

**THE CLASS CEILING IN THE NETHERLANDS: EXPLORING EARNINGS
DISPARITIES THROUGH SOCIAL CLASS ORIGINS AND CULTURAL CAPITAL**

Roberto Mentone

746232rm@eur.nl

Master's in Social Inequalities

Erasmus School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Dr. Gabriele Mari

Wordcount: 9214

June 22, 2025

Abstract

The class ceiling studies when people's class background has a considerable impact on occupational trajectories, limiting the attainment of higher incomes. Basing on the theories of Maximally Maintained Inequality (MMI), Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI), and cultural fit, this research attempted to fill a gap in the research by investigating the relationship between top professionals' salaries and their class of origin in order to encourage the study of the class ceiling in the allegedly meritocratic and egalitarian Dutch society. Moreover, I focused on how this relationship is shaped and influenced by cultural capital. I rely on a regression analysis on data from the LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet studies for the Social Sciences), a representative sample of Dutch individuals. On the basis of this article, it was not found a class ceiling on earnings. But, the moderating effect of institutionalized cultural capital was confirmed. It looks like once individuals hold top-professional jobs, their earnings are determined by work category, not by their family background. However, the sample also reveals other types of inequalities: important differences in cultural capital between classes of origin and a scarcity of people from the less-privileged social classes in top-professions. This could be interpreted as a symptom of a gate to enter prestigious jobs. Remedial measures are suggested. More studies are recommended to redress any limitations of this paper and definitively verify the presence of a class ceiling in the Netherlands.

Keywords: class ceiling, class pay gap, social origin, social mobility

1. Introduction

The *glass ceiling* metaphor has been effectively used to draw attention to the persistent systemic obstacles that women and people of color encounter in accessing remunerative positions of power in labor markets, often disproportionately filled by White men (Collins, 1997; Kanter, 2008; Lacy, 2007; Laurison & Friedman, 2024; Wingfield, 2008; Woodson, 2015; Yavorsky et al., 2019). According to a large literature, people's class background also has a considerable impact on occupational trajectories, limiting the attainment of higher incomes. Even when attaining elite occupational positions, people from working-class backgrounds routinely earn less than their more affluent counterparts, a phenomenon that recent comparative cross-national research has called *class ceiling* (Falcon & Bataille 2018; Friedman & Laurison 2019; Hällsten 2013; Hansen 2001; Laurison and Friedman 2016; Mastekaasa 2011; Toft & Friedman 2020). Even when taking into account educational credentials, socio-demographic characteristics, occupational sorting, work location, as well as indicators of human capital such as experience, training, and hours worked, research shows that large class-based earnings gaps remain (Falcon & Bataille, 2018; Friedman & Laurison, 2019; Hansen, 2001a, 2001b; Ljunggren, 2016).

In this thesis, I attempt to bring further attention to the topic adding, perhaps for the first time, the Netherlands among the few countries where this dynamic linking class of origin and work outcomes was explored. The necessity of studying the Netherlands arises from the fact that the class ceiling has been observed even in countries that follow more egalitarian principles such as Norway (Mastekaasa 2011). This may suggest a likelihood that the class ceiling may also be present in the Dutch context. Furthermore, previous research has already highlighted structural weaknesses within the Dutch educational system, which tend to favor individuals who recognize the advantages of education, potentially benefiting families

that recognizes the importance of cultural capital (De Graaf et al., 2000; Tubadij et al., 2017) which are often those belonging to the upper social strata (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

My input aims to broaden the conversation by emphasizing the multifaceted nature of social mobility, with the intent to challenge ideas and conceptions about meritocracy and egalitarianism in the Netherlands (Grendstad, 1999; Hedegaard, 2019; Steijn, 2016; Thijs et al., 2019).

I also try to provide tools that can assist in the evaluation of current inclusion and equity policies and ultimately, I aspire to contribute meaningfully to the scientific literature by examining the cultural mechanisms that drive economic divergence among social classes. With all the above in mind, my research question is: to what extent does social class origin influence earnings within elite occupations in the Netherlands? What is the role of cultural capital in sustaining these class-origin inequalities?

By the examination of earnings by class origin among people in higher professional and managerial occupations in the Netherlands, as already done in the pioneer studies of class ceiling in US and Europe, my study also challenges the effectiveness of the equalization thesis (Hout, 1984) trying to demonstrate the more pronounced influence of factors like individuals' social class of origin and different facets of cultural capital compared to only education level in shaping outcomes. I answer my research question with data from the Longitudinal Internet studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel, thus relying on a probability sample representative of the population residing in the Netherlands.

Academically, this thesis seeks to investigate the meritocratic idea that positions education as a means of redemption for underprivileged social classes in line with the view of Sandel (2021). He is a critic of meritocracy, contending that it ignores structural advantages like social networks, affluence, and access to prestigious schools. Instead of recognizing the structural obstacles people encounter, people who are unable to secure prominent jobs are

hence frequently seen as personally accountable for their results. My contribution will extend the theoretical discussion highlighting the complexities and nuances of social mobility in relation with a more encompassing definition of cultural capital, ultimately challenging the prevailing narratives surrounding meritocracy in contemporary (Dutch) society. More practically, my objective is to provide guidance to policymakers on initiatives that not only encourage university enrollment but also dismantle barriers through additional measures that help to counterbalance the advantages enjoyed by the most privileged social classes, underscoring the inequality of outcomes.

To sum up, this thesis aims to fill a critical gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between social class origins and work earnings. Finally, I focus on how cultural capital shapes and influences this connection between social class of origin and earnings; thereby contributing to the specific understanding of the class ceiling for the first time in contemporary Dutch society.

2. Background

2.1 Recent History of Social Mobility in Western World

Social mobility influences people's opportunities for advancement and shaping the overall economic landscape (Breen, 2004). A variety of characteristics, including education, wealth, and resource accessibility, can influence a person's or a family's capacity to climb or descend the social ladder (Breen & Karlson, 2014; Hussein, 2021; Levasseur et al., 2015). Alongside improvements in equality of opportunity, social mobility has often grown since World War II. This tendency has frequently been accompanied by increased equality of outcomes, which has promoted a society that is more flexible and dynamic (Breen, 2010). But this trend abruptly stopped in the 1980s, when declining opportunities tended to aggravate already existing inequalities. This in turn reinforced unequal outcomes and consolidated more immobile class systems (Corak, 2013).

An important step in social mobility research was made by Hout (1984) when he found that completing a college degree rewards regardless of class of origin. The finding gave rise to the equalization thesis, which posits that people who attain higher education are able to enter top occupations and secure better economic prospects, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty that often traps individuals in less privileged socioeconomic strata. Along the same lines of reasoning, the idea of meritocracy was strongly promoted at that time, especially by Reagan in the US and Thatcher in the UK (Sandel, 2021). According to the meritocracy principle, everyone may accomplish their goals in a free-market society by working hard, regardless of their starting circumstances (Sandel, 2021).

Following Hout's studies (1984), research conducted in European countries such as France, Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands (Vallet, 2004; Breen and Jonsson, 2007; Breen and Luijkx, 2007; Ganzeboom & Luijkx, 2004) agreed on the importance of education in enabling upward social mobility. Nonetheless, these studies started to draw attention to the important influence of one's birth class on life trajectories. A more complex understanding of social mobility dynamics was made possible by this change in emphasis, which highlighted the interaction between schooling and pre-existing socioeconomic conditions.

A few years later, groundbreaking research by Torche's (2011, 2016) underscored the insufficiency of examining only the occupational entry, as had been the prevailing approach in social mobility research. She indeed looked both at earnings and career advancement over time, demonstrating that individuals from different class backgrounds experienced markedly divergent life paths even after obtaining similar qualifications. Thus, setting a new standard for social mobility research.

Relying on Torche's insight (2011, 2016), recent studies conducted in Europe and US have demonstrated that factors originating from class origin frequently influence career trajectories that extend well beyond occupational entry. According to research conducted in a

variety of national contexts such as France, UK, USA, and Norway (Falcon and Bataille 2018; Friedman and Laurison 2019; Hällsten 2013; Hansen 2001; Laurison and Friedman 2016; Mastekaasa 2011; Toft and Friedman 2020) even when people from working-class backgrounds are successful in securing top jobs, they continue to earn substantially less than their more affluent counterparts.

Although education used to have prominent equalizing effects, its ability to foster social mobility may be fading. According to Barone, education is no longer the main means of achieving equality of opportunity (Barone & Ruggera, 2017). This changing role of education emphasizes how less effective it is at reducing social and economic inequality in today's society. Examining the connection between social origins, education, and occupational destinations is critical (Barone & Schizzerotto, 2011). Even if education is among the primary factors influencing occupational attainment in many contemporary countries, family background effects still exist.

