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## **Unlocking the immigrant paradox: Career aspirations of Caribbean -Dutch high school students**

*A mixed-method study to determine the effect of the socio-economic and cultural status of Caribbean-Dutch high school students on career expectations in comparison with Dutch-native high school students*

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**Emmy Robles**  
**Student number: 510791**  
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**Supervisor: Sjaak Braster**  
**Second reader: Jennifer Holland**

## **Abstract**

There is existing evidence that Caribbean- Dutch students originating from Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao have lower academic performance than Dutch-native students. Despite their low academic performance, Caribbean- Dutch high school students have higher career expectations compared to Dutch-native high school students.

This study examined the effect of the socioeconomic and cultural status of Caribbean-Dutch high school students on their career expectations compared to Dutch-native students. A one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to determine this effect. Results show that Caribbean-Dutch students have a lower socio-economic and cultural status compared to Dutch-native students but have surprisingly higher career expectations than Dutch-native students. By conducting interviews with Caribbean-Dutch parents this study attempted to explain the high career aspirations of Caribbean-Dutch students. Interviews revealed that Caribbean- Dutch parents are also highly driven and expect their children to be successful.

**Keywords:** career expectations, immigrant-paradox, immigrant optimism, parents' expectations, relative attainment, social-economic and cultural status

## 1. Introduction

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Numerous academic research evidence proves that students originating from the islands within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in particular students from Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao have lower academic performance when pursuing a college or university degree in the Netherlands, this is in comparison with native students from the Netherlands.

Caribbean -Dutch students often face many education challenges when forming part of a complex integration process within Dutch society (Observant, 2021; Nationale Ombudsman, 2022). Students originating from the islands within the Kingdom of the Netherlands undergo many integration obstacles such as the language barrier, discrimination, prejudice amongst teachers, and cultural differences, that too often affect(s) their academic performance.

This evidence of integration obstacles might also be applied when explaining the low academic performance outcomes of students originating from the islands within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Studies (SES,2020) have shown that many students with a migrant background have lower academic performance compared to Dutch-native students, often with the same social-economic status.

Socio-economic status can significantly influence the resources available to Caribbean-Dutch students. Higher socio-economic status often provides access to better educational opportunities, extracurricular activities, and support systems ( Plenty and Jonsson, 2021). These resources can enhance academic performance and exposure to various career options, leading to more ambitious career expectations. But for Caribbean-Dutch students with low socio-economic status, it may be more difficult to get access to these beneficial resources. The impact of socio-economic and cultural status on the career expectations of immigrant students is a complex and multifaceted issue. Several factors interact to shape their perceptions and aspirations regarding their future careers. Immigrant families might face financial constraints, making higher education or specific career paths less feasible. In such cases, Caribbean-Dutch students may choose a more financially stable career. Also, the role of parental expectations and cultural values can influence Caribbean-Dutch students' perceptions and aspirations regarding career choices ( Plenty and Jonsson, 2021). Caribbean cultures often place emphasis on family, community, and certain professions. Students from these backgrounds may feel pressure to pursue careers that align with their cultural values, such as medicine, law, or economics. Despite being the underdog in a foreign country, Caribbean-Dutch students have

been shown to surprisingly have higher levels of positive attitudes towards education and higher career expectations than Dutch-native students (OECD, 2021). This anomaly is known in the literature as the “immigrant paradox” ( Feliciano & Lanuza (2017), Keller & Tillman (2008) and Salikutluk (2016)).

Researchers such as Heath and Brinbaum (2007), Kao and Tienda (1995), Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have explored this phenomenon and discovered that students with a immigrant background tend to have higher aspirations and motivation to achieve social mobility through higher education. Others such as Jonsson and Rudolphi (2011), Teney, Devleeshouwer, and Hanquinet (2013) have argued that immigrant students with higher career expectations mostly come from low-income families. This may also be a motivational factor for parents to guide and push their children to aim toward high academic and career achievement. This paradox is an interesting phenomenon and worth researching. That is why I pose the following question; *To what extent does the socio-economic and cultural status of Caribbean-Dutch high school students influence career expectations compared to Dutch-native high school students? And how can this difference be explained?*

Studies regarding educational inequalities in the Netherlands focus mainly on for example students with a Moroccan or Turkish background because they are two of the most populated migration group in the Netherlands. But no research has been done on students’ originating specifically from the islands of the Dutch kingdom ( Aruba, Bonaire & Curacao) regarding their career expectations. Therefore, this research aims to open up a pathway for future research.

### **1.1 Sociological and societal relevance**

Researching the career expectations of Caribbean-Dutch students holds significant sociological and societal relevance for several reasons. Firstly, career expectations among Caribbean-Dutch students can shed light on their integration into the host society. It can provide insights into the extent to which they are able to access opportunities for social mobility, which reflects the openness and inclusivity of the society they have migrated or were born into.

Secondly, studying career expectations helps identify the barriers and challenges that Caribbean-Dutch students face in pursuing their desired careers. These barriers may be related to language, discrimination, educational access, or limited social networks, among others.

Thirdly, research on career expectations can inform policymakers and educators about the specific needs and requirements of immigrant students. It can lead to the development of targeted policies and educational programs to better support their career aspirations and

improve their overall outcomes. And fourthly, by understanding the career expectations of Caribbean-Dutch students, Dutch society can work towards creating more inclusive and diverse workplaces and educational institutions. This can foster a sense of belonging and positively impact overall social cohesion.

