreatment and exploitative situations. The almost “utopic” idea of a two-sided exchange program and respect for the unclear program rules depends too much on the willingness of the stronger actor, meaning the host, to invest in a balanced relationship. As mentioned by Cox (2015, p.66) “the combination of being a living-in migrant makes au pairs vulnerable and dependent of their hosts”. In this sense, besides labor migrants often being in a disadvantaged position, the au pair may be in an even more problematic spot as her rights and provisions are dependent on the less-regulated private realm. Problematic situations are difficult for au pairs to articulate and negotiate with host families, since the au pairs’ tie to the Netherlands is solely determined by the host families.

The au pair program may be a source of opportunity for the girls trying to live abroad. However, if we examine the broader cultural exchange framing, it does not allow a stricter enforcement of regulations regarding the au pairs’ labor rights and leaves them in an unclear position regarding their role within the household. Therefore, I would recommend that policy makers consider further changes in the au pair program’s regulation. Recognizing the au pair program as labor could possibly result in a stricter protection of their rights in cases of labor exploitation and mistreatment, as well as improvement of their wages. Concurrently, it would safeguard more uniform experiences for the au pairs, regardless of their families.

In the case of the Netherlands specifically, the “cultural exchange” approach provided by the Dutch government to ensure the non-inclusion of the au pairs in the ILO convention is justified with the argument that “it is arguable whether workers performing household work just a few half-days per week should be afforded the same protection as regular domestic workers” (Stenum, 2011, p.22). However, this argument does not accurately represent how the program works in the country. In addition to the au pairs working too many hours without any compensation, others participate in the illegal practice of working more hours with the hope to improve their earnings and, at the same time, there is evidence that suggests that the families actually need more hours. Moreover, a realistic picture of the au pair program regarding the inclusion in the family realm should be painted by governmental authorities and agencies, as the two-sided exchange and quasi-familiar idea is at most a hypothesis and not a realistic truth. The Dutch government should also set

more uniform rules regarding the au pairs' chores as their limits are often too vague, which leaves room for many interpretations by the agencies and host families.

Finally, I would recommend that further research explores the actions of the Dutch government and au pair agencies. It would be important to obtain more information on how both parties act in safeguarding the au pairs' protections, and to what extent the mechanisms they use are enough to support the au pairs in contentious situations.

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Appendix

Interview guide:

For the Au pair:

First part focus on the au pair's expectations and motivations of the au pair program and other background information of their year as an au pair.

How has your year been so far?

Which were the reasons that motivated you to become an au pair?

Could you do an exchange program pursuing other ways?

Which were the advantages of the au pair program compared to other exchange programs?

The role of the agency

How did the agency portray the au pair program to you?

Did you feel the agency give clear information about the program?

Expectations X Realities

This part focus on the au pair's expectations and their real experiences regarding multiple themes.

Did the program meet your personal expectations as a cultural exchange program?

Were you expecting to be treated as a family member? If yes, was this expectation met? If not, explain why?

Were you expecting to be part of the family activities? If yes, was this expectation met? If not, explain why?

Do you think the agencies acted like you were expecting?

Did the amount of work hours and day worked by you meet your expectations?

Did the number of baby-sittings meet your expectations?

Did the amount of free time meet your expectations?

Did the respect of your privacy meet your expectations?

Did the amount and kind of domestic work meet your expectations?

Did the amount of food available meet your expectations?

Did the housing facilities meet your expectations?

Did the support while you were sick meet your expectations?

Regarding the au pair's perception:

Before starting this part of the interview I would reinforce the confidential character of the research and I would also remind them that they only needed to say something that they felt comfortable in sharing.

How do you feel you are being treated by your host family?

Do you feel that they respect your rights? (If not) could you give an example of what you are not happy about?

Could you give an example that you think the host families did not comply with the rules?

Did they compensate when they did that?

Is there any other way they go beyond the contract?

Did you feel you had support from the agency in those situations?

Why do you think families have an au pair?

Is there anything you have not talked but you want to share?

For the Host families:

Why did you decide for an au pair?

How is the division of the house chores in your family?

Which role the au pair is supposed to have in the household?

Which chores the au pair is supposed to complement, the mother, the father or both?

Do both parents have active participation in the labour market?

Au pair's program attractiveness

Why is an au pair at home more attractive to the host parents instead of child-care provided in the country?

Why not day care and or a Dutch babysitter?

Accessibility

Is the pair exchange program the only feasible way to have someone from abroad at home providing this kind of help?

Is it possible to pay a native woman to provide the same kind of work?

The role of the agency

How did the agency explain the program to you?

