Children's Geographies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cchg20

‘There are many ways to make it’: young minority men’s aspirations and navigation of their low-income neighbourhood: a case study in Utrecht, The Netherlands

Kirsten Visser, Merel Jonker, Catrin Finkenauer & Gonneke W.J.M. Stevens

To cite this article: Kirsten Visser, Merel Jonker, Catrin Finkenauer & Gonneke W.J.M. Stevens (2023) ‘There are many ways to make it’: young minority men’s aspirations and navigation of their low-income neighbourhood: a case study in Utrecht, The Netherlands, Children's Geographies, 21:5, 867-882, DOI: 10.1080/14733285.2022.2150961

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2022.2150961

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 29 Nov 2022.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 640

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=cchg20

CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHIES
2023, VOL. 21, NO. 5, 867–882
https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2022.2150961

'There are many ways to make it': young minority men's aspirations and navigation of their low-income neighbourhood: a case study in Utrecht, The Netherlands

Kirsten Visser [a], Merel Jonker[b], Catrin Finkenauer [c] and Gonneke W.J.M. Stevens [c]

[a]Department of Human Geography and Spatial Planning, Faculty of Geosciences, Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands; [b]Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance, Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands; [c]Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Young minority men from low-income neighbourhoods are often perceived as a uniform, disaffected group with antipathy towards mainstream education and occupations, while their own experiences are generally overlooked. Through in-depth interviews, we investigated how 14 minority young men (aged 16-23) from low-income neighbourhoods experience and navigate the impact of the neighbourhood social environment on their educational and occupational aspirations. Despite facing several challenges, the men felt that those conditions did not strongly affect their aspirations. Their narratives provided a nuanced picture of how the neighbourhood facilitated connections that influenced their aspirations and how this social environment was navigated by the young men in different and dynamic ways.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 14 December 2020
Accepted 11 November 2022

KEYWORDS
Aspirations; low-income neighbourhoods; young minority men; navigation; social environment

Introduction

The successful transition from youth into adulthood has drawn the interest of many social scientists over the last decades (Evans 2002; Shildrick and MacDonald 2007). A country's future lies with its young people, prompting societal concern with their well-being and developmental outcomes. Mainstream media and policy documents depict young people – particularly young minority men from low-income neighbourhoods – as disconnected from society (McKendrick, Scott, and Sinclair 2007; MacDonald and Marsh 2001; Raco 2009; Wyn and Woodman 2006). The notion of disaffected youth is often associated with individual characteristics (such as the intersection between their minority status, socio-economic position, gender and age) as well as social climate in the neighbourhood they are from. It is said that low-income neighbourhoods do not form a context for 'mainstream' educational and occupational aspirations, and thereby lack opportunities for successful transitions to adulthood (Lupton and Kintrea 2011; McKendrick, Scott, and Sinclair 2007; Shildrick and MacDonald 2007). In the Dutch policy literature, it has been assumed that young people who live in low-income areas have limited occupational aspirations and opportunities (Van Ham and Manley 2010), but scientific literature offers little evidence to support this assumption.

CONTACT Kirsten Visser k.visser@uu.nl @drkirstenvisser

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Against the backdrop of these prevailing assumptions, there is a need to investigate how young people experience and navigate low-income neighbourhoods. Young people have different perceptions of disadvantage than adults (Levitas et al. 2007) and policies are generally based on middle-class values of 'good' transitions into adulthood (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Archer, Hollingworth, and Halsall 2007; Brown 2013). According to Barry (2005, 108), '*the model of transition rarely incorporates the lived reality for disadvantaged young people*'. Moreover, research among youth – and particularly young men – has focussed on risk (such as deviant or criminal behaviour) and specifically on those who are already 'problematic' (Morrow 2008). Little is known about how non-defiant young people navigate the social context of their low-income neighbourhood. Finally, most studies on neighbourhood effects depict a rather static situation rather than elucidating how the neighbourhood context is experienced and navigated in dynamic ways (for exceptions see Anderson 2000; Cahill 2000; Gunter 2008; McKenzie 2015; Visser, Bolt, and van Kempen 2015).