Understanding the relationship between socioeconomic and cultural status on career expectations of Caribbean-Dutch students is crucial for educators, policymakers, and communities. Providing equal access to educational resources, fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, promoting cultural understanding, and offering mentorship and support can help empower these students to pursue fulfilling and successful careers based on their talents and passions rather than being limited by their backgrounds.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

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Studies have shown that students with a migrant background perform more poorly academically than Dutch- natives students. But despite their poor academic performance they tend to have surprisingly higher career expectations compared to Dutch-native students. This phenomenon is referred to in the literature as the ‘immigrant paradox’ Feliciano and Lanuza, (2017), Keller and Tillman (2008), and Salikutluk (2016). This research aims to explore this interesting phenomenon. What drives Caribbean-Dutch students to pursue higher education or have such high career- expectations? Studies conducted by researchers like Heath and Brinbaum (2007) and Kao and Tienda (1995) have revealed that immigrant students tend to indeed exhibit higher levels of optimism compared to non-migrant students. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as "immigrant optimism," which suggests that migrants, including immigrant students, “are a positively selected group with character traits such as ambition, optimism, and motivation” (Tjaden and Hunkler, 2017). Migrants who choose to move to a new country often do so with specific goals and aspirations in mind, searching for economic and educational upward mobility and better opportunities. They may thus have a higher willingness to overcome challenges. The challenges and uncertainties faced during the migration process itself can cultivate resilience and determination, further enhancing their optimism and motivation. Immigrant parents might transfer their attitude to their children, who could therefore also be highly motivated to have high aspirations. Heath and Brinbaum (2007), Kao and Tienda ( 1995 ), and Portes and Rumbaut ( 2001) can validate this line of thinking. They proclaimed that migrant students from low-

income families are often highly motivated to seek upwards social mobility through educational success. This motivational drive mostly comes from immigrant parents that impose on their children that education is the key to upward mobility (Jonsson and Rudolphi ( 2011); Teney, Devleeshouwer, & Hanquinet ( 2013)). Kao en Tienda ( 1995) refers to this as the immigrant optimism hypothesis. It is important to acknowledge that while immigrant optimism is a common trend, individual differences and circumstances can influence the level of optimism and ambition among immigrant students. That aside, Relikowski, Yilmaz, and Blossfeld (2012) researched the level optimism that Turkish parents living in Germany have on their children's academic aspirations. Their study revealed that Turkish parents have indeed a high level of academic aspirations and stress the importance of having a high-level degree for a better future outcome. Turkish parents want their children to take advantage of the opportunities that they did not have in their country of origin to be successful. This may also be an explanation for why Caribbean- Dutch students tend to be more optimistic and ambitious about their career expectations. To explore this further, I pose the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Caribbean- Dutch students with a low ESCS have high carrier expectations compared to Dutch-Native students

Research from Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli ( 1996) has tried to explain how parents' expectations influence children's academic achievement. Studies have shown that parents with high expectations for their children's academic achievement are more engaged in promoting behavior that stimulates achievements compared to parents with low academic expectations. The level of parents' academic expectations of their children might be linked to their relative attainment in their home country ( Ichou, 2014; Feliciano & Lanuza, 2017). Ichou conducted a study and measured the relative attainment of immigrant parents in France compared to their non-immigrant counterparts in their home countries and found that the level of relative attainment of these parents predicts children's educational attainment. Feliciano and Lanuza conducted a similar study, but in the U.S. context, and came to the same conclusion. This concept might be an important factor in further analyzing the concept of the immigrant paradox when applying it to the high career expectations of Caribbean- Dutch students. Relative attainment of immigrant parents in the pre-immigration context might provide us with insightful information about their background. Immigrant parents might be highly educated in their home country or might have had a high economic, social, and cultural status, but experienced a downgrade in social class after migration due to for example their disadvantaged social networks and language barrier. Therefore, making it is hard to perform well in labor markets (

Pong & Landale, 2012; Loui, 2012). This suggests that considering only the socio-economic and cultural status in the destination country could underestimate parents' true class status. Considering parents' pre-immigration class standing is important because this could indicate why Caribbean- Dutch students have high levels of aspirations. Tong and Harris (2021) explain Engzell's theory regarding this relationship as follows: "Parents with higher relative attainment may expect their children to reproduce this high relative status through a stable self-perceived status (relative to their country of origin) that maintains high expectations on children". But Tong and Harris's theory can also be contradicted. Immigrant parents who may not have high relative attainment may encourage their children even more to pursue higher education and careers. Immigrant parents would want their children to have access to opportunities that they didn't have.

Another important factor that is closely related to this line of thinking and further explains the high level of aspirations in Caribbean-Dutch students, is the value that these students have for their parent's expectations and how aware and accepting children are of these values ( Grusec and Goodnow, 1994). This is something that they called a perception-acceptance pathway. Grusec and Goodnow explained that how parents discipline their children contributes to values transmission by shaping their perceptions of their parent's values. The perception acceptance pathway and high career aspirations of minority students are two separate concepts that may have an interrelated impact on the educational and career trajectories of Caribbean-Dutch students. If these students perceive that their talents and efforts will be recognized and rewarded, if they believe that opportunities are accessible to them, and if they receive support and encouragement from their environment, they are more likely to develop and maintain high career aspirations. Conversely, negative perceptions, stereotypes, or lack of support can hinder their aspirations and lead to a narrowing of career choices.