In recent years, scholarly interest has often focused on people at the top of the income distribution (Savage, 2014). The class origins of the affluent segment of the population, however, have received little attention among the factors that would explain the attaining of top jobs (Toft & Friedman, 2020) which is a significant research gap. Given that family wealth frequently offers benefits in building up resources over time, examining these circumstances may help explain why people with privileged background continue to economically prosper in many Western nations, including the Netherlands (Hansen & Wiborg, 2019; Pfeffer & Killewald, 2017; Sherman, 2017; Toft & Friedman, 2020).

2.2 Theoretical Foundations and Hypotheses

This study is mostly based on three interrelated theoretical perspectives along with the empirical observations of class ceiling studies conducted in other contexts. First, Maximally Maintained Inequality (MMI) (Raftery & Hout, 1993) and Effectively Maintained Inequality

(EMI) (Lucas, 2001). This pair of concepts help explain why education often fails to tackle class inequality. Second, Bourdieu's cultural capital theory (1984) informs us that the benefits of the top social class are not exclusively economic. Lastly, Riviera's cultural matching (2012) illustrates how employers consciously prefer or are implicitly biased towards people who are like them, and therefore often from a similarly privileged background. When combined, these theories could help explain why class disadvantages in the Dutch labor market might not be overcome by formal schooling alone.

Raftery and Hout (1993) argued that the educational system expanded to the less privileged social classes only when already saturated with the more privileged ones, creating the MMI. People at the top of the social pyramid aim to attend the most selective and prestigious universities while making use of systemic benefits and capitals so as to maintain a distance from the working class. In the Dutch context, this may translate with affluent families and biased school staff driving the kids with privileged backgrounds to attend scientific schools (Voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs (VWO)) that would prepare them for the best higher education, maintaining an over-representation with the rest of the population (Büchner & Van Der Velden, 2013; Huibers, 2021).

The concept of EMI was further redefined by Lucas (2001) who expanded the analysis to include the fact that privileged students in addition to access to education can also rely on advantages within the educational experience such as prestigious internships, networks and recommendations that actually play a part in a career, thus keeping the less affluent classes at a distance even as policies expand the inclusion of education. In the Dutch landscape this may be reflected by the advantaged portion of the population being more represented in certain fields and studies (law, medicine, finance) than others in comparison with the less advantaged classes (Van De Werfhorst, 2002).

The significance of non-economic assets in influencing social mobility is highlighted by Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital (1984). This concept can be divided into three. Institutionalized cultural capital refers to academic credentials awarded by institutions (e.g., a university degree). The objectified cultural capital refers to the possession of material objects that may symbolize cultural value (e.g., books, musical instruments). Lastly, embodied cultural capital includes behavior, speech patterns, accents, and even modes of expression like laughter. Furthermore, people from affluent backgrounds can seem more at ease and are frequently seen as more capable or prepared since they are familiar with elite cultural standards (Jack & Black, 2022). Cultural capital provides access to a variety of benefits, including participation in elite sports like debating or rowing clubs, which foster relationships with other wealthy, reputable people improving the employment prospects. In the Dutch society, cultural capital still has a big impact (De Graaf et al., 2000). An example is the networking possibilities given by elite student associations which are frequently distinguished by exclusive invitations or fees that are out of reach for many economically constrained students from less advantaged classes.

The idea of cultural matching as proposed by Rivera (2012) describes selection biases that provide preference to people from affluent socioeconomic backgrounds, even when their qualifications are the same. According to her research, decision-makers frequently confer cultural affinities and soft skills more weight than qualifications and abilities. Elite organizations and institutions, which are often composed of people with privileged backgrounds, tend to give preference to candidates who reflect their cultural characteristics because they believe they are a better fit compared to people with a more distant cultural fit but perhaps more or equally qualified. This mechanism maintains the dominance of elite groups in these settings and reinforces social injustices. In the Dutch labor market, this selection bias is likely prevalent due to the practice of informal hiring through social

connections (Henkens et al., 2005), which disproportionately benefits the privileged social classes.

Based on the above theoretical framework I aim to test two hypotheses. The educational advantages as conceptualized within the framework of MMI, combined with the privileges inherent in EMI structures, the enhanced networking opportunities, the perception of competence rooted in substantial cultural capital, and the increased likelihood of employment resulting from cultural fit, collectively point to my first hypothesis (H1). H1 aims to explore whether class-based pay disparities exist within the same job bracket, meaning that people from privileged backgrounds earn more than their less privileged peers for similar types of work, a pattern known as unequal pay for equal work class. In simpler words, H1 investigates whether there is a class-based pay disparity among top professionals.

On the base of Rivera's research (2012) and even more recent studies (Reeves & De Vries, 2018; Rocha & Brymer, 2024), which establish cultural capital as a crucial factor in determining labor market results, in the second hypothesis (H2) I will try to explain the relationship between cultural capital and work earnings with social class of origin as mediator. In particular, I rely on the empirical research of De Graaf et al. (2000) on educational attainment, which demonstrated that in the Netherlands cultural capital has negligible effect on education level among those in upper socioeconomic strata because other types of capital still sustain the higher educational achievements and therefore potentially the earnings. In contrast, for people from less affluent socioeconomic levels, in the absence of other forms of capital, culture capital has a significant impact on educational achievement, ergo work earnings. Building on this premise, I hypothesize that the relationship between social class of origin and earnings is mediated by cultural capital, such that cultural capital has a stronger impact on gross earnings for individuals belonging to less privileged social classes compared to those from privileged social classes.

2.3 Context

In highly unequal settings like the US and the UK, the discovery of the existence of the class ceiling may not have been surprising. Yet, the finding has been replicated in Norway (Hansen, 2001a, 2001b; Toft & Friedman, 2020), a country that is considered to be one of the most egalitarian nations in the world (Ljunggren, 2015), has brought up significant questions regarding the continued existence of class-based disparities in other contexts.

According to Van Oorschot (2006), the Dutch welfare state can be seen as a hybrid model between the social-democratic approach of Norway and the liberal market-driven of the US. Its system is indeed referred to as a flexicurity model (portmanteau of the words flexibility and security): a model that combines both job market flexibility and social security features. For example, with unemployment benefits, housing subsidies, and emphasis on personal responsibility (Bekker & Mailand, 2018). On the one hand, the Netherlands is frequently seen as an egalitarian country (Thijs et al., 2019). Education is widely available, and programs like scholarships and tuition subsidies are in place to lower the barriers for lower-income students. However, since the 1980s, the Dutch system has moved toward privatization and more flexibilization of the labor market, thus reducing state involvement in bestowing benefits and insurances (Van Oorschot, 2006). Compared to Norway, where the state plays a more active role in minimizing inequality (Ljunggren, 2015), Dutch policies put more emphasis on the participation of the individual in the labor market, potentially reinforcing class-based disadvantages. Yet, unlike the market-driven American system, which relies heavily on individual responsibility and private solutions (Hook & Markus, 2020), the Dutch model still maintains a safety net (Van Oorschot, 2006), though with increasingly stringent eligibility requirements conditioned by neoliberal policies. In a few words, since the class ceiling has persisted in nations with social policies even more egalitarian than the

Netherlands, it is reasonable to assume that a similar phenomenon will also be present in the Dutch setting.

Analyzing the Dutch schooling system, a pattern could be found: affluent families purposefully may use the Dutch educational system to preserve their class advantages, despite the fact that it is praised for being accessible. Under the early tracking system in the Netherlands, students are categorized by age 12 into various educational tracks (Voorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (VMBO), Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs (HAVO), and Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (VWO)). Unlike economically constrained class families, affluent families can usually afford to invest in tutors and extracurricular preparation to better prepare their children to embark on a successful working career. In addition, this choice to invest is motivated by the recognition of the importance of education given a larger cultural capital of the family (De Graaf et al., 2000; Tubadij et al., 2017). This has remarkable effects in reinforcing class inequalities considering that employers in the Netherlands strongly select on education credentials (Di Stasio & Van De Werfhorst, 2016) but also on cultural alignment with the work environment (Tubadij et al., 2017). In support of this, Tubadij and colleagues (2017) in a study set in the Netherlands found that cultural capital still explains income differences also when controlling for education. Simply said, even with the same degree, graduates from high cultural capital families make more money than those from lower cultural capital families.

According to Van De Werfhorst (2002), people from different social classes pursue educational strategies that maintain their class position. Because of reasons related to job security, students from working class favor vocational education. This results in children from lower-income households disproportionately placed in VMBO and MBO tracks (Büchner & Van Der Velden, 2013; Huibers, 2021) and thus less access to the qualifications needed for the most prestigious jobs. Even when students from working-class backgrounds

pursue academic education, they tend to select studies with strong labor market prospects which do not match with the highest paid elite professions. This choice diverges from the choices made by students from upper-class backgrounds (Van De Werfhorst 2002), hence failing in ensuring elite jobs and consequently reducing their chances of earning higher incomes.

