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## Mijn ouders migreerden om erop vooruit te gaan

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## Summary

### MY PARENTS MIGRATED TO IMPROVE THEIR LIVING STANDARD

Education and the dynamic habitus.

Factors improving success in the educational careers of Dutch academics of Moroccan and Hindustani descent, and of native Dutch academics from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Successful educational careers of non-native people offer an underutilized information source for measures to fight educational disadvantages. This study attempts to fill that gap. This study deals with the following question: *What factors have contributed towards the upwards educational mobility of Dutch academics of Moroccan and Hindustani descent, and of native Dutch academics from lower socio-economic backgrounds in the Netherlands?*

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical basic principle of this study: the Bourdieuan theory of reproduction. According to this theory, the educational system is based on middle-class standards, and assumes the presence of middle-class cultural capital in all students. However, lower-class schoolchildren often do not possess the desired cultural capital, so that their educational career starts with a disadvantage.

Bourdieu does not address the influence of ethnic or gender factors on educational achievements (Chapter 3). He also does not address opportunity structure measures directed to breaking the reproduction of inequalities (Chapter 4). This study examines the influences of class, ethnicity and gender, as well as the influence of opportunity structure measures.

In Chapter 5, the sub-questions of this study are formulated:

1. What forms of economic capital have contributed favourably towards upward educational mobility in the respondents' views?
2. What forms of cultural capital have contributed favourably towards upward educational mobility in the respondents' views?
3. What forms of social capital have contributed favourably towards upward educational mobility in the respondents' views?
4. What influence do the ethnic habitus and the gender habitus have on upward educational mobility in the respondents' views?
5. What factors in the opportunity structure have contributed favourably to upward educational mobility in the respondents' views?

Chapters 6 - 10 contain a literature study concerning the upbringing and the educational careers of academics of Moroccan, Hindustani and Dutch descent.

The empirical part of this study starts in Chapter 11. The empirical study was performed among 18 academics of Moroccan descent, 20 of Hindustani descent, and 17 native Dutch academics from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The non-native respondents were first generation immigrants and included both students with a Dutch preparatory education ("onderinstromers") and with a foreign preparatory education ("zij-instromers"). The respondents were acquired

through the snowball method. Each respondent was interviewed according to the biographical interview method, supported with a topic list. All discussions were transcribed literally; the transcriptions served as the basis for data analysis.

In Chapter 12, the factors in the respondents' economic capital that improve success were investigated. The groups' different visions on the origin of the family income and the division of financial responsibilities appear to be essential for success. In Dutch native families, the family income is usually generated by one fulltime and one parttime job, and the fact that they have relatively few children gives them a favourable starting position. Parents often pay a considerable part of the education expenses. According to the Moroccan respondents, their family income equals their father's income. However, these respondents have been responsible for paying their own education from an early age, causing many of them to take on extra jobs. According to the Hindustani respondents, different family members contributed to the family income. Older siblings often take (partial) responsibility for younger siblings.

The non-native respondents also needed the incomes from their extra jobs for study and living costs. Besides, in many cases their parental homes lacked a quiet place to study and a computer. In such cases, libraries offered an alternative. In some cases, independent housing offered a solution. But independent housing is unusual among people of Moroccan and Hindustani descent. Exceptions are often caused by protracted conflicts, migration without parents or an intended marriage. For most respondents, student grants and loans were a basic condition enabling them to study. Many of them also required interest-bearing loans. Especially the Moroccan respondents frequently declined loans for religious reasons. Subsidized jobs also promoted success, because of the combination with paid training. This is especially true for those who came to the Netherlands later in life, and for women who managed to continue their educational career later in life.

Chapter 13 deals with the relevancy of the respondents' cultural capital. The main success factor is the importance given to education in the children's upbringing. Achieving educational qualifications was a target in the upbringing of nearly all men. Generally, the ambitions with respect to the educational level desired for sons differ for each population group. Whereas native parents set customized educational goals, non-native parents usually aspired for the best possible results, initially anything above their own educational level. Frequently, the parents of all respondent groups did not aspire to academic educational qualifications for their children, because these were considered unachievable or because the parents not familiar with the long term results.

Gender differences occur in all three the respondent groups, but in different gradations. Among the native respondents, gender differences are age-related. Women younger than 45 grew up with the idea that they should develop and blossom through education, just like the men. However, the first generation

Moroccan and Hindustani women's parents' message was that they should primarily prepare for a role as wife and mother. For these parents, educational qualifications were primarily an emergency solution, in case their daughters should unexpectedly have to fend for themselves. Hindustani women more often received parental support for their educational ambitions than Moroccan women. The (academic) educational careers of Moroccan women are more frequently accompanied with damage to important relations and declining marriage chances.

Parents' ambitions are raised as they realize that higher educational qualifications are also achievable for their children. These changes in ambitions for daughters are greater than those for sons. The importance of educational success in upbringing is gradually growing, but does not replace other upbringing targets. Marriage is often postponed to achieve educational targets; daughters, however, are also expected to become successful wives and mothers, with all duties involved. Despite this heavy burden on women, the non-native respondents' families have made a huge emancipatory step forward within a relatively short time (in comparison with the native respondents' families).