The success of future governmental strategies depends on ensuring that policies to improve the opportunities of these young people really address their lived experiences. Without a good understanding of how disadvantage is experienced and navigated, policies might not support the target groups but rather stigmatise them. Therefore, the following question is central to this paper: *How do young minority*[1] *men (aged 16-23) living in low-income neighbourhoods in Utrecht, the Netherlands experience and navigate the impact of the neighbourhood social environment on their realistic educational and occupational aspirations?* We distinguish between *experience* and *navigate*, discerning how young men feel an impact of the neighbourhood on their aspirations as well as how they deal with it – their personal agency.

In our study we use 'aspirations' to cover desires to achieve something in the future, with the implication that they will drive actions in the present (Quaglia and Cobb 1996). The literature distinguishes between idealistic and realistic aspirations. The former encompasses desired outcomes that are not limited by constraints or resources. Idealistic aspirations, are however tempered by knowledge of structures, norms and opportunities, and as such become more realistic aspirations (Baars 2014). Accordingly, Gottfredson (1981) suggests that aspirations are better seen as reflections on, rather than determinants of occupational or educational opportunities. Similarly, St Clair and Benjamin (2011) suggest that aspirations have performative value: they are determined by genuine expectations for the future, but also by the needs of the moment, and reflect the expectations and constraints inherent in different settings. We adopt a similar perspective in our study, as young men's imagined futures are likely to be influenced by social structures, such as the neighbourhood social environment, as well as by group-based expectations in Dutch society (Gutman and Akerman 2008). While keeping educational and occupational aspirations central to the study, we also look into aspirations that focus on other forms of self-fulfilment, such as roles in the family or community (Brown 2011).

Our focus is on young men with minority backgrounds in deprived neighbourhoods. Given the intersection of their status as a visual minority, of their age, gender and neighbourhood of residence, they are often lumped together as a group with aspirations that deviate from the norm (MiMen 2015). We draw attention to how the young men experience and navigate the neighbourhood dimension of this stereotype. The two neighbourhoods in this study are characterised by a low socio-economic status, many residents with a non-western migration background[2], and poor scores on perceived safety, nuisance from youth and drug use (CBS 2017), and are therefore seen as posing a risk to the aspirations and opportunities of young people. At the same time, the neighbourhoods have quite close-knit (ethnic) social networks and the young residents feel a strong sense of place attachment (Koster and Mulderij 2011).

Determinants of young people's aspirations

Aspirations are often described as goals, wants or future desires (Brown 2011; Marzi 2018). Young people's aspirations have been examined in many studies (Hardgrove, Rootham, and McDowell 2015; Gorard, See, and Davies 2012; Lupton and Kintrea 2011) and are generally deemed relevant

predictors of educational and occupational outcomes (Gutman and Akerman 2008; Gorard, See, and Davies 2012; Schoon and Parsons 2002). In this sense, Gewirth (1998) describes aspirations as vectorial – or action-guiding. Research suggests that aspirations play a role in the reproduction of inequalities. Quantitative studies show that socio-economic status is often negatively associated with aspirations (Croll 2008; Schoon and Parsons 2002). Some qualitative studies focus on how aspirations among groups with low socio-economic status differ from those of their middle-income peers, and find that they are less specific and more influenced by material considerations (Abrams 2010; Nayak 2006; Threadgold and Nilan 2009). There are also ethnic dimensions to aspirations. Often, young people with minority backgrounds or those from deprived neighbourhoods have been labelled as 'low aspiration' by those in positions of power (McKendrick 2015; MacDonald and Marsh 2001). At the same time, studies show that ethnic minority youth or children of migrants express higher educational and occupational aspirations than their native peers (Feliciano and Lanuza 2016; Salikutluk 2016; Teney, Devleeshouwer, and Hanquinet 2013). Finally, gender is also important: educational and occupational aspirations are often shaped by discourses about masculinity and femininity (Archer, Hollingworth, and Mendick 2010). Burke (2006), for example, shows how young men's aspirations are produced through their masculine identifications, such as what they perceive as acceptable careers for men or family expectations.

In addition to individual level characteristics, there is an ongoing discussion regarding the ways in which the neighbourhood of residence influences the aspirations of young people. In the United States, several studies have found associations between neighbourhood disadvantage and educational and occupational achievement (see Sharkey and Faber 2014). Results on neighbourhood effects in Europe are more mixed: some studies have found that concentrated poverty (Andersson et al. 2007) or ethnic concentration (Musterd et al. 2008; Van der Laan Bouma-Doff 2008) had an impact on occupational achievement, but these effects seem to be smaller than in the United States (Van Ham and Manley 2010). Aspirations are often regarded as an important mediating factor. Looking specifically at neighbourhood effects on aspirations, the results are less convincing than for educational and occupational achievement. Furlong, Biggart, and Cartmel (1996) showed that low-income neighbourhoods have an impact on occupational aspirations, mostly for males, though other studies did not find evidence for a link (Lupton and Kintrea 2011; Kintrea, St Clair, and Houston 2015; McKendrick, Scott, and Sinclair 2007; Sinclair, McKendrick, and Scott 2010).