Also, parents' involvement ( time, energy, and financial provisions) in children's learning may also play an important role in conveying to their children that having an education is important ( Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). When children see how highly parents value educational achievement, they may come to value it themselves, which may also lead to higher career expectations. Less-educated migrant parents could transmit higher aspirations to their children than highly educated ones because they might attribute their status to structural barriers in their country of origin rather than their ability. Moreover, parents' disadvantaged situation can also serve as a motivational factor for students with a migrant background to have higher career expectations (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). To get a better

understanding of the relationship between parents level of academic aspiration and students career expectations I pose the following sub-questions:

**Sub-question 1:** What level of completed education did parents attain in their country of origin?

**Sub-question 2:** How important is educational attainment to Caribbean-Dutch parents for their children and why?

**Sub-question 3:** How do Caribbean-Dutch parents encourage and motivate their children academically?

An additional theory similar to the perception-acceptance pathway approach is the social cognitive theory (Bandura ( 1997, 1999). This theory can explain the reasoning behind Caribbean-Students aspirations and motivations leading to certain life choices. The social cognitive theory provides a solid framework to explore the role of perceived self-efficacy in shaping academic motivation and career expectations. This theory is well-established and widely used in understanding human behavior and motivation (Bandura et al., 2001). Perceived self-efficacy is about people's ability to believe that they can achieve certain goals through their actions. In other words, when people don't have a goal or an underlying motivation to achieve something, they would more likely have little incentive to act or persevere. Bandura et al. (2001) further illustrate the power of perceived self-efficacy as follows: " Perceived self-efficacy occupies a central role in the causal structure of social cognitive theory because efficacy beliefs affect adaptation and change not only in their own right but through their impact on other determinants. Such beliefs influence aspirations and strength of commitment to them, the quality of analytic and strategic thinking, level of motivation and perseverance in the face of difficulties and setbacks, resilience to adversity, causal attributions for successes and failures, and vulnerability to stress and depression." The Perceived self-efficacy theory can be used to explain Caribbean -Dutch high school students' career expectations by measuring the level of their academic motivation. One can assume that if students have high academic motivation, they will also have high career expectations.

One more theory that illustrates higher career expectations amongst students with a migrant background compared to Dutch-native students is the blocked opportunities approach (Heath and Brinbaum , 2007). This approach assumes that " structural and social barriers to education and labor market success spur high educational ambitions as a reaction" ( Salikutluk, 2016). This means that immigrants parents who anticipate discrimination against their children



will motivate their children to attain high education to prevent this. By attaining a high educational degree parents hope that their children will have higher chances of finding a job through meritocratic principles. This theory suggests that the drive for higher education among minority students is not merely due to intrinsic optimism or ambition but is rather a strategic response to perceived disadvantages in society. The blocked opportunity approach is according to Jonsson and Rudolphi (2011) applicable to various minority groups, including Caribbean-Dutch students, as it helps explain the paradoxical combination of lower academic performance and higher career expectations among these students. That is why I pose the following sub-question:

**Sub-question 4:** Do Caribbean-Dutch parents anticipate discrimination against their children in the educational setting? If so, how do parents try to prevent this?

The blocked opportunity approach can give as interesting insights into the potential factors that may influence Caribbean-Dutch student's high career expectations because it addresses real-world challenges faced by minority groups and offers a plausible explanation for their high educational ambitions. It provides valuable insights into the experiences of disadvantaged communities in their pursuit of better opportunities. Also, the theory recognizes the significance of the social and cultural context in shaping educational aspirations. But while this approach provides a relevant and contextual understanding of their motivations, it may oversimplify the complexities involved and might not fully account for individual agency and diverse factors influencing career expectations.

In conclusion, the phenomenon of high career expectations among Caribbean-Dutch students is a complex interplay of various influential factors. The immigrant optimism ingrained by their determined and aspirational parents, seeking improved opportunities in a new country, is a significant driving force. Furthermore, the relative attainment of parents in their home country and the perception-acceptance pathway also contribute to shaping their ambitious career goals. Moreover, the active involvement and support from parents, along with the student's belief in their own capabilities (perceived self-efficacy), can further fuel their motivation for higher education and professional success. And lastly, the blocked opportunities approach highlights how these students strategically respond to perceived disadvantages in society by aiming for greater educational achievements

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research design**

This research aims to answer the following research question: *To what extent does the socio-economic and cultural status of Caribbean-Dutch high school students influence career expectations compared to Dutch-native high school students? And how can this difference be explained?* A mix-method approach was chosen to best determine the effect of socioeconomic and cultural status on career-expectation of Caribbean-Dutch students in comparison to Dutch-native students. A one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to compare the results. To provide a deeper understanding of the quantitative results, interviews were conducted with Caribbean-Dutch parents. Parents give a good representation of students' socio-economic and cultural status and might even influence students' aspirations. Also, the sample group of Caribbean-Dutch students [N=60] compared to Dutch-native [4101] is very small, yet sufficient to obtain relevant statements about their background and aspirations. But interviews can provide important insights and further support the statements obtained in such a small sample.

##### **3.1.1. Quantitative analysis**

A one-way ANOVA descriptive analysis was conducted, using already existing data from a Dutch dataset program called PISA 2015 (Program for international student assessment) (OECD, 2021). PISA 2015 was used to collect all the relevant data regarding Caribbean Dutch high school students originating from Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao and Dutch-Native high school students. The dependent variable in this research is career expectations and the independent variable is economic, social, and cultural status (ESCS).

A one-way ANOVA descriptive analysis was conducted to explain the relationship between these variables. Relevant variables were derived from The Student Questionnaire from PISA 2015 such as socioeconomic and cultural status, education expectations cultural possessions, unfair treatment of teachers, and educational level of parents. Also, the data findings will be supported using existing literature to support the relationships found between the variables

relevant to this research.