While the Dutch educational system is designed to tailor education to students' abilities, it can reinforce class disparities. Early tracking forces kids to choose careers before they are aware of the long-term effects (Van De Werfhorst 2002). All the above indicates that equitable chances cannot be guaranteed by educational expansion alone. Memorably, Van De Werfhorst (2002) highlighted that the Dutch vocational education system is effective only in preventing downward mobility, functioning more as a safety net than a mechanism for upward mobility. Instead of fostering opportunities for class mobility, education often acts as a tool for the reproduction of social class, benefiting the upper-class households to maintain their advantages (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Despite everything, the class ceiling dynamic or the pay gap between service and working-class people that enter professions that have historically been associated with the most privileged classes remains still unexplored in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, if a class ceiling is discovered to be in place, it would indicate that the regulations in act are insufficient to remove barriers based on class. By examining the class ceiling, this study adds to a larger discussion on whether the Netherlands' reputation as a highly mobile country is true or if the privileged class is still favored by covert processes.

Finally, the analysis of employment outcomes in the Netherlands in relation to social class may provide us with useful data for assessing social policies that aim to reduce class disparities like for example the attempt in increasing diversity in elite occupations to increase the representation of underrepresented groups (Schakel, 2019).

3. Methods

In this paper, I rely on data from the LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet studies for the Social Sciences) managed by the non-profit research institute Centerdata (Tilburg University, the Netherlands). The LISS panel is a representative sample of Dutch individuals who participate in monthly internet surveys. The panel is based on a true probability sample of households drawn from the population register by Statistics Netherlands. Self-registration is not possible, and households that would otherwise be unable to participate are provided with a computer and internet connection. The longitudinal LISS Core Study, consisting of separate topical surveys, has been conducted in the panel every year since 2007, covering a large variety of domains including health, work, education, income, housing, leisure and time use, political views, values, and personality.

More specifically the data came from the 2015 wave, incorporating all relevant modules that facilitate the operationalization of the variables under investigation. I combined the following modules: “Work orientation”, “Social integration and leisure”, “Background variables” and “Economic situation”. The initial raw sample was $N = 1230$ participants. I excluded the cases in which information about parents’ professions, monthly gross earnings, education level, current job, gender, age, migration background, average work hours, geographical area were missing. This is because the planned analyses required the use of these variables and as the main parameters for the hypothesis or control study. I also ruled out full-time student participants. After this initial selection the sample consisted of $N = 572$ participants.

To be able to study class ceiling that by definition concerns elite professions and not general class-origin pay penalties, I excluded agricultural, unskilled manual, semi-skilled manual, skilled manual, and routine non-manual workers according to the

Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero (EGP) table (Barone et al., 2022). At this point the sample size only included people from higher/lower grade professionals (job categories I and II) ($N = 246$ participants).

For every data point of earnings, I computed z-scores in order to exclude outliers. Since this cutoff point translates to a 0.1% probability in a typical normal distribution, cases with an absolute z-score higher than 3.29 were disqualified, guaranteeing that only extreme outliers were eliminated. The purpose of this process was to make the analysis more robust. The final sample consisted of a total of $N = 244$ respondents randomly drawn from the LISS panel.

The dataset was particularly suitable for my investigation because, first, the information about the occupations of respondents' parents can be recoded to measure people's class background. Second, the data included variables such as leisure activities viable for measuring proxies of cultural capital. Third, several items in the survey measured the respondent's career development including, for example, their income level, and occupation. Fourth, the presence of demographic and control variables such as gender, age, migration background (Dutch vs. foreign), education, geographic location (rural vs. urban), and average work hours per week. These control variables enhanced the reliability and robustness of the study enabling a more legitimate and accurate interpretation of the findings.

The independent variable considered for my inquiries is the social class of origin, operationalized by the main occupation of the respondent's family parents' occupation using another adaptation of the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero (EGP) scheme (Barone et al., 2022) that considers the parent from the most advantaged class as dominant. More specifically, the categorization was EGP I: higher-grade professionals, EGP II: professional/managerial, EGP III: intermediate (administrative/commercial/service), EGP IV:

skilled manual workers, EGP V: semi-skilled manual workers, EGP VI: unskilled manual workers, EGP VII: agrarian occupations, X: no valid occupation/do not know/never worked.

To differentiate between privileged and underprivileged origins, the variable for social class of origin was dichotomized for the purpose of this research and reasons of sample size. Respondents from the service and intermediate classes (EGP I, II, and III) were categorized as "privileged" in accordance with the EGP schema. In contrast, the 'less-privileged group' was assigned to responders from manual, agrarian, and non-working backgrounds (EGP IV, V, VI, VII, X).

Following the classic methodology for measuring cultural capital, this study regarded embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital as separate concepts (Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2010). Participation in cultural activities such as playing an instrument, photography, acting, painting, drawing, model building, and the number of books read in the previous month contributed to the construction of a score for embodied cultural capital. The frequency of attendance at cultural events such as theatre events, operas, concerts, movies, art galleries, and libraries was used to calculate a score for objectified cultural capital. These variables' metrics were standardized by individually converting all underlying scores onto a consistent scale ranging from 0 to 10, with 10 denoting the greatest attainable score and 0 the lowest. As for institutionalized cultural capital the score was attained by looking at educational attainment of the respondents and then divided into four levels (less than bachelor's or equivalent, bachelor's or equivalent, master's or equivalent, PhD or equivalent). This score system provides a thorough and easy-to-interpret framework for assessing individually all the facets of cultural capital (Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2010).

The dependent variable for H1 and H2 was respondent's work gross monthly earnings. H2 further investigated the link between social class origin and work gross monthly earnings studying the mediation role of cultural capital. Specifically, it was predicted that

cultural capital has a stronger impact on gross monthly work earnings for individuals belonging to less privileged social classes compared to those from more privileged ones.

Since labor gross earnings, the study's outcome variable, is continuous, linear regression is the statistical methodology chosen for this paper. In total six models were constructed. Model 1 included job category (EGP) and social class of origin (EGP). Model 2 added control variables: gender, weekly work hours, age, migration background (foreigner or Dutch), geographic location (rural or urban). These first two models addressed H1. For the study of H2 further four models were created. Model 3 added institutionalized cultural capital at Model 2. Model 4 included in Model 2 objectified cultural capital. Model 5 instead added embodied cultural capital to the analysis. Finally, the last model (Model 6) included in Model 2 all the three differentiations of cultural capital (i.e.: institutionalized, objectified, and embodied cultural capital).

The study involves completely anonymous data files. The data will be handled exclusively by myself using online storage spaces offered by the Erasmus University Rotterdam and following its ethical guidelines. I hereby certify that the study will be carried out in compliance with Erasmus University Rotterdam's Department of Public Administration and Sociology's ethical criteria (see Appendix A for more detailed information).

The analysis of data was conducted with the software IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

A summary of the descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1. People from less affluent socioeconomic backgrounds were less represented in elite occupational positions, which is a noteworthy trend. In contrast, only six respondents were from class EGP VII, while 73 respondents were from class II. Overall, the more privileged categories (EGP I, II,

and III) had 176 respondents, while the less privileged categories (classes IV, V, VI, VII, and X) had 68 respondents overall.

Additionally, the statistics show that those with a Dutch background ($n = 212$) were overrepresented in top occupations as compared to people with a migratory background ($n = 32$). A bachelor's degree was the most common educational achievement among top professionals ($n = 121$). Furthermore, 162 respondents lived in less urbanized areas, compared to 82 in more urban areas, suggesting that these professionals had a preference for less urbanized places.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

		<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Job Category	I	106	43.44		
	II	138	56.56		
Social Class of Origin	I	27	11.1		
	II	73	29.9		
	III	76	31.1		
	IV	17	7		
	V	19	7.8		
	VI	13	5.3		
	VII	6	2.5		
	X	13	5.3		
Education (Institutionalized Cultural Capital)	Less than Bachelor's	61	25		
	Bachelor's or equivalent	121	49.59		
	Master's or equivalent	47	19.26		
	PhD or above	15	6.15		
Objectified Cultural Capital				2.3	1.04
Embodied Cultural Capital				3.28	1.88
Gender	Female	124	50.82		
	Male	120	49.18		
Avg. Work Hours				32.93	12.08
Age				52.29	15.05
Migration Background	Foreign	32	13.11		
	Dutch	212	86.89		
Geographic Location	Rural	162	66.39		
	Urban	82	33.61		
Monthly Gross Work Earnings				2899.05	1824.92

Table 2 presents an overview of the descriptive statistics for the parameters of top professionals, categorized by social class of origin. A notable disparity was found between the top two job categories and the social class of origin. Individuals from less privileged social classes of origin were more likely to work in EGP job category II. For example, 84.62% ($n = 11$) people from EGP VI worked in job category II compared to 15.38% in job category I ($n = 2$). However, this trend reversed for individuals from EGP I, where 59.26% ($n = 16$) were employed in job category I compared to 40.74% ($n = 11$) in job category II.