In the literature on neighbourhood effects, it is assumed that young people's educational and occupational aspirations and outcomes are shaped by neighbourhood social networks and social capital as well as educational and occupational norms in their immediate surroundings (Galster 2012; Sharkey and Faber 2014). First, some studies capture people's social networks and the potential of these structures to deliver social capital such as information, personal connections and material resources (Baars 2014). It is assumed that residents of low-income neighbourhoods are locally oriented for their social contacts and, further, that these social relations would not be able to provide relevant educational and job-related information and support (Granovetter 1973; Lin 1999). Secondly, some studies suggest that young people would develop certain norms regarding school and work based on the jobs that are held by the people around them and the extent to which these jobs are seen as desirable and achievable (Harding 2009; Lewis 1959). We can link this strand of research to Bourdieu's concept of habitus: young people perceive what is ab/normal, un/desirable and im/possible for 'people like them', based on past and present experiences (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Pimlott-Wilson 2011; Reay 2004; Archer, Hollingworth, and Halsall 2007). The concept encompasses both individual and collective experiences and thus captures the neighbourhood context.

Navigating the neighbourhood as a place of connections

Face-to-face exchanges between individuals form a core component of any neighbourhood, as do habitual actions of daily life (Martin 2003). We therefore approach the neighbourhood as a place of

connections and explore how relationships and interactions garner meaning and influence aspirations. The paper investigates these effects in the light of calls for greater appreciation of the relational geographies of everyday life and considers how neighbourhoods become places of possibility as well as restriction. This relational lens lets us view space not as an objective surface or container but rather as a set of relations that are continually made and re-made (Jones 2009).

By adopting this approach, we move beyond the idea of an unconditional relationship between neighbourhood and aspirations. We look into how young people negotiate neighbourhood influences, or in other words, their personal agency (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1984; Threadgold 2011; Woodman 2009). Our perspective is informed by Giddens' (1984) notion of structuration, which emphasises the importance of both structure and agency to social formations. Recently scholars have moved away from a dichotomy between structure and agency to emphasise a middle ground, also termed 'bounded agency' (Evans 2002, 2007; Threadgold 2011). That middle ground constitutes '*socially situated agency, influenced but not determined by environments and emphasizing internalized frames of reference as well as external actions*' (Evans 2007, 93). In this paper, we will therefore focus on describing young migrant men's aspirations and how they are influenced by neighbourhood social structures, but also pay attention to perceptions of agency in navigating these structures. Central to this are the young men's own experiences. Insight into the complex and rich experiences and negotiations of young men may clarify what is valued and important within these neighbourhoods and how different aspects of the neighbourhood are being navigated (Vigh 2010). At the same time, it may reveal what is missing there and how young men adjust their actions to compensate for what they do not have (McKenzie 2015).

Finally, central to our approach is that the relation between the neighbourhood context and young people's aspirations is bidirectional. As shown in earlier studies (Gotham 2003; Chaskin 2013; Visser, Sichling, and Chaskin 2016) neighbourhood life is reciprocal: human practices create space while space helps create those practices. As Horton and Kraftl (2006, 88) state: *It becomes obvious that children (and adults) are constantly creating, or co-creating their geographies. Spaces are never finished, never containers waiting to be filled, never discrete blocks, segments or 'fields'. There are all sorts of complex, contingent and on-going connections that always make spaces (an) under-construction.* In this study, we apply reciprocal thinking to aspirations, focusing on how individual aspirations are influenced by young men's socially-experienced neighbourhoods, but also on how through their behaviour and choices they reproduce or challenge the aspirations prevalent in the neighbourhood.