### **3.1.2 Qualitative analysis**

For the qualitative research, approximately six to eight Caribbean-Dutch parents of the students were interviewed. The goal of this qualitative analysis is not to reach saturation but to get an indication of the theories being tested. Using existing literature, three main themes (immigrant optimism, relative attainment, and parental involvement and encouragement) were created to structure and generate data. Caribbean-Dutch parents according to the theories presented seem to play a significant role in Caribbean- Dutch student's aspirations. For that reason, Caribbean- Dutch parents originating from Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao were interviewed to attempt to get a deeper understanding of the important factors that might influence Caribbean students' level of career expectations.

In this study 'purposive sampling' was adopted to generate informants. This method of sampling allows the researcher to deliberately choose informants that have a direct reference to the research question being asked and also who can provide the necessary data.

Recruiting information was mainly through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, but also through the researcher's social network. Informants were asked to include their friends in this research to create a snowball effect (Bryman, 2015). Snowballing will also be used as a sampling strategy, because of the poor absence of this particular sample group.

The interviews were in person and were semi-structured consisting of questions that were based on the theories presented in the theoretical framework. Semi-structured was chosen for the opportunity to collect other relevant data regarding parents' academic values and aspirations. An interview guide will be constructed consisting of important topics on existing literature that must be addressed during the interviews, but new topics can emerge during interviewing ( Bryman, 2015). Data collected would be systematically analyzed using Atlas-ti. Codes and themes will be constructed based on the research theory, but also from the collected data that is relevant to answering the research question.

### **3.4 Ethical considerations**

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. This means that there are a few ethical considerations to be made regarding the privacy and consent of the informants. All informants must sign an informed consent. Also, informants must be fully informed about the essence of

the study and that participation is voluntary. Informants should be informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without questions being asked. All the collected data and recordings must be safely stored for a period of a maximum of two years. Confidentiality is important and the identity of the informants must remain private and anonymous. This can be obtained by using pseudonyms.

#### 4. Results: ANOVA table results and qualitative results

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##### 4.1 ANOVA table

This ANOVA table contains PISA data from 2015 about 15-year-old Caribbean- Dutch high school students and Dutch-Native high school students. The Caribbean-Dutch group consists of one or both parents that were born in the Antilles. The Dutch-native group consists of both parents that were born in the Netherlands. The Caribbean – Dutch group was small [ n=60] in comparison with the Dutch-native group [n=4101], but big enough to make statements about their background and ambitions.

OECD PISA 2015 Variables	Mean mother and father born in the Netherlands	Mean one father or mother born in Antilles	Anova P-value between groups	Measures of Association ETA
N	4101	60		
Mathematics	523,06	481,66	<,001	,059
Science	521,01	474,53	<,001	,059
Students expected occupational status (SEI)	54,26	59,43	,05	,034
Economic, social and cultural status ( ESCS)	0,23	-,09	<,001	,055
Highest parental occupation (HISEI) mother	45,71	47,81	,46	,012

Highest parental occupation (HISEI) father	49,41	48,20	,73	,005
Mother's education (MISCED)	4,40	4,17	,10	,026
Father's education ( FISCED)	4,44	4,09	,03	,033
(CULTPOSS)Cultural possessions at home (WLE)	-,36	-,48	,29	,016
ICT resources (ICTRES)	0,59	0,25	,001	,050
(HEDRES) Home educational resources ( WLE)	,37	,02	,002	,049
Wealth Family (WLE)	,36	,05	<,001	,061
Teacher fairness (TEACHFAIR)	8,43	9,42	,02	,036

*ANOVA table comparing the educational achievements and economic, social, and cultural background of Caribbean-Dutch and Dutch-native students on the basis of PISA 2015.*

#### **4.2 Description of the PISA 2015 variables:**

A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the effect of socioeconomic and cultural status ( ESCS) of Caribbean- Dutch high school students and Dutch-native high school students on career expectations (OECD, 2017) . ESCS is a composite score based on three main indicators which are parental education ( PARED), highest parental occupation ( HISEI), and home possessions ( HOMEPOS). The HOMEPOS variable in PISA 2015 indicates the number of household possessions available in a household. Students were asked to report the amount of possessions and books at home. The HOMEPOS variable is used as a proxy for family wealth and is composed of the following variables;

- family wealth possessions (WEALTH): cars, televisions computes, links to the internet

- cultural possessions ( CULTPOSS): books of poetry, musical instruments, classic literature e.g. Shakespeare
- home educational resources ( HEDRES): a desk to study, computer for school work, books to help with schoolwork
- ICT resources (ICTRES): a link to the internet, cellphones, computers, tablet

Expected occupational status (SEI) was determined in PISA 2015 by asking students to report their expected occupation at age 30 and to describe this job. This variable gives an indication of career expectations. High levels of SEI mean indicated high levels of career expectations. The variable of Teacher fairness ( TEACHFAIR) gives an indication of the school climate and how students experienced unfair treatment by teachers. Students were asked to report how many times in a period of 12 months they have experienced unfair treatment by teachers.

#### **4.3 ANOVA table results :**

A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in economic, social, and cultural status expectations between Caribbean-Dutch students and Dutch-native students [ $p$ -value= $<,001$ ;  $\eta^2=,055$ ]. Therefore, the hypothesis ‘Caribbean- Dutch students with a low ESCS have high carrier expectations compared to Dutch-Native students’ can be accepted.

Results show that Caribbean-Dutch parents in comparison to Dutch-Native students have lower education levels. The table shows that Caribbean- Dutch mothers have a mean score of 4.17 and fathers have a mean score of 4.09. Dutch-Native mothers scored a mean of 4,40 and Dutch-Native fathers scored 4,44. Furthermore, the difference in educational level between Caribbean-Dutch mothers is not statistically significant [ $p=.10$ ;  $\eta^2=.026$ ], but interestingly the difference between Caribbean-Dutch fathers and Dutch-native fathers is statistically significant [ $p=.03$ ;  $\eta^2=.033$ ].