Privileged socioeconomic classes were positively correlated with educational attainment and cultural capital scores. For instance, the average scores for objectified cultural capital, and embodied cultural capital were 2.56, and 3.74, respectively, for socioeconomic class EGP I. The socioeconomic class EGP VII, on the other hand, had significantly lower scores, with averages for objectified, and embodied cultural capital of 1.82, and 1.85, respectively. Class of origin EGP II had the highest educational attainment, with 23.29% ($n = 17$) having a master's degree and 6.85% ($n = 5$) possessing credentials higher than a master's, whereas other socioeconomic classes of origin often, especially the less privileged ones, had obtained a higher education in fewer cases (see Table 2).

Additionally, among top professionals with a migration background, an important proportion originated from privileged social classes. Specifically, 65.63% ($n = 21$) of top professionals with a migration background came from EGP II and EGP I, whereas only 34.37% ($n = 11$) originated from less privileged social classes.

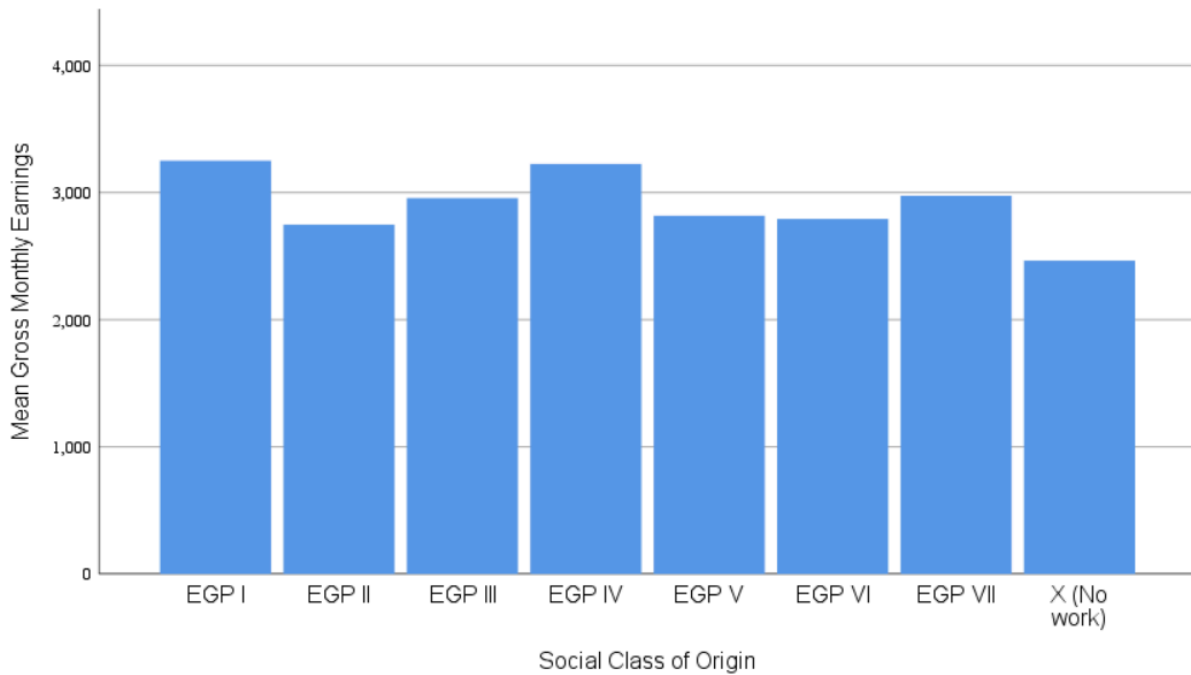
Finally, as visible graphically in Figure 1, descriptive statistics indicated that mean earnings for individuals from the most privileged social class (EGP I) and skilled manual workers (EGP IV) were the highest. On the other hand, earnings from EGP II and VI were the lowest. The largest difference in monthly earnings was approximately €480 (+17.41%) between II and IV.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics by Class of Origin*

		EGP I				EGP II				EGP III				EGP IV			
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Job Category	I	16	59.26			32	43.84			33	43.42			8	47.06		
	II	11	40.74			41	56.16			43	56.58			9	52.94		
Education	Less than	2	7.41			18	24.66			16	21.05			5	29.41		
(Institutionalized	Bachelor's																
Cultural Capital)	Bachelor's	14	51.85			33	45.21			43	56.58			8	47.06		
	Master's	7	25.93			17	23.29			15	19.74			2	11.76		
	PhD or above	4	14.81			5	6.85			2	2.63			2	11.76		
Objectified Cultural Capital				2.56	1.05			2.46	1.11			2.19	1.02			2.03	1.08
Embodied Cultural Capital				3.74	1.66			3.33	1.86			3.25	1.95			3.66	1.95
Gender	Female	10	37.04			40	54.79			37	48.68			7	41.18		
	Male	17	62.96			33	45.21			39	51.32			10	58.82		
Average Work Hours				37.19	9.29			30.85	13.31			31.58	11.76			38.71	12.00
Age				52.56	14.91			51.48	14.61			51.22	16.16			61.18	10.19
Migration background	Dutch	22	81.48			57	78.08			73	96.05			17	100.00		
	Foreign	5	18.52			16	21.92			3	3.95			0	0.00		
Earnings				3250.02	1803.37			2745.95	2064.73			2956.37	1816.01			3223.77	1500.51

Table 2, Continued

		EGP V				EGP VI				EGP VII				EGP X (No Work)			
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Job Category	I	8	42.11			2	15.3 8			3	50.00			4	30.77		
	II	11	57.89			11	84.6 2			3	50.00			9	69.23		
Education (Institutionalized Cultural Capital)	Less than Bachelor's	8	42.11			2	15.3 8			3	50.00			7	53.85		
	Bachelor's	8	42.11			9	69.2 3			2	33.33			4	30.77		
	Master's	3	15.79			2	15.3 8			1	16.67			0	0.00		
	PhD or above	0	0.00			0	0.00			0	0.00			2	15.38		
Objectified Cultural Capital				2.35	0.88			2.49	0.94			1.82	0.72			1.72	0.90
Embodied Cultural Capital				3.27	1.87			3.59	1.82			1.85	0.57			2.14	1.95
Gender	Female	12	63.16			9	69.2 3			2	33.33			7	53.85		
	Male	7	36.84			4	30.7 7			4	66.67			6	46.15		
Avg. Work Hours				31.84	12.60			34.08	11.12			36.50	14.77			35.00	7.62
Age				53.26	13.37			54.00	13.29			54.17	15.69			46.92	18.54
Migration background	Dutch	18	94.74			12	92.3 1			6	100.00			7	53.85		
	Foreign	1	5.26			1	7.69			0	0.00			6	46.15		
Earnings				2816.63	1939.79			2791.35	1354.51			2974.23	1183.04			2463.49	1522.01

Figure 1*Mean Gross Monthly Earnings (€) of Top Professionals by Social Class of Origin (EGP)*

4.2 Inferential Statistics

A linear regression was conducted to predict work gross monthly earnings ($N = 244$) based on the EGP job category schema (Barone et al., 2022) and social class of origin (Barone et al., 2022) (Model 1). Model 2 added control variables such as gender, weekly work hours, migration background, and geographic location. Model 3 incorporated institutionalized cultural capital, Model 4 instead included objectified cultural capital, and Model 5, on the other hand, covered embodied cultural capital. Finally, Model 6 incorporated all three different cultural capitals in a single framework. Regression coefficients, p-values and standard errors for all the models can be found in Table 3.

First, we can note that for top professionals working in the job category EGP I instead of II on average led to increased gross monthly earnings across all the models. Regression coefficients spaced between a maximum of 1665.24 ($SE = 211.88$) in Model 1 to a minimum of 892.72 ($SE = 213.29$) in Model 3 with p-values always below conventional levels ($p < .001$).

Turning to H1, I sought to investigate whether class-based pay disparities, also referred to as unequal compensation for equal work class, occur within the same employment bracket, wherein individuals from privileged origins receive greater compensation for equivalent labor than their peers from less privileged backgrounds. To put it another way, H1 examined if there is a difference in work gross monthly earnings based on social class of origin within top professionals. The coefficients for social class of origin ranged between -100.00 ($SE = 234.24$) of Model 1 and 32.32 ($SE = 213.47$) of Model 5. In all the models the relationship did not meet the thresholds for rejecting the null hypothesis at conventional levels of p .