Context

The research was carried out in two adjacent neighbourhoods in Utrecht (Overvecht and Zuilen), the Netherlands. With 359,376 inhabitants, Utrecht is the country's fourth largest city, and 12% of the children live in a low-income household (below 125% of social minimum, Gemeente Utrecht 2017). Even though this portion is low, the concentration of poverty in neighbourhoods such as Overvecht and Zuilen is high. In Overvecht the child poverty rate is 35%. Some areas in Zuilen are gentrifying: child poverty is only 6% in some areas compared to 26% in other parts of Zuilen.[3] Seventy percent of the children growing up in poverty in Utrecht have a migration background (Gemeente Utrecht 2017).

About 22% of the inhabitants of Utrecht have a non-western migration background and 11% have a western migration background. The largest groups are migrants or their children from Turkey, Morocco or Surinam and the Dutch Antilles. These groups also concentrate in certain neighbourhoods. In Overvecht, 50% of the population has a non-western migration background; in Zuilen this share is 15% in the gentrifying and 34% in the non-gentrifying sub-neighbourhoods. Western migrants comprise 10% of both neighbourhoods (BRP 2021).

The extent of disadvantage should be seen in context. Because of the Dutch welfare system, problems related to education and drop-out, unemployment and social disorganisation are not as dire

as reported for low-income neighbourhoods in, for example, the UK or USA. Nevertheless, both Overvecht and Zuilen experience several social problems, such as relatively low educational levels, low labour market participation and issues of crime and safety. Their severity is reflected in the attention they get in national and municipal plans to combat problems in low-income neighbourhoods (Gemeente Utrecht 2018). To illustrate, while the share of low-educated people is 20% in Utrecht overall, this percentage is 40% in Overvecht and between 20% and 31% in Zuilen. In Utrecht in general, 63% of persons aged 15–75 are active on the labour market. With 49%, Overvecht scores well below the average, whereas in Zuilen the labour market participation is about average (58-70% in the different sub-neighbourhoods; CBS 2018). Also in terms of crime and safety both neighbourhoods deviate from the city average. While Utrecht records 43 crimes per 1000 inhabitants, this figure is 60 in Overvecht and ranges between 49 and 52 in Zuilen (Politie Utrecht 2019). In Utrecht 30% of the inhabitants sometimes feel unsafe; this rises to 46% in Overvecht and ranges between 33% and 35% in Zuilen (Gemeente Utrecht 2019).

Methods

Young adults were taken as the focus of the study not only because they are in the midst of making choices about their future but also because they are able to look back at educational and occupational choices made when they were younger. This is not the case for early teenagers – who are still in the early stages of making choices about their future – or older adults for whom the decision-making might be too long ago to really remember and reflect upon. Of the participants included in this study, five were recruited through a community centre, three by posting outside a vocational school, two by posting outside a school for higher general and pre-university education, and one through the personal network of one of the researchers. From that baseline additional participants were found using snowball sampling, during which we made sure that not too many came from the same social network.

In total, we interviewed 23 individuals, including four females and five males with a native Dutch background. Given the argumentation of this paper and to cover one specific group of young adults, we decided to focus on the 14 male participants with a minority background. These participants were between 16 and 23 years old and from diverse ethnic backgrounds: some can be classified as western migrants, whereas most had a non-western migration background.[4] All 14 were enrolled in education at the time of the interview, which corresponds with the fact that drop-out rates are generally rather low in the Netherlands: in 2017–18 only 3,0% of young men left school without having obtained a diploma (SCP 2020). We, however, cannot rule out that the young men who agreed to participate were already positively embedded in neighbourhood social networks (e.g. through community organisations) and therefore had more mainstream aspirations than others in the same neighbourhood.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to better understand their aspirations, obstacles, resources and personal agency. They were asked about their aspirations regarding school and work; about the role of gender and migration background in forming and achieving these aspirations; and about the role of family, friends and the social neighbourhood context. Regarding the neighbourhood, the focus was on three concepts: socialisation, stigmatisation and social capital. Each session took between 30 and 60 minutes and was held in a small office in the community centre, at the participant's home or at some other quiet place such as an outdoor bench or in a participant's car. Realising that the researchers' white, middle-class norms and values could influence the questions asked and the interpretation of the results, we aimed to account for this as much as possible by using Milner IV's (2007, 388) framework to 'consider dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen'. This requires a critical attitude towards power relations in the field, the nature of social interaction between the researcher and the researched, and the interpretation of data. Moreover, it includes cultural self-reflection as well as researching the self in relation to the community under research. Therefore, we sought to elicit the experiences of the participants themselves and allowed

them to be the experts on their neighbourhood. When interpreting our results, we aimed to highlight the heterogeneity and complexity of the young men's experiences, vulnerabilities and positions (see also Charsley and Wray 2015).