The upbringing goals and their changes directly influence the support respondents experience in their social environment. Both for the schoolchildren and their social environments, understanding of the possibilities proves to be a success factor in educational careers of boys and girls. Besides, the acceptance by the social environment of success definitions other than those of wife and mother, also turn out to be a major success factor in women's education careers.

Chapter 14 deals with social capital factors which improve success. Within the social environment parents, siblings and other family members are important. Non-native parents' contributions were mainly on the emotional plane. For many respondents, the fact that at least one parent encouraged his or her educational career was of major importance. Non-native parents' direct practical involvement, however, remained limited. When non-native parents do try to change the primary school's recommendations for their children's secondary education, they rarely succeed. They are frequently overruled by teachers and do not know how to navigate through the educational system to create better mobility opportunities for their children.

The parents of the native respondents, however, did a very good job at critically addressing their children's teachers. They also often managed to defer the final schooling decision, even when they agreed with the elementary school's advice. This turns out to be a major success factor.

Moroccans and Hindustani often refer to siblings and family members as sources of positive social capital. Siblings take over upbringing tasks from their parents and accompany their parents to school for parent-teacher-talks, where they provide essential and critical input. Siblings stimulate educational achievements, act as role models, and strengthen competitiveness. Their standards are higher than those of their parents.

Among Moroccans and Hindustani, other family members function as information sources and role models; they also have normative functions. After the stay in the Netherlands, educational qualifications tend to become a source of competition within families and the social environment.

The study also shows another difference: native parents support their children in their chosen paths. They create choices by opening doors so that children can navigate through the educational system on their own. Non-native networks tend to lead and direct within the (limited) choices known to them. Parents, siblings and family networks create boundary conditions, enabling children to achieve the educational targets set for them by their relatives. The respondents feel both support methods promote success, although the non-native parents' method, which is more leading and directing, is more often associated with social pressure.

Outside the social environment, teachers, fellow students and other *peer groups* are important sources of social capital. For all three the respondent groups, teachers are one of the most important sources of social capital. This study shows that the teachers' information about continuation possibilities for schooling, and their support, encouragement, appreciation and trust greatly improves and strengthens the students' ambitions with regards to education. Success is also promoted by teachers' willingness to invest extra effort and time, and an outreaching approach. The study also shows that a teacher's high expectations also have a distinctly positive effect. Besides, teachers can contribute to a favourable teaching climate and the schoolchildren's wellbeing.

The teacher's role proves to be of greater importance for non-native schoolchildren, because they usually have fewer information sources available at home, and their families frequently fail to appreciate higher educational qualifications. For them, extra investments by the teacher also turn out to be important, for instance with regard to the progress to higher education or language acquisition. A teacher's outreaching attitude to the parents is also a success factor. For instance, teachers investments in parent understanding can create parental support for an educational career so students, especially Moroccan girls, can study without causing conflict situations.

Teachers can also provide negative social capital. Non-native respondents have to cope with teachers' prejudices and assumptions more often than native respondents, so that they face incorrect school advice and limited education possibilities more frequently. Combined with the limited knowledge and participation of non-native parents and the decreasing possibilities of amassing more degrees, the teacher can be a major negative influence. Prejudice and erroneous assessments in providing recommendations for secondary education are undesirable, but cannot always be prevented. Especially when the student is newly arrived in the country and is undergoing an acculturation process, it may be difficult for a teacher to formulate the correct recommendations for secondary education. Referring the child to a secondary school where the final decision for the child's further education is delayed, proves to be a major success factor. When

the secondary school advice turns out to undervalue the child's possibilities, there are always options to continue to higher education.

Both fellow students and other *peer groups* are important for the student's educational career. Positive social contacts with fellow students contribute to the student's wellbeing and study motivation. Besides, fellow students can be a source of information and help, and act as discussion partners regarding the contents of the lessons. Fellow students also display behaviour to be copied. The class composition turns out to be very important for learning the language, standards and behavioural codes. The results of this study support the hypothesis that a measure of adaptation to the ruling middle class culture definitely promotes educational success. Association with fellow students from comparable social environments also turns out to promote success. A major prerequisite here is that the upward educational mobility as a mutual objective is displayed both through ambitions and study behaviour.

*Peer groups* also function as negative social capital. Over half of the Moroccan respondents and several Hindustani respondents experienced exclusion by native fellow students. Native respondents especially experienced exclusion problems at university. Where non-native respondents associated with other (non-native) students and student clubs, native students, even when their educational achievements were excellent, more often switched to a lower type of secondary education where they could connect with the other students. There are differences in the strategies employed by native and non-native respondents, but both strategies result in a study network. Possibilities to create one's own study network within the educational setting turn out to promote success.

The interviews show there is one success factor which cannot be directly placed in one of the three forms of social capital. This is a personal property which can be described as innate strength. This concerns respondents' willpower and perseverance to achieve their ambitions. This property explains why under the same conditions, one individual perseveres whereas another quits. Innate strength also explains why some Moroccan women chose a career in education, contrary to all expectations of their social environment; for this, they often paid a very high price.