Did you feel think they give clear information about the program to you?

Expectations X Realities

Which were the expectations you had for the role of an au pair in your household?

What would you expecting she would bring to your home?

Did the au pair meet your expectations in that sense?

To what extent do you see the au pair as a cultural exchange?

To what extent do you see the au pair as a service provider?

Do you think the agencies acted like you were expecting?

Do you think the agencies gave you a realistic information of the au pair program?

Did the amount of work hours in the au pair meet your expectations?

Did the amount of free time given to an au pair meet your expectations?

Did the number of baby-sittings meet your expectations?

Did the amount and kind of household chores performed by an au pair meet your expectations?

Did the expenses involved in having an au pair meet your expectations?

Do you think are there enough rules to safeguard the au pairs' protection?

Is there anything you have not talked but you want to share?



PART I: CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Jennifer A. Holland, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART II: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Different expectations leading labor exploitation to Brazilian au pairs in the Netherlands

Name, email of student: Cecilia Roberta Cabral de Sousa Groenwold, 509195cc@student.eu.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Marieke van Houte, vanhoute@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 29/05/2019 – 2 months

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES - NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?

(e.g. internship organization)

PART III: TYPE OF RESEARCH STUDY

Please indicate the type of research study by circling the appropriate answer:

1. Research involving human participants.

YES - NO

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES - NO

Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).

2. Field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants.

YES - NO

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else).

YES - NO

PART IV: PARTICIPANTS

Where will you collect your data?

I collected through a WhatsApp-group network, Facebook groups and through snow-balling sampling.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

The size of my sample was 21 au pairs and 6 families.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

The number of au pairs per year in the Netherlands stays around 1500. The number of Brazilians is around 250. Therefore, the number of families that have an au pair may be similar to the number of au pairs.

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them?

YES - NO

2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study?

YES - NO

3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants?

YES - NO

4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants?

Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).

YES - NO

5. Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants?

YES - NO

6. Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)?

YES - NO

7. Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent?

YES - NO

8. Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study?

YES - NO

9. Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured?

YES - NO

10. Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study?
YES – NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

It could be a case of stress if the au pairs were asked to participate without the knowledge of the family. This situation could put them in stress as they could be afraid to be discovered.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

My intention was to interview au pairs and their linked families. So, both actors will be aware of each other's participation. Minimizing the risk of future tensions between them because of this research.

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

The only possibility in my view to cause any negative consequence would be not being careful with the questions asked and bringing up intense negative reminders of their time as an au pair.

PART V: DATA STORAGE AND BACKUP

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

The data was stored in a encrypted file with password, there will be an online backup off-set encrypted file and after the research is published all data is going to be removed.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

I am going to be responsible for all those tasks

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

Continuously

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

Using techniques such as pseudonymization or anonymization

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student:

Name (EUR) supervisor:

Cecilia Roberta Cabral de Sousa Groenwold

Date: 11/06/2019

Date:

PART VII: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

As supplied by Erasmus University Rotterdam, from <https://eur.nl/en/media/67319>

INFORMED CONSENT FORM



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title	Different expectations of Brazilian au pairs and Host families in the Netherlands.
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Cecilia Roberta Cabral de Sousa Groenwold. I am inviting you to participate in this research project about divergent expectations of the au pair program in the Netherlands. The purpose of this research project is to compare conflicting expectations shaping the experience of the au pair program to the host families and au pairs.
Procedures	You will participate in an interview lasting approximately 20 minutes. You will be asked questions about your experiences with the au pair program. You must be at least 18 years old
Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">*There is no obligation to participate and you can at any point stop your participation in this study.*You can always ask to receive a copy of your interview.*You can always request to rectify, remove or restrict the information that you provided.*You can always contact the supervisors of this project if you are not happy about anything.*The results will not be shared to any governmental institution.
Confidentiality	Your privacy will be protected by law. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product. The interviews are going to be recorded and written notes are going to be taken. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location in the researchers' computer and only researcher and supervisor will have access to it. If you do not want the audio to be recorded you can point this out at any time throughout the interview.

Who contact after further questions?	Erasmus University Rotterdam Cecília Groenwold 06- 28902120 You can also get in touch with the EUR data protection officer (privacy@eur.nl)	Erasmus University Rotterdam Dr. Marieke Van Houte 06 - 4129 1249
Statement of Consent	<p>I agree to participate in a research project led by Cecilia Roberta Cabral de Sousa Groenwold. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed.</p> <p>1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.</p> <p>2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.</p>	
Signature and Date	NAME PARTICIPANT	NAME PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE
	DATE	DATE