All were informed of the aim of the research before agreeing to participate and again at the start of the actual interview. They were asked if they agreed with the session being audiotaped and used for scientific research, and were told that their privacy would be protected. Moreover, all respondents knew that they could refuse to answer questions they were uncomfortable with and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were assigned pseudonyms, and these are used throughout this paper to protect their privacy. During the recruiting process we initially encountered some distrust among potential participants. Several of those we approached had negative experiences with journalists and researchers. This wariness came up in the interview with Emre:

> you are being put in a bad light. They just come by … You (the researcher) asked to interview me, but sometimes people simply don't ask. To film you, or to record you. If you treat us with respect, you'll get respect back. If you don't treat us with respect, then eeehhh … well, there are many people that have a temper here.

Posting outside the schools sometimes led to unrest among the youth present; they asked a researcher to ID himself to make sure he was not police. In the end we were able to gain the trust of the respondents by adjusting the register of communication: approaching them in an informal manner, making jokes and using street language. In particular, one of our young male researchers was able to gain the trust of the youth in this way.

The interviews were transcribed and then coded in NVivo. A grounded theory approach consisting of several rounds of coding was adopted. First, general patterns in the data were identified, and these were refined during subsequent rounds. Various themes were distinguished: educational and occupational characteristics; the impact of the young men's age and gender; the impact of parents; the role the neighbourhood played in forming young men's aspirations (socialisation, stigmatisation and social capital); and how the young men navigated the neighbourhood context. The interviews were initially coded by two graduate students, as the study consisted of two graduate research projects. Afterwards, the two coding trees were combined with input from one of the senior researchers (first author). As the interviews were conducted in Dutch, the coding was based on the Dutch transcripts. The citations used in this paper were translated into English. When translating, we tried to stay close to the original wording while conveying the meaning and emotions, humour etc.

Our study received approval from the Ethics Assessment Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University (FETC18-070) in 2018.

Results

The young men's narratives offer insights in their educational and occupational aspirations and how these relate to the neighbourhood social environment. The first section considers their aspirations on the individual level: what did they find important and which choices did they make for school, work or (resisting) deviant behaviour? The second section considers the ways in which the neighbourhood social environment influences the formation of these aspirations, as well as the ways in which these influences are navigated by the young men.

Young men's educational and occupational aspirations

When speaking about their educational and occupational aspirations, it was clear that most were positive about their own futures. Except for one respondent, none had negative attitudes towards school or work. In fact, most had very conventional desires: as the Dutch saying goes, 'huisje-boompje-beestje' ('a house, tree (garden) and a pet'). As expressed by Rayan: *'Ten years from*

now … I hope to have finished my hbo [university of applied sciences]. And I think I will move toward a permanent job. And I hope to be married. Well, that's about it'.

All except one were currently in secondary education, either vocational or higher general, and had aspirations for continuing education that fit their current level (see Table 1). Most aimed to finish at least their (vocational) post-secondary education, even though it was no longer compulsory. While the educational trajectories of some young men were far from linear – dropping out and starting school again – the majority were convinced that finishing their education was the way to achieve their aspirations for the future. This reflects their belief that, in the end, finishing education would provide access to stable and well-paying jobs.

Table 1. Description of participants.