Regarding H2, De Graaf et al. (2000) suggested that in the Netherlands, cultural capital has little impact on the educational attainment of individuals from more privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. This is because other forms of capital continue to support their access to higher education and, in turn, higher earnings. In contrast, for individuals from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural capital plays a significant role in educational attainment and subsequent work earnings, as they lack other forms of capital to provide similar advantages. Considering this, H2 argued that cultural capital mediates the link between social class of origin and earnings, meaning that for people in less privileged socioeconomic classes (EGP X, VII, VI, V, IV) cultural capital has a greater effect on gross income than for people in more privileged socioeconomic classes of origin (EGP III, II, I). The coefficients for all variables representing cultural capital were always positive, both individually and in combination with the other facets of the construct. Notably, in Model 3 and Model 6, institutionalized cultural capital has respectively a coefficient of 369.72 ($SD = 119.88$) and 359.90 ($SD = 121.78$), which is statistically significant at the conventional level ($p < .01$). Coefficients for objectified and embodied cultural capital levels instead were not significant at the standard levels of p . I can therefore partially confirm H2 with respect to institutionalized cultural capital.

Table 3*Regression Models of Gross Monthly Earnings in Social Class of Origin EGP II and I*

	Model 1 R. Coefficient (p-value) [SE]	Model 2 R. Coefficient (p-value) [SE]	Model 3 R. Coefficient (p-value) [SE]	Model 4 R. Coefficient (p-value) [SE]	Model 5 R. Coefficient (p-value) [SE]	Model 6 R. Coefficient (p-value) [SE]
Constant	2247.75 ($p < .001$) [213.00]	-954.93 ($p = .09$) [555.82]	-1771.49 ($p < .01$) [606.41]	-1116.56 ($p = .05$) [576.20]	-1084.72 ($p = .06$) [568.06]	-1878.63 ($p < .001$) [620.15]
Job Category (II vs. I)	1665.24 ($p < .001$) [211.88]	1079.53 ($p < .001$) [208.25]	892.72 ($p < .001$) [213.29]	1069.13 ($p < .001$) [208.43]	1078.25 ($p < .001$) [208.17]	894.91 ($p < .001$) [213.80]
Social Class of Origin*	-100.00 ($p = .67$) [234.24]	32.32 ($p = .88$) [213.47]	-38.66 ($p = .85$) [210.94]	4.16 ($p = .98$) [215.06]	11.40 ($p = .96$) [214.23]	-57.91 ($p = .79$) [212.82]
Gender (ref: female)		1024.82 ($p < .001$) [214.75]	992.34 ($p < .001$) [211.21]	1055.10 ($p < .001$) [216.59]	1057.56 ($p < .001$) [216.73]	1023.92 ($p < .001$) [214.78]
Average Work Hours		36.39 ($p < .001$) 8.86	38.27 ($p < .001$) [8.73]	37.28 ($p < .001$) [8.90]	37.27 ($p < .001$) [8.89]	39.06 ($p < .001$) [8.79]
Age		6.58 ($p = .32$) [6.57]	8.96 ($p = .17$) [6.50]	4.87 ($p = .470$) [6.76]	4.73 ($p = .49$) [6.78]	7.17 ($p = .29$) [6.83]
Migration Background (ref: foreign)		325.82 ($p = .25$) [279.90]	393.75 ($p = .15$) [275.82]	304.96 ($p = .28$) [280.51]	305.61 ($p = .28$) [280.38]	372.61 ($p = .18$) [277.69]
Geographic Location (ref: rural)		22.15 ($p = .91$) [202.10]	-14.43 ($p = .94$) [198.88]	-20.28 ($p = .92$) [205.97]	-.02 ($p = 1.00$) [203.03]	-37.98 ($p = .85$) [202.96]
Institutionalized Cultural Capital			369.72 ($p < .01$) [119.48]			359.90 ($p < .01$) [121.78]
Objectified Cultural Capital				101.79 ($p = .29$) [95.99]		17.28 ($p = .87$) [104.94]
Embodied Cultural Capital					57.59 ($p = .27$) [52.54]	44.99 ($p = .43$) [56.60]

*EGP X, VII, VI, V, IV vs. III, II, I

5. Discussion

5.1 Main Findings and Interpretation

Starting with the descriptive data, an important observation that significantly conditioned the analysis was the composition of the sample. Since the study focused solely on top professionals, fewer than one-third of the participants came from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, while more than two-thirds came from more privileged social classes. This may imply that people from more affluent households are far more likely to become top professionals. This first finding may represent a real-world disparity where top occupations are disproportionately accessible to those with pre-existing advantages.

Analyzing job destination, the descriptive data indicated a disproportionate representation of individuals from less privileged social classes (e.g., EGP VI) in job category II, while those from more privileged social classes (e.g., EGP I) were more likely to be present in job category I. This pattern highlights the persistence of social stratification in the job market, where the class of origin of an individual appears to strongly predict their occupational destination. This could signify that structural barriers or advantages linked to family background considerably shape career trajectories leading to an overrepresentation of less privileged individuals in intermediate roles and more privileged individuals in elite positions.

Descriptives about cultural capital showed that people born into higher socioeconomic classes inherit not just economic wealth, but also cultural assets. The disparities in both objectified and embodied cultural capital scores between EGP I and EGP VII suggest an ingrained social hierarchy of knowledge. This is further reinforced by the educational attainment levels, which show that the path to higher education is far more accessible for those from privileged backgrounds.

Interestingly, contrary to what one might think, examining top professionals with a

migration background about 65% came from EGP I and II and only 35% from the other less privileged social classes of origin (EGP III, IV, V, VI, VII, X). This could mean that the pathway to becoming a top professional for those with a migration background might be more accessible in the case they come from a privileged social background, likely because such an origin provides additional resources, networks, or cultural capital that can mitigate the challenges associated with being from a migration background (Van Hear, 2014).

About earnings, figure 1 showed that skilled manual workers (EGP IV) have similar earnings with the top professional and managerial class (EGP I), and significantly outperform lower-level professionals and managers (EGP II). This may suggest that the relationship between socioeconomic class of origin and monetary earnings is not that straightforward. The largest discrepancy noted a €5,760 yearly difference where skilled manual workers (EGP IV) earned over 17% more than lower-level professionals and managers (EGP II). Possible explanations for this unannounced result may be found in the high demand and scarcity of skilled trades and strong unionization and collective bargaining in the Netherlands (Been & Keune, 2019).

Turning to the core of the study, in order to contribute to the first understanding of the class ceiling in contemporary Dutch society, I presented empirical data on the connection between social class of origin and work earnings among top professionals, attempting to close a significant gap in the literature. I then concentrated on how cultural capital shapes and influences this relationship between incomes and social class of origin.

H1 examined whether there is a class-based pay disparity within top professionals. Based on the results of the regression analysis, it can be stated confidently that people that work in job category EGP I earn approximately €7,030 more yearly compared to the ones in job category II. As for social class of origin, the effect on earnings is negligible and indistinguishable from being zero. This at first glance may seem like a contradiction, yet it

highlights a bias at the entry gate. Social class of origin is a powerful force in determining who gets access to the top jobs in the first place. However, once individuals are in those top jobs, they appear to be compensated based on their specific role (job category EGP I vs. II), and not their family background.

The results of the H2 test show that of the three categories of cultural capital only the institutionalized form, measured in the study by educational credentials, has a distinguishable pay-off. According to the data, neither embodied cultural capital (e.g. tastes, habits) nor objectified capital (e.g. books, artworks) move the income needle in any meaningful way. This indicates that cultural capital does, in fact, moderate the relationship between incomes and class of origin, but nearly only through formal qualifications. Practically speaking, a person from a less privileged background who achieves a higher credential will experience a salary bonus even when they did not experience violin lessons or lived among collections of rare books.

The research question interrogated the influence of social class of origin in earnings within elite occupations in the Netherlands and tested the role of cultural capital as mediator. In summary, on the basis of this study it could be said that social class of origin virtually does not have a direct effect on earnings. Once individuals hold top professions, their year-to-year earnings are determined mostly by job category (EGP I vs. II), not by their family background. The regression showed no meaningful earning penalty or bonus tied solely to social origin among elite jobs. While among cultural capitals education credentials, rather than cultural tastes, habits or books, sustains and can even soften class-based economic disparities at the elite level.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

By highlighting the complexity social mobility, in this thesis I aimed to expand the discussion and challenge preconceived notions about meritocracy and egalitarianism in the Netherlands (Grendstad, 1999; Hedegaard, 2019; Steijn, 2016; Thijs et al., 2019).

Not having found evidence in the disparity of earnings due to social class of origin, it is clear that this study is not on the same frequency as those that made the class ceiling a worthwhile object of research (Falcon and Bataille 2018; Friedman and Laurison 2019; Hällsten 2013; Hansen 2001; Laurison and Friedman 2016; Mastekaasa 2011; Toft and Friedman 2020). The outcomes of this research also differ from the study set in the Netherlands of Tubadij and colleagues (2017). In a study set in the Netherlands they found that cultural capital still explains income differences also when controlling for education. Even with the same degree, graduates from high cultural capital families made more money than those from lower cultural capital families.