Also, the parental occupation of Caribbean-Dutch parents was analyzed and compared to Dutch-native parents and results observed that Caribbean-Dutch mothers have higher parental occupation [mean= 47,81] than Dutch-native mothers [mean=45,71]. The difference between these groups is not statistically significant ( $p=.46$ ;  $\eta^2=0,012$ ). An interesting finding is that Caribbean-Dutch fathers have a low occupation [mean=48,20] in comparison to Dutch-native fathers [mean=49,41]. The difference between these groups is statistically significant [ $p=.03$ ;  $\eta^2=.033$ ].

Furthermore, the expected occupational status of Caribbean-Dutch students and Dutch-native students was also analyzed and results revealed that Caribbean-Dutch

students have higher career expectations than Dutch-native students. The difference between the groups is statistically significant [  $p=0,05$ ,  $\eta^2=.034$ ]. Also, the subjects mathematics and science we included as variables to indicate the academic performance between the two groups, and the results show that Caribbean-Dutch students scored lower for both subjects compared to Dutch-natives students. The difference between the groups is statistically significant [ $p<.00$ :  $\eta^2=.059$ ]

Another important variable that was included in the analysis is cultural possession at home. How many cultural possessions parents have may indicate if parents have a low or high socio-economic and cultural status. Results revealed that Caribbean-Dutch parents have fewer cultural possession than Native-Dutch parents but the difference between groups is not significant [ $P= .29$ ;  $\eta^2=.016$ ]. Although results show that the difference is not statistically significant, results revealed that Caribbean-Dutch parents have significantly fewer ICT resources and home educational resources compared to Dutch-native parents. ICT resources [ $p=.001$ ;  $\eta^2=.050$ ] and educational resources [ $p=.002$ ;  $\eta^2=.049$ ]. Moreover, results indicate that Caribbean- Dutch parents have lower family wealth than Dutch-native parents and that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant [ $p<.001$ ;  $\eta^2=0.061$ ] Finally, teachers' fairness towards students were analyzed and results revealed that Caribbean Dutch student experience more unfair treatment from teachers than Dutch-Native. This difference is statistically significant [ $p=.02$ :  $\eta^2=.036$ ].

#### 4.4 Qualitative results

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I presented the ANOVA results to answer the research question: *To what extent does the socio-economic and cultural status of Caribbean-Dutch high school students influence career expectations compared to Dutch-native high school students?* The presented results provided insightful indications of potential factors that might influence Caribbean-Dutch students' high career aspirations. The findings concluded that there is indeed a significant difference in socio-economic and cultural status. To further investigate and understand these findings, I conducted interviews with Caribbean-Dutch parents to explore their potential influence on their children's aspirations. These interviews were primarily aimed at answering the second part of the research question: *How can this difference be explained?* The themes presented are based on the theories presented in this research, and interesting results were found.

**Immigrant optimism:**

It was discussed that immigrants exhibit higher levels of optimism, ambition, and motivation. One explanation for this optimism is that parents of immigrant backgrounds experienced hardship growing up or when moving to another country, and this optimism may be transmitted to their children. Additionally, the results showed that Caribbean-Dutch parents have a lower economic, social, and cultural status compared to Dutch-Native parents. The interviews shed light on why this might be the case, with respondents indicating that they faced limited resources and economic hardship while growing up. For example, Tamara, a single mom, shared her experiences of facing financial challenges and the importance of education in overcoming those difficulties. She explained that she came to live in the Netherlands about 8 years ago because, in her home country, there weren't many education and work opportunities. She explained that being a single mom at a very young age living in her hometown was hard financially and therefore couldn't achieve much. She further expresses that her mom was also a single mom at a very young age and also had to endure hardship raising her children. Growing up Tamara's mother talked to her a lot about her upbringing and past and tried to encourage her to pursue an education.

**Relative attainment:**

The level of relative attainment of immigrant parents in their home country can influence their children's educational aspirations. Interestingly, despite not having a high economic, social, or cultural status during their upbringing, Caribbean-Dutch parents didn't let these limitations stop them from pursuing higher education. Respondents revealed that their parents motivated and encouraged them to pursue education despite their circumstances. For example, Cynthia's mother, who only finished second-grade MAVO, wanted her children to achieve more than she could. She was at the time the oldest sibling out of 7 other siblings and had to quit school in order to work and help provide for her family. Cynthia's mother came from a poor family and couldn't pursue education due to her circumstances. That is why Cynthia explains that education was very important for her mother because her mother wanted her children to achieve something that she couldn't.

This piece of data illustrates how Caribbean-Dutch parents integrate this optimism into their children's lives to thrive for higher achievements. Cynthia eventually finished her degree in tourism and emigrated to the Netherlands to further explore her possibilities. In the Netherlands, she continued another degree in tourism at HBO.

Another great example to further illustrate how immigrant optimism can have a



positive influence on educational and or career aspirations is Dennis. Education was for Dennis's parents very important. His mother finished secondary school ( Mavo) and found a job in administration in government. His father didn't have the opportunity to go to school. At a young age, his father had to work to help provide for his family. His father didn't get the opportunity to go to school and didn't want Dennis to miss out on that opportunity. Dennis further explains that he was always motivated to pursue an education because he grew up in a family that didn't have many possibilities. A big part of his family didn't have a degree and he wanted more possibilities for himself and his future. Dennis moved to the Netherlands when he was 18 years old for higher education and finished his HBO degree in accountancy.