Pseudonym	Age	Neighbourhood	Ethnic background[5]	Level of (secondary) education currently being followed[6]	Plans for further education	Realistic occupational aspirations
Ahmed	23	Overvecht	Moroccan-Dutch	Pre-university diploma, just quit another applied sciences study	University of applied sciences	Primary school teacher
Francesco	20	Overvecht	Italian-Dutch	Secondary vocational (theoretical learning path)	Post-secondary vocational (level 4)	Car salesman
Efe	16	Overvecht	Turkish-Dutch	Secondary vocational (theoretical learning path)	Post-secondary vocational (level 4)	Something with marketing
Rafik	16	Overvecht	Moroccan-Dutch	Secondary vocational (middle management-oriented learning path)	Post-secondary vocational (level 4) → University of applied sciences	Not decided yet
Ali	16	Overvecht	Moroccan-Dutch	Secondary vocational (theoretical learning path)	Post-secondary vocational (level 4) → University of applied sciences	Not decided yet
Marouane	16	Overvecht	Moroccan-Dutch	Secondary vocational (middle management-oriented learning path)	Post-secondary vocational (level 4)	Something with ICT/ technical profession
Said	18	Overvecht	Turkish-Surinamese-Dutch	Secondary vocational (theoretical learning path)	Post-secondary vocational (level 3) → Post-secondary vocational (level 4)	Car repair
Emre	17	Overvecht	Turkish-Dutch	Secondary vocational (middle management-oriented learning path)	Post-secondary vocational (level 3)	Not decided yet
Christian	16	Overvecht	Bulgarian-Dutch	Secondary vocational (theoretical learning path)	None	None
Samir	16	Overvecht	Moroccan-Dutch	Secondary vocational	Not decided yet	Own business (undetermined)
Rayan	17	Zuilen	Moroccan-Dutch	Secondary higher general	University of applied sciences	Nurse
Musa	16	Zuilen	Moroccan-Dutch	Secondary vocational	Post-secondary vocational	Own business (garage or restaurant)
Damin	17	Zuilen	Moroccan-Dutch	Secondary higher general	University of applied sciences	Social work
Yassin	17	Zuilen	Moroccan-Dutch	Secondary vocational (theoretical learning path)	Post-secondary vocational (level 4)	Financial administration/ own business

Regarding occupation, Baars (2014) discerns the materiality and the specificity of young people's aspirations. Materiality concerns the financial remuneration of a job, as opposed to 'immaterial' considerations such as enjoying the work, contributing to society, or having a job that fits one's interests and skills. Specificity concerns the extent to which a young person talks about their occupational aspirations in 'specific' terms, such as aiming for a certain job, as opposed to more general aspirations. Indeed, the majority of the respondents mentioned material considerations: choosing occupational trajectories that would generate considerable money or prestige, or at least economic stability, such as in car sales/repair, ICT or marketing/finance. Quite a few said they wanted to start their own business, although these aspirations were not very specific. Musa and Samir, respectively, said, '*I want to start my own business, not sure what yet, a car shop or a restaurant probably*' and '*start my own business, doesn't matter what, as long as it is my own business*'. The respondents mentioned that they liked the freedom of being their own boss and the potential of having a good income. Some were inspired by (neighbourhood) role models who became successful entrepreneurs.

Some respondents (Ahmed, Damin and Rayan) referred to contributing something to society, particularly to their local community. When asked what he finds important for the future, Damin expanded as follows: *'[…] contribute things, improve things, and protect those. […] for example, in the playground [where he works as a volunteer], I want to keep young people busy, keep them from the streets. Play some soccer, hang around … '* These three also seemed to have more concrete plans for their future. Damin, for example, already started volunteering at a local playground which would prepare him for his study as a social worker. And Rayan had the specific ambition to be a nurse. The fact that some of the young men addressed the importance of the social aspects of their future jobs is noteworthy. Both the literature and our neoliberal society tend to emphasise achieving a high status and income rather than the wide range of other aspirations young people have for their adult lives (Brown 2011; Levitas et al. 2007).

The respondents mainly spoke about realistic aspirations. While some mentioned they would like to become famous in music or soccer, most had more realistic goals such as finishing their education and finding a good job that fit their level of education and interests. Some said they had to adjust their initial aspirations because they had to follow a lower level of education. As Rayan explained, '*I wanted to be doctor when I was little […] but then I had to go to havo [higher general education] and I had to adjust my dreams. But I really aspire to be a nurse now at a hospital*'. Also Cristian, who had to switch from higher general to vocational education and had just failed his exams at that level, became more realistic about his aspirations:

> When I was younger I wanted to be something like a lawyer, just study law at the university of applied sciences (…) now I don't have any plans for the future anymore, I threw them away. I'll just finish vocational school and see where I'll end up.

While most of the young men expressed mainstream aspirations, they also described their adolescence as a 'learning time' for full participation in society, a period in which they could make mistakes. Quite a few respondents, for example, said they had been involved in some way or another in minor illegal activities. They, however, did not consider this as serious criminal behaviour. Shoplifting, for example, was seen as nothing serious, just mischief. More importantly, the young men did not consider such behaviour inconsistent with positive educational and occupational aspirations. Most desired to get a good education, which made them confident about their future, Moreover, they said they were involved in illegal activities when they were younger but had since bettered their lives. According to Francesco having learned from his deviant activities made him stronger and taught him to distinguish between good and bad. Due to interactions with certain peers, he had not attended school for two years. However, now that he had become more mature, he appreciated the importance of education and started going to school to become a car salesman: '*I didn't go to school for two years. Because I thought: this is nothing [going to school]. And still, it's nothing, but I need it. Now I am thinking more and more like that, because I started to grow up*'. This shows that the

period of early adolescence can also be seen as learning time, and that for some this learning meant taking detours.