Then, is the Netherlands more egalitarian than Norway? Assuming my findings are robust, it would be necessary to develop an explanatory framework that elucidates and systematically deconstructs the theoretical components underpinning the class-ceiling observed in the countries in which it was found, yet absent in the Netherlands. A closer look at the Dutch setting shows that a very high percentage of students enrolled in vocational institutions also offer very marketable and respectable qualifications (Wierik et al., 2014). Diplomas from different institutions also have similar or same formal standing, among the explanations for this is that in the Netherlands the high proportion of public educational establishments makes it difficult to distinguish between elite and non-elite education (De Boer et al., 2007).

Furthermore, although the top academic credentials are supposedly only available at particular preparatory schools, there are many exceptions and alternate routes that exhibit

both horizontal and vertical permeability, such foundation courses and entrance exams (*colloquium doctum*) (Suryani et al., 2023). This allows a considerable percentage of students to effectively move up between tracks which reduces barriers.

Parents from affluent socioeconomic backgrounds adopt concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2017), but less-advantaged parents also increasingly make use of resources (e.g., online information, community networks) to support children's education (Boerkamp et al., 2025). These support networks reduce gaps in navigating among information, lowering barriers. It might be argued that all socioeconomic classes place a high value on prestigious occupations and fields. Many teenagers may be inspired by this to seek professions in fields like law or medicine. In order to close knowledge gaps, parental engagement programs also seek to educate less privileged parents about the educational options available. These efforts might help to mitigate the direct influence of different cultural capital transmission in the creation of a rigid class ceiling. This might suggest that Maximally Maintained Inequality (MMI) is less prevalent in the country.

It is also necessary to mention the efforts in inclusive pedagogy and anti-bias interventions. Research indicates that teacher recommendations may reflect inherent biases, thereby reinforcing class ceilings. As a reaction, in the Netherlands, pilot measures, such as blind assessments and rubric-based advisory systems, are being implemented to mitigate subjective biases during track selection, thereby alleviating discriminatory constraints (OECD, 2021).

The results support the claim made by De Graaf et al. (2000) that, in the Dutch context, credentials rather than general cultural knowledge are what matters. However, they also challenge Bourdieu's (1984) understanding of cultural capital. According to my sample, formal credentials are the only predictor of earnings in high-level occupations. As a theoretical implication, this finding corroborates the equalization thesis (Hout, 1984). While

disparities in early life have a big impact on people's paths, they are gradually lessened by accessible and standardized education.

Prior to making generalizations on the effectiveness of a meritocratic system in a perfectly egalitarian Netherlands, it is imperative to address a crucial issue: the occupational entry dilemma and the reasons why it is in place. The analysis, based on a disproportionate random sample of high-achieving professionals, indicates that the main problem is not a ceiling that directly penalizes the earnings of top professionals from underprivileged origins. But it seems clear that people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face an important entry barrier that prevents them from climbing the social ladder. This claim, theoretically speaking, emphasizes the significant impact of a persistent Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI) and cultural matching in Dutch culture.

What happens in Dutch society according to EMI, is that the less affluent classes are kept at a distance even as policies increase educational inclusion because privileged students can rely on benefits within the educational experience, such as prestigious internships, networks, and recommendations that really contribute to a career, and of course access to education. As a result, in contrast to the less advantaged classes, the privileged part of the population is more represented in some professions and fields (such as law, medicine, and finance) (Van De Werfhorst, 2002). Furthermore, according to Rivera's cultural matching theory (2012), inequalities in institutional fit and cultural capital (habitus, familiarity with elite norms) might discourage or exclude underprivileged students before they can pursue high-level careers. All of the above lower the success of less advantaged kids in competitive selection or their frequency in applicant pools in higher education, creating and maintaining indeed this occupational entry gap.

5.3 Practical implications

Practical implications to the findings are surely to expand access to recognized educational institutions as the primary goal to level the playing field. Also because without recognized accreditation, efforts to develop cultural sophistication alone are unlikely to result in increased earnings. The following suggestions are formulated to lower EMI in light of the data showing an occupational entrance gap and with the intention of resolving this discrepancy. By promoting a more equitable educational system, these interventions may work to mitigate the entrance biases that prevent people from pursuing high-level education and consequently top professions.

A number of affirmative measures intended to reduce MMI can also be used to reduce EMI, thus these should be strengthened further to guarantee an effective plan for lowering entrance biases. Vertical and horizontal mobility mechanisms should be enhanced in order to allow “late bloomers” to reach universities and top professions. This may be even not enough, indeed the Education and Training Monitor (European Commission, 2020) recommended abolishing or postponing the end-of-primary test to make secondary education more accessible and equitable.

In order to increase diffusion of information, schools should provide planned information sessions in schools serving students from less affluent backgrounds about requirements and pathways to top professions. Clear, early guidance may reduce information asymmetries that lead to self-selection in the professional fields.

Schools have the opportunity to facilitate the connection of students from underrepresented groups with mentors, peers, alumni, or professionals in target fields so that their application processes become smoother and they yield more information about the professions. The stories of successful people as well as the step-by-step directions are the two factors that persuade the students to believe that they can be in charge of their destiny and that they have

the possibility to get employed in well-respected jobs. As a result, connecting potential students with alumni from comparable circumstances who achieved access into elite fields may be a crucial strategy for encouraging upward mobility.

The country should continue and bolster its anti-bias campaigns with the training of primary and secondary teachers on implicit biases in track advice and assessment. Studies show that unconscious biases can skew recommendations. Structured training can reduce such effects (Van Der Velden et al., 2023).

Finally, admissions procedures for advanced educational institutions could adopt more equitable approaches, such as threshold-based inclusive selection. This methodology ensures a baseline level of ability by requiring candidates to first meet a predefined minimum performance or qualification score. Other factors created especially to increase representation from underrepresented groups are then incorporated into the selection process after this basic criterion has been satisfied. By achieving a balance between diversity goals and performance-based criteria, this approach makes sure that candidates with the highest scores are not the only ones chosen, while also recognizing the crucial role of inclusivity. Having fulfilled this condition, an additional criterion is introduced with the objective of increasing the number of candidates from underrepresented groups. This approach not only promotes the idea of inclusivity but also makes sure that the top-performing candidates are not the only ones chosen, hence, it manages to achieve both diversity targets and quality results. Once this requirement is met, other criteria designed specifically to boost representation from underrepresented groups are added to the selection process. This strategy recognizes the importance of inclusivity while at the same time ensures that candidates with the best scores are not the only ones selected, achieving a balance between diversity goals and performance-based criteria.

5.4 Strengths and Limitations

This thesis contributes significantly to the study of labor market stratification and social inequality in the Dutch setting. The existence of a class ceiling in the Netherlands has not yet been fully investigated in any published studies. My input establishes a new and significant topic of study by focusing on top professionals' earnings and relating them to their origins' social classes. By providing insightful comparisons, I attempted to expand the geographic research of class ceiling beyond the contexts of the US, UK, France, and Norway.

Moving forward with the strenghts, the study focuses on people who are already in elite occupational groups rather than looking at disparities at the general population level. This approach adds complexity to discussions about meritocracy and social mobility by testing whether class-origin pay disadvantages still exist even among individuals who have supposedly "made it". The thesis also offers a strong framework for examining structural inequality in the labor market incorporating three important theories: Rivera's concept of cultural matching, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, and Maximum and Effectively Maintained Inequality. In addition, unlike many studies that limit cultural capital to a single dimension, this thesis differed between: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital, allowing a more refined understanding of how different forms of cultural capital influence labor market outcomes.

On the methodological level, this study is based on a nationally representative and methodologically rigorous dataset (the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences panel). Using such thorough data enhances reliability, generalizability, and empirical validity of the findings.

Turning to my study's limitations, previous research identifying a class ceiling often involved much larger sample sizes, sometimes thousands of participants even after filtering. Given my study's smaller sample, and the uneven distribution between privileged and

less-privileged participants, any findings should be interpreted cautiously. This imbalance can signify that the study might not have fully captured the true differences between these groups. The low variance of the social class of membership could mean that there was a range restriction in play, which consequently reduced the statistical power of the analyses and thus the generalizability of the conclusions. A test on a subgroup with only a few cases is likely to fail to show real effects simply for lack of sufficient data. To study the class ceiling it takes people from less privileged social classes working in managerial jobs. If there are few or no such individuals in the sample then it is unfeasible to study the phenomenon. Having said that, the absence of evidence for class ceiling in this study does not mean that there are no barriers to occupational entry instead. On the contrary, this scarcity of cases from the less advantaged social classes could be interpreted precisely as a symptom of a gate to enter the professional world.