### **Parental involvement and encouragement:**

Bianca explains that growing up, her mother and father were very involved in her education. Her father started his studies at a very low level and climbed his way to the top. Bianca expresses that her father planted his motivation to keep studying in all of his children. When her mother married her father, she quit her job and became a stay-at-home mother and provided everything that the children needed. Bianca expresses that her mother always asks how their school day went, makes sure that their homework was done, and helped them with their homework when needed. Contrary to Bianca's parents that were very much involved in her education, George's parents were not. George expresses that education was very important in their household but because of the divorce of his parents, it was hard, especially for his mother. His mother had to work hard to provide for her family. George explains that his older brother was much more involved in encouraging him to for example do his homework. He also explains that he spent a lot of time with his father who always encourage him to study and do something with his life. His father always talked about how hard life can get and that having a diploma to go somewhere is very important.

Even though George's parents were not very involved in his education, they still encouraged him to pursue an education.

Cynthia's parents were also involved in her education. Growing up Cynthia expresses that her mother was very strict. She explains that even when feeling sick, for example, having a headache, her mother would send them to school. Arriving late for school was also not an option. Her mother always made sure that she did her schoolwork and studied. Her mother always told her that having a degree is important and to always do her best at school.

In sum, data revealed the importance of parental involvement and encouragement in shaping children's aspirations. Parents like Bianca and George were actively involved in their children's education, providing support, asking about their school day, helping with homework, and encouraging their academic pursuits. While George's parents were not heavily involved in his education due to their divorce, his older brother took on a supportive role. Similarly, Cynthia's strict upbringing and discussions about the importance of education motivated her to encourage her son to pursue an education.

The data collected from Caribbean-Dutch parents' upbringing indicated that they also integrated the same optimism into their children's lives, providing them with more resources and opportunities compared to their own upbringing. The results showed two ways in which parents encouraged their children: discussing their own life experiences and by emphasizing the importance of education in achieving success.

George and Bianca for example talk a lot with their children about the importance of having a degree. Bianca's father played a big role in her education life and she made sure she passed the same encouragement that she received from her father on to her children. They are very involved in their children's education. They make sure their children are in sports and music because to them that is very important in their children's education. Sports and music give their children peace of mind and more happiness and enjoyment at school. They also are very attentive with their homework and help them when need it. Bianca and George have one daughter that is attending secondary school. She is motivated with her studies and hopes to become a notary in the future. They are very proud of her and always encourage her to do what is best for her and what makes her happy. Bianca and George express that education is important and they would like their children to be successful in life. They have six children with different levels of education. For them, it is not about reaching the highest education level but for their children to achieve something in their capacities and talents. They have raised their children to make their own decisions and to be independent.

Similarly to Bianca and George, education is very important for Dennis and Anna. They always encourage their children to do their best because to them having a diploma is very important for having a good future. For them, the level of education is not that important, but they just want their children to do their best. They don't want their children to struggle in life. When their children don't have much motivation or are lazy they sit and talk to them about the importance of education. They explain to their children that in this society diploma is everything

in order to be successful.

Dennis and Anna's daughter just finished VWO and want to study law. According to Dennis and Anna, she has chosen this degree because she finds that is best for her at the moment.

Dennis and Anna also support her choice.

Dennis and Anna want their children to have a diploma and a good job. To be able to buy a house, a car and to provide for their future family. Dennis expresses that "I don't want my children to work hard in life or for them to end up working in a factory for example. If they have the talent and possibility to study, I want them to study. That is why I talk a lot with my children because I want them to achieve more than I did". Dennis and Anna explain that they both came from a divorced family which has limited them from many possibilities. Their children don't have that disadvantage and have all the possibilities that they did not have.

Cynthia also expresses that she talks a lot with his son about his education and tries to make him understand the importance of having an education and a diploma. She wants her son to be independent and have the opportunity to provide for himself. She expresses; "I don't care if he wants to become cleaner, for me, it is important to get the degree necessary to work as a cleaner so that he can take care of himself".

Her son does not know what he wants to study after finishing secondary school. Cynthia did mention that her son often asks her for her opinion about what she would see him becoming. Cynthia would like to see her son doing something with ICT because she finds that her son is very talented in computer work. To motivate her children to study and go to school she explains that she talks about her situation and how she grew up. She tries to explain to her son the importance of education for his future. Interestingly, she says "In the Netherlands compare to Bonaire, your degree is more valuable than just your experience or talent".

Tamara expresses that her son is very positive and is always talking about his career aspirations. Tamara's also mentioned that her son is very driven to pursue an education to help his mother. Tamara's son would like to become a computer technician in the future.

As a mother Tamara further expresses that she would like her son to have a bright future with a good job. She wants her son to choose something because he wants to and because it is something that makes him happy. Whatever profession he chooses to do, she will support him one hundred percent.

Interesting about these findings is that all the respondent's children want to pursue an education in either law, economics, or ICT. Parents did not force their children to pursue such a high

level of education. However, these findings suggest that talking and motivating their children to pursue education in any profession, influences their career aspirations. Another interesting finding is that parents did not focus solely on high levels of education but mainly on their children's wants and happiness when pursuing a degree. In conclusion, immigrant optimism can be seen as an intrinsic motivation in Caribbean-Dutch parents, driven by external factors such as financial and social hardship. Even when parents lack resources or time, they still encourage their children to pursue education and emphasize its importance. This optimism is integrated into the mindset of Caribbean-Dutch children, influencing their career aspirations positively.