Additionally, by having samples with thousands of participants, authors such as Laurison and Friedman (2016) were also able to study the phenomenon by disaggregating participants into their specific professions rather than using only “top profession” as a single group as I did all. In this way, Laursion and Friedman (2016) found a considerable class ceiling in some professions such as lawyers, financial brokers and accountants while they could not say the same thing about researchers and more technical jobs. Certain professions, in fact, have their salaries regulated by governments or unions. Omitting this distinction may have been fatal to the robustness of my study.

Also, due to sample quantity reasons, another limitation of my study was that I had to categorize the social classes of origin into two major groups (privileged vs. less-privileged) and thus could not compare EGP classes of origin more precisely. By dividing the sample into EGP I; II; III, and EGP IV; V; VI; VII; X, I lost the possibility of identifying mismatches between single classes. For example, comparing these two macro groups did not allow for a

comparison of EGP I vs. EGP IV instead. This binary categorization resulted in a flattening of data, measurement limitations, and loss of nuance between groups.

Finally, another limitation consists that the scores for embodied and objectified cultural capital, due to a questionnaires not being too suitable for the operationalization of these variables, were calculated without the use of standard methodologies and thus the scores were aggregated through sums and arbitrarily placed on a scale from 0 to 10. Without a robust empirical or theoretical rationale for the chosen scale the indicators used may not accurately reflect the underlying dimensions of cultural capital as theorized in the literature thereby weakening the internal validity of the claims related to embodied and objectified cultural capital.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Considering all the strengths and limitations just listed, I call for more studies to be conducted on class ceiling in the Netherlands, not only from graduate students, but from actual researchers that have the means for more in-depth studies to make up for the problems with statistical power, hence to establish accurately whether there is a class ceiling in the Netherlands. Future research should use larger and more diverse samples in order to overcome the constraints of range restriction and the underrepresentation of people from less privileged backgrounds in top occupations. For example, researchers could draw from large records from Dutch official registers.

Building on Laurison and Friedman (2016), future research should avoid treating all high-level occupations as a single, homogeneous category. The class ceiling can vary substantially across sectors, as shown by Laurison and Friedman (2016) the annual gap is as high as \$16,700 for finance professionals compared to an average of “only” about \$11,000 overall. It is therefore called for future studies to disaggregate the top professions in smaller categories.

The choice to use only two macro categories (privileged vs. less-privileged) should also be revised in view of a larger sample availability. This would allow researchers to identify not only the presence of a class ceiling, but also which social classes of origin are most disadvantaged and in what ways.

The scores and scales in which cultural capital were calculated should also be reviewed. The use of standardized and tested questionnaires to assess cultural capital should be integrated in future studies. This would ensure greater comparability with the current literature and improve construct validity.

Considering the results of this study, future research could also investigate the barrier to entry more than the class ceiling per se. This includes studying selection mechanisms at prestigious universities, internships, or first jobs. In this case, longitudinal data could help to identify at what stage of the educational or career trajectory inequalities related to social class of origin emerge or become larger, testing more accurately the theories of EMI, MMI and cultural matching.

Future research should also examine how class origin intersects with gender, ethnicity, and migration background in order to assess the impact of class ceiling on people from groups historically underrepresented in managerial occupations. Lastly, it would also be interesting to study the presence of the class ceiling in the public vs. private sector, when wages are regulated by governments or with the presence or absence of unions.

5.6 Conclusions

For the first time in the Netherlands, I examined cultural capital as a mediating factor and looked at how salaries in elite occupations in the Netherlands are influenced by social class of origin. The results demonstrate that, once people are in high-level professional positions, the job category, rather than family background, drives an important part of their yearly income. However, over two-thirds of participants in top professions came from more

privileged families, while less than one-third came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This suggests that while a class ceiling in earnings was not found, elite positions are still disproportionately held by people with pre-existing advantages. Regarding cultural capitals, those who are born into higher socioeconomic groups inherit both financial and cultural resources. The most significant factor that maintains and even softens and effectively moderates class-based economic gaps at the top level is educational credentials, not cultural preferences, customs, or literature.

This thesis' results differ from those by the pioneers of the class ceiling, probably influenced, however, by various methodological limitations. Nevertheless, clear social inequalities (i.e., top professions entry gate, cultural capital differences) are exposed and concrete actions are proposed for mitigation. Ultimately, it can be concluded that the country remains far from achieving genuine egalitarianism.

References

- Barone, C., Hertel, F. R., & Smullenbroek, O. (2022). The rise of income and the demise of class and social status? A systematic review of measures of socio-economic position in stratification research. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 78, 100678. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2022.100678>
- Barone, C., & Ruggera, L. (2017). Educational equalization stalled? Trends in inequality of educational opportunity between 1930 and 1980 across 26 European nations. *European Societies*, 20(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2017.1290265>
- Barone, C., & Schizzerotto, A. (2011). Introduction: Career mobility, education, and intergenerational reproduction in five European societies. *European Societies*, 13(3), 331–345. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2011.568248>
- Been, W., & Keune, M. (2019). The Netherlands: Decentralisation and growing power imbalances within a stable institutional context. In *Collective bargaining in Europe: Towards an endgame* (pp. 445–464). ETUI.
- Bekker, S., & Mailand, M. (2018). The European flexicurity concept and the Dutch and Danish flexicurity models: How have they managed the Great Recession? *Social Policy and Administration*, 53(1), 142–155. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12441>
- Boerkamp, L. G., Van Der Zeeuw, A., Van Deursen, A. J., Van Laar, E., & Van Der Graaf, S. (2025). Internet appropriation barriers in the lives of Dutch parents living in poverty: A qualitative study. *The Information Society*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2025.2467031>
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London; Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

- Breen, R. (2004). *Social Mobility in Europe*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/0199258457.001.0001>
- Breen, R. (2010). Educational expansion and social mobility in the 20th century. *Social Forces*, 89(2), 365–388. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2010.0076>
- Breen, R., & Jonsson, J. O. (2007). Explaining Change in social fluidity: Educational equalization and educational expansion in Twentieth-Century Sweden. *American Journal of Sociology*, 112(6), 1775–1810. <https://doi.org/10.1086/508790>
- Breen, R., & Karlson, K. (2014). Education and Social Mobility: New Analytical Approaches. *European Sociological Review*, 30, 107-118.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ESR/JCT025>.
- Breen, R., & Luijkx, R. (2007). Social mobility and education: A comparative analysis of period and cohort trends in Britain and Germany. In S. Scherer, R. Pollak, G. Otte, & M. Gangl (Eds.), *From origin to destination: Trends and mechanisms in social stratification research* (pp. 102-124). Campus Verlag.
- Collins, S. (1997). *Black corporate executives*. Temple University Press.
- Corak, M. (2013). Income inequality, equality of opportunity, and intergenerational mobility. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(3), 79–102.
<https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.27.3.79>
- De Boer, H. F., Enders, J., & Leisyte, L. (2007). Public sector reform in Dutch higher education: The organizational transformation of the university. *Public Administration*, 85(1), 27–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2007.00632.x>
- De Graaf, N. D., De Graaf, P. M., & Kraaykamp, G. (2000). Parental Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment in the Netherlands: A Refinement of the Cultural Capital perspective. *Sociology of Education*, 73(2), 92. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2673239>

- Di Stasio, V., & Van De Werfhorst, H. G. (2016). Why does education matter to employers in different institutional contexts? A vignette study in England and the Netherlands. *Social Forces*, 95(1), 77–106. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sow027>
- European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency. (2020). *Equity in school education in Europe: structures, policies and student performance*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/286306>.
- Falcon, J., & Bataille, P. (2018). Equalization or reproduction? Long-term trends in the intergenerational transmission of advantages in higher education in France. *European Sociological Review*, 34(4), 335–347. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcy015>
- Friedman, S., & Laurison, D. (2019). The class ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged. Policy Press.
- Ganzeboom, H. B. G., & Luijkx, R. (2004). Recent trends in intergenerational occupational class reproduction in the Netherlands 1970–99. In *Oxford University Press eBooks* (pp. 345–382). <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199258457.003.0014>
- Grendstad, G. (1999). A political cultural map of Europe. A survey approach. *GeoJournal*, 47(3), 463–475. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1006903308237>
- Hällsten, M. (2013). The class-origin wage gap: heterogeneity in education and variations across market segments. *British Journal of Sociology*, 64(4), 662–690. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12040>
- Hansen, M. N. (2001a). Closure in an open profession. The impact of Social Origin on the educational and occupational success of graduates of law in Norway. *Work Employment and Society*, 15(3), 489–510. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170122119129>

- Hansen, M. N. (2001b). Education and economic rewards. Variations by social-class origin and income measures. *European Sociological Review*, 17(3), 209–231.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/17.3.209>
- Hansen, M. N., & Wiborg, Ø. N. (2019). The accumulation and transfers of wealth: Variations by social class. *European Sociological Review*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcz036>
- Hedegaard, T. (2019). Migration and Meritocracy: Support for the idea that hard work will get you ahead in society among nine migrant groups in Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 9, 1 - 18.
<https://doi.org/10.2478/njmr-2019-0002>.
- Henkens, K., Remery, C., & Schippers, J. (2005). Recruiting personnel in a tight labour market: an analysis of employers' behaviour. *International Journal of Manpower*, 26(5), 421–433. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437720510615116>
- Hook, C. J., & Markus, H. R. (2020). Health in the United States: Are appeals to choice and personal responsibility making Americans sick? *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 15(3), 643–664. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691619896252>
- Hout, M. (1984). Status, autonomy, and training in occupational mobility. *American Journal of Sociology*, 89(6), 1379–1409. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228020>
- Huibers, D. (2021). Educational inequality in the Netherlands: Policies targeting school segregation from the perspective of street-level bureaucrats. [Master thesis, Leiden University]. <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3239860>
- Hussein, A. (2021). The impact of educational attainment on individual earning and social class mobility. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3834349

- Jack, A. A., & Black, Z. (2022). Belonging and boundaries at an elite university. *Social Problems*, 71(4), 996–1013. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spac051>
- Kanter, R. M. (2008). Men and women of the corporation: New edition. Hachette UK.
- Kraaykamp, G., & Van Eijck, K. (2010). The intergenerational reproduction of cultural capital: A threefold perspective. *Social Forces*, 89(1), 209–231. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2010.0087>
- Lacy, K. R. (2007). Blue-chip Black: Race, class, and status in the new Black middle class. Univ of California Press.
- Lareau, A. (2017). Concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth. In *Childhood socialization* (pp. 335-344). Routledge.
- Laurison, D., & Friedman, S. (2016). The class pay gap in higher professional and managerial occupations. *American Sociological Review*, 81(4), 668–695. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122416653602>
- Laurison, D., & Friedman, S. (2024). The class ceiling in the United States: Class-Origin pay penalties in higher professional and managerial occupations. *Social Forces*, 103(1), 22–44. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soae025>
- Levasseur, M., Généreux, M., Bruneau, J., Vanasse, A., Chabot, É., Beaulac, C., & Bédard, M. (2015). Importance of proximity to resources, social support, transportation and neighborhood security for mobility and social participation in older adults: results from a scoping study. *BMC Public Health*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1824-0>
- Ljunggren, J. (2016). Economic rewards in the cultural upper class: The impact of social origin on income within the Norwegian field of culture. *Poetics*, 57, 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2016.05.003>

- Ljunggren, J. (2015). Elitist egalitarianism: negotiating identity in the Norwegian cultural elite. *Sociology*, 51(3), 559–574. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515590755>
- Lucas, S. R. (2001). Effectively maintained inequality: education transitions, track mobility, and social background effects. *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(6), 1642–1690. <https://doi.org/10.1086/321300>
- Mastekaasa, A. (2009). Social origins and labour market success: Stability and change over Norwegian birth cohorts 1950-1969. *European Sociological Review*, 27(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcp050>
- OECD (2021). Education Policy Outlook 2021. In *Education Policy Outlook*. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/75e40a16-en>
- Pfeffer, F. T., & Killewald, A. (2017). Generations of advantage. Multigenerational correlations in family wealth. *Social Forces*, 96(4), 1411–1442. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sox086>
- Raftery, A. E., & Hout, M. (1993). Maximally Maintained Inequality: Educational stratification in Ireland. *Sociology of Education*, 65, 41-62.
- Reeves, A., & De Vries, R. (2018). Can cultural consumption increase future earnings? Exploring the economic returns to cultural capital. *British Journal of Sociology*, 70(1), 214–240. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12374>
- Rivera, L. A. (2012). Hiring as cultural matching. *American Sociological Review*, 77(6), 999–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122412463213>
- Rocha, V., & Brymer, R. A. (2024). We go way back: Affiliation-based hiring and young firm performance. *Strategic Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3673>
- Sandel, M. J. (2021). *The tyranny of merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* Penguin Books Limited.

- Schakel, W. (2019). Unequal policy responsiveness in the Netherlands. *Socio-Economic Review*, 19(1), 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwz018>
- Scherpenzeel, A.C., and Das, M. (2010). “True” longitudinal and probability-based internet panels: Evidence from the Netherlands. In Das, M., P. Ester, and L. Kaczmirek (Eds.), *Social and Behavioral Research and the Internet: Advances in Applied Methods and Research Strategies*. (pp. 77-104). Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis.
- Sherman, R. (2017). *Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence*. Princeton University Press.
- Steijn, S. R. (2016). What we want and what we see: Preferences, perceptions and judgments about inequality and meritocracy. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].
- Suryani, N. a. I., Rusdinal, R., Ananda, N. A., & Gistituati, N. N. (2023). The Netherlands education system. *International Journal of Humanities Education and Social Sciences (IJHESS)*, 2(5). <https://doi.org/10.55227/ijhess.v2i5.458>
- Thijs, P., Grotenhuis, M. T., Scheepers, P., & Van Den Brink, M. (2019). The rise in support for gender egalitarianism in the Netherlands, 1979-2006: The roles of educational expansion, secularization, and female labor force participation. *Sex Roles*, 81(9–10), 594–609. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-1015-z>
- Toft, M., & Friedman, S. (2020). Family wealth and the class ceiling: the propulsive power of the bank of mum and dad. *Sociology*, 55(1), 90–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520922537>
- Torche, F. (2011). Is a college degree still the great equalizer? Intergenerational mobility across levels of schooling in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 117(3), 763–807. <https://doi.org/10.1086/661904>
- Torche, F. (2016). Education and the intergenerational transmission of advantage in the US. In *Edward Elgar Publishing eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785360459.00020>

- Tubadji, A., Gheasi, M., & Nijkamp, P. (2017). Immigrants' socio-economic achievements and cultural diversity. *International Journal of Manpower*, 38(5), 712–728.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/ijm-12-2015-0232>
- Vallet, L. (2004). Change in Intergenerational Class Mobility in France from the 1970s to the 1990s and its Explanation: An Analysis Following the CASMIN Approach. In *Oxford University Press eBooks* (pp. 115–148). <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199258457.003.0005>
- Van De Werfhorst, H. G. (2002). A detailed examination of the role of education in intergenerational social-class mobility. *Social Science Information*, 41(3), 407–438.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018402041003004>
- Van Der Velden, G. J., Meeuwssen, J. A., Fox, C. M., Stolte, C., & Dilaver, G. (2023). Peer-mentorship and first-year inclusion: building belonging in higher education. *BMC Medical Education*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-023-04805-0>
- Van Hear, N. (2014). Reconsidering migration and class. *International Migration Review*, 48(1), 100–121. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12139>
- Van Oorschot, W. (2006). The Dutch Welfare State: Recent trends and challenges in historical perspective. *European Journal of Social Security*, 8(1), 57–76.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/138826270600800104>
- Wierik, M. L. T., Beishuizen, J., & Van Os, W. (2014). Career guidance and student success in Dutch higher vocational education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(10), 1947–1961. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.914905>
- Wingfield, A. H. (2008). Racializing the glass escalator. *Gender & Society*, 23(1), 5–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243208323054>
- Woodson, K. (2015). Race and Rapport: Homophily and racial disadvantage in large law firms. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3001333

Yavorsky, J. E., Keister, L. A., Qian, Y., & Nau, M. (2019). Women in the one percent: Gender dynamics in top income positions. *American Sociological Review*, 84(1), 54–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418820702>

Appendix A



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. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: The Class Ceiling in the Netherlands

Name, email of student: Roberto Mentone, 746232rm@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Gabriele Mari, mari@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 23/03/2025 - 22/06/2025

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.

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

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.

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

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.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.

Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

I will obtain the data from the LISS Panel (Longitudinal Internet studies for the Social Sciences) managed by the non-profit research institute Centerdata (Tilburg University, the Netherlands).

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

$N = 1,230$

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

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

The sample is drawn from the 7500 people who are part of the panel representing the Dutch population over the age of 16. The online panel draws on a representative sample of the Dutch Population.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

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

The data will be handled exclusively by myself using password-protected online storage spaces offered by the Erasmus University Rotterdam.

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?

The data will be handled exclusively by myself; hence I will be personally responsible.

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

The data will be saved automatically whenever I make a change through the university's dedicated online rescue spaces. The frequency will be a minimum of once a week.

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

Data will already be anonymized when disclosed to me.

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: Roberto Mentone

Name (EUR) supervisor: Gabriele Mari

Date: 23/03/2025

Date: 22 May 2025

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Roberto Mentone', with a stylized, flowing script.A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gabriele Mari', with a cursive script.