## **5. Conclusion & discussion**

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This study aimed at answering the research question; *To what extent does the socioeconomic and cultural status of Caribbean-Dutch high school students influence career expectations compared to Dutch-native high school students? And how can this difference be explained?* Quantitative data revealed interesting results. The hypothesis posed in this research that Caribbean- Dutch students with a low ESCS have high carrier expectations compared to Dutch-Native students, was accepted. One-way ANOVA revealed that the effect of socioeconomic and cultural status does indeed affect the career expectations of Caribbean-Dutch students. Results indicated that Caribbean- Dutch parents in comparison with Dutch-native parents have lower ESCS. The ESCS from parents most likely reflects students' ESCS. Variables such as the educational level of parents, parental highest occupation, cultural possessions, and variables that measure family wealth were analyzed to get a better understanding of the difference in ESCS between both groups. Results revealed interesting outcomes. Caribbean-Dutch parents have a lower educational level than Dutch-native parents. The cultural possession of both parents was also taken into account and the result indicated that Caribbean-Dutch parents have lower cultural possessions than Dutch-native parents, but the difference between the groups is not significant. However, when the variables of ICT resources and family wealth were analyzed, results revealed that Caribbean-Dutch parents scored lower on both variables and that the differences between the groups were both statistically significant. One will assume that lower ESCS will result in lower career expectations. But results show the opposite. Even though Caribbean-Dutch parents have fewer resources at home, their children still have higher career expectations. Qualitative data indicate that Caribbean-Dutch parents

have high levels of optimism which they integrate into their children's upbringing. Caribbean-Dutch parents mostly came from low-income families. The challenges and uncertainties they faced growing up cultivated resilience and determination, further enhancing their optimism and motivation. Immigrant parents could have transferred their attitude onto their children, who could therefore also be highly motivated to have high aspiration

Furthermore, the expected occupational status of Caribbean-Dutch students was compared to the highest occupation of Caribbean- Dutch parents and results revealed that the expected occupation level of Caribbean-Dutch students is higher than the occupation level of their parents. Caribbean-Dutch parents who were interviewed talked highly about their children having a good education. They expressed that they would like their children to be independent and able to provide for themselves in the future. The results showed that all the respondents came from hardworking families with a low social economic status. The parents of the interviewees had a hard time growing up and were not able to pursue an education. Some of their parents did not finish any type of schooling or only finished secondary school due to financial circumstances and had to start working at a young age to provide for their families. Interviewees expressed that they, therefore, put a lot of effort into motivating them to pursue an education because they do not want their children to endure the hardship that they had to endure. They motivate their children by talking to them about their past experiences and the importance of having a degree

How Caribbean- Dutch parents motivate their children may explain Caribbean- Dutch students' higher career aspirations. All the children of the participants want to pursue an education in either ICT or Law, both high career choices. This also adds supporting data to the quantitative results and may indicate that the children of Caribbean-Dutch parents are highly motivated to pursue high careers.

Another important variable that was included in this study was teacher fairness. Which indicated how fairly students are being treated by their teachers. Results revealed that Caribbean-Dutch students are treated less fairly compared to Dutch-native and that the difference between the groups was statically significant. Existing literature explains the relationship between high career expectations and blocked opportunities, assuming that structural and social barriers to education work as a catalyst for higher career aspirations. This study attempted to gain insights by asking parents if they anticipate discrimination against their children at school and how they try to prevent it. Unfortunately, qualitative data failed to support these findings. One possible reason why the qualitative data did not support these

findings is due to the quality of the interview questions. Addressing a topic such as discrimination is sensitive and can be a challenge to encourage respondents to share their experiences. Another explanation could be the research sample itself that was not indicated to support the findings. Maybe if Caribbean-Student were interviewed, they could have given more insights into their personal experiences when dealing with their school environment. That is something to take into account for future research. In closing, this study has revealed that Caribbean-Dutch high school students have a low socio-economic and cultural status in comparison to Dutch-native students. Also, this study has shown that despite Caribbean-Dutch student's low socio-economic and cultural status they still have higher career expectations than Dutch-native students. Moreover, interviews indicated that Caribbean-Dutch parents highly value the importance of education and motivate their children to pursue an education. Findings also indicated that Caribbean- Dutch parents integrated these values into their children's upbringing which may influence Caribbean-Dutch student's career aspirations in a positive way.

On a final note, policymakers and educators should consider these findings to develop targeted interventions and support systems to better understand to underlying factors that drive Caribbean-Dutch students' career aspirations and foster their academic and career success instead of limiting them. Additionally, further research is needed to better understand the nuanced interplay of these factors and to explore individual experience and agency within the broader context of the immigrant paradox.

## **5.1 limitations**

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations. The first limitation concern the sample size of the Caribbean-Dutch student group for the statistical analysis. Although the sample size was small enough to make relevant statements, it does raise concerns about the validity of the conclusions. This is something to take into consideration for future research.

The second limitation is the number of participants that were interviewed. More participants could contribute to more insightful findings. The third limitation that is important to address, is the choice of the sample group. Even though Caribbean-Dutch parents gave valuable insights into students' motivation and aspirations, it is recommended to also include Caribbean- Dutch parents in future research to compare the differences. Also including Caribbean-Dutch students would also add to more valuable and valid findings.

The fourth limitation to take into account is the quality of the interview questions. As mentioned above, the qualitative data failed to support the results of teachers' unfairness towards Caribbean-Dutch students. The questions that were aimed to address this issue were not able to provide relevant data. This could be due to the sensitivity of the topic or the unclarity of the questions.

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## 7. Appendix

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### 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](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 I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Caribbean-Dutch students and their career-expectations

Name, email of student: Emmy Robles, [510791er@student.eur.nl](mailto:510791er@student.eur.nl)

Name, email of supervisor: Sjaak Braster, [braster@essb.eur.nl](mailto:braster@essb.eur.nl)

Start date and duration: 1 April 2023– 25 June 2023

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 II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES - NO

*If 'NO': skip to part V.*

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. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. YES - NO

*If 'YES': skip to part IV.*

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES - NO

*If 'YES': skip to part IV.*

## PART III: PARTICIPANTS

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? YES - NO  
*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.).*

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.

**This studies focus specifically on Caribbean-parents originating from Aruba, Bonaire or curacao. Therefore information related to their background could not be avoided.**

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues  
**All participants will be anonymized to safeguard their privacy. Also, if participant could get a copy of the final research paper if they wish to. In addition, participants can withdraw from the research at any time. And lastly, if participants have any question concerning their participation in this research they can always contact me personally.**

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.

**No.**

#### **PART IV: SAMPLE**

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

**Data will be collected through interviews and personal notes.**

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

**Approximately 6- 8 participants will be interviewed.**

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

## **Unknown**

### *Continue to part V* **Part V: Data storage and backup**

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

**Data and transcripts will be safely stored in One-Drive.**

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

**I am personally responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and back-up of the data arising from this research.**

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

**Not applicable.**

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

**All persona data will be anonymized using pseudonyms.**

## **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: Emmy Robles**

**Name (EUR) supervisor: Sjaak Braster**

**Date: 10-4-2023**

**Date: 10-4-2023**

## **APPENDIX I: Informed Consent Form (if applicable)**

### **Information consent**

Name of Principal Investigator*:	Emmy Robles
University	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Project Title and Version*:	Caribbean- Dutch high school students and their career-expectations

### **Introduction**

*I am Emmy Robles and I am currently studying Social inequalities at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. I am doing research on Caribbean-Dutch high school students and their career expectations. I am going to provide you with information and invite you to be part of this research. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me for explanations when anything is unclear.*

### **Purpose of the research**

It is known that students with a migrant background have lower academic performance compared to Dutch- Native students. But surprisingly they have higher career expectations than Dutch-native students. This research focuses mainly on students with a Caribbean-Dutch background. Students must have one or both parents originating from Aruba, Bonaire, or Curacao. I believe that you can contribute to this research by telling us a little bit about your background and academic and career aspirations.

### **Type of research intervention**

The research takes place over three months in total. During that time, I will be interviewing a few participants only once, and each interview will last for about one hour. Interviews may include one or both parents' presence.

### **Participant selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because your educational experience with your children as a Caribbean-Dutch parent can contribute to more understanding and knowledge of their career expectations.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier. You have the right to withdraw your consent to use the personal data that you have provided at any time (unless the data has been anonymized). You do not have to justify your decision to withdraw your consent and there are no consequences for withdrawing your consent.

## **Procedures**

You are invited to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be asked to take part in an interview. You do not have to share anything that you are not comfortable sharing. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. The interview will take place at home or at a place where we can talk privately with no interruption. The entire interview will be tape-recorded. Your (real) name during the interview will not be mentioned.

At the end of the interview, you could review your responses if you wish to. If you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly, you may ask me to modify or remove parts of them.

## **Privacy**

During this research, you will be asked to provide personal data. Personal data is information that can directly (age, gender, ethnicity, type of job) identify you as an individual. As indicated above, this research project involves making audio recordings of interviews with you for the purpose of analysing the career expectations of Caribbean-Dutch students. The audio recordings will be transcribed (that is, put into writing). Segments of the transcribed interview may be used in the final thesis paper. The segment will never directly or indirectly identify you as a person; the segments used are anonymous. Personal data will only be shared with people who are directly involved in this research such as my supervisor. Your real name will be removed from your answers as soon as possible and it will be replaced with a fake name.

## **Retaining and Sharing your data**

Your personal data (audio recordings and documents created as part of this study) will be stored in a secure location for a maximum period of 2 years after the results of the research have been published. A selection of the personal data you provide may be useful for educational purposes and for future research, also in other areas of research. Therefore, I would like to re-use your personal data and will ask you to consent to this in the certificate of consent. You have the right to request access to your personal data and to change these if they are not right or to erase your data.

## **Who to Contact?**

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact any of the following: Emmy Robles [/emmyrobles@hotmail.com/](mailto:emmyrobles@hotmail.com) Sjaak Braster/ [braster@essb.eur.nl](mailto:braster@essb.eur.nl). If you want to invoke your rights or if you have a question concerning privacy about this study, you can contact Erasmus University's DPO (Data Protection Officer) at [privacy@eur.nl](mailto:privacy@eur.nl) . If you would like to lodge a complaint concerning privacy, you can do this with the national supervisory authority in the Netherlands on personal data (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens).



**Certificate of consent**

I have read the Informed Consent Form and I understand what the purpose of the research is and that data will be collected from me. The research has been explained to me clearly and I have been able to ask questions.

By signing this Form, I

1. consent to participate in this research.
2. confirm that I am at least 18 years old<sup>1</sup>.
3. understand that participating in this research is completely voluntary; and
4. understand that my data will be anonymized for publication, educational purposes and further research unless I give my consent to the Quotes, Actual Name and/or Education, and further research options below.

**Consent Special categories of personal data**

I give my consent to the collection, processing, use, and storage of my personal data for the purposes of this research including data related to ethnic origin, education level, and type of job).

**Audio/Video**

I hereby consent to have audio and/or video recordings made during the research and to have my answers transcribed.

**Quotes**

I hereby consent to have my answers quoted in research publications. When quotes are used, your (real) name and other direct identifiers will not be mentioned.

**Education and further Research**

I hereby consent to have my personal data, namely ( age, gender, ethnicity, education level, type of job), stored and used for educational purposes and for future research, also in other areas of research than this research.

**Name of the participant:**

**Signature of the participant:**

**Date:**

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