Growing up in a low-income neighbourhood

Above, we found that the young men's aspirations were largely mainstream. Here we argue that they were influenced by their neighbourhood context in several ways. Their activity patterns were generally very local; their part-time jobs, social lives and personal relationships, and sports and leisure activities were mostly situated in the neighbourhood (see also Visser and Tersteeg 2020). The only exception was the school, that in some cases was situated outside the area. In this section, we approach the neighbourhood as a place of connections. It is there that a range of forms and functions of locally situated connections, as well as young men's navigation of these connections, provide the basis for young men's aspirations.

Dealing with stigma

The literature (Bauder 2001; Tunstall et al. 2014) shows that place-based discrimination might occur in addition to stigmatisation based on individual differences such as socio-economic status, ethnic background or gender. Young people living in low-income neighbourhoods are often well aware of the poor reputation of the place. This awareness may affect their aspirations and behaviour, including decisions to apply for certain jobs and their behaviour in the job application process (Bauder 2001; Tunstall et al. 2014).

The majority of the young men in our study, however, felt that they had the same chances on the educational and labour market as their peers in other neighbourhoods. This might reflect the Dutch context: the quality of schools does not differ much between neighbourhoods; there is free school choice; and most schools within a city are well accessible by public transport or bike. The young men experienced free choice for the school they wanted to attend (see also Visser 2019). Moreover, there is hardly any spatial mismatch (see Galster 2012) between place of residence and job opportunities in the Netherlands, which has to do with the small size of the country and the high quality of public transport and cycling infrastructure.

With regards to stigma, the respondents were aware of the negative image of their neighbourhood and that it was sometimes reinforced by others, such as teachers. Rayan gave the following example of prejudice about his neighbourhood in relation to educational and occupational achievement:

> For example, if I tell someone I'm from Wittevrouwen [white, higher-class neighbourhood], then they imagine a decent boy. But when I say I'm from Zuilen, they imagine a street boy. Also at school, for example, when I have a meeting with a teacher or someone else, and I say 'I'm from Zuilen', people are like [surprised] … but you're doing havo, you're doing your best at school, you can have a proper conversation!

On the other hand, Efe recounted:

> Well, you know, my school doesn't think like that. The student is taken at face value, the neighbourhood I come from doesn't matter. You know, I'm from Overvecht, and my teacher doesn't suddenly expect that I will do bad at school. I'm from Overvecht, but I can also do hbo [university of applied sciences].

Awareness of any negative images others might have about the youth and their residential background might make these young people adjust their realistic aspirations. This, however, was not the case among most of the respondents; in fact, the opposite was true for some. Rayan, for example, aimed to do better to show others that he could succeed. Ahmed told a similar story:

> a friend of mine plays soccer at a high level, is studying at university. He is making it, and maybe that's also a consequence of the neighbourhood you're from. Because you know that your family and the people around you haven't always had a good life …

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Kao and Tienda (1998) also suggest that a blocked opportunity structure may lead to overachievement as a means to compensate for disadvantaged status, or in this case negative images of a certain group or place.

In sum, the young men's narratives illustrate how images of neighbourhood, interpretations of outsiders such as teachers, and young people's experiences are intertwined. While Rayan's teacher reproduces the stigma of the neighbourhood, Efe's teacher does not, which shows that the people the young men encounter, or more generally the social environments they find themselves in, can influence how aspirations are perceived in relation to their residential background. At the same time, while one might expect these images to influence the young men's aspirations, their own interpretations and agency come into play as some even try to challenge the reproduction of the neighbourhood stigma. This illustrates the reciprocal relationship between the young men's behaviour and the contexts they find themselves in.

Navigating neighbourhood connections

Key issues in the narratives were the choice between school and work and whether to engage in activities that would be considered deviant by mainstream society. Finishing post-secondary education was the most desired option for the long run among most respondents, although working was also attractive as a way to earn spending money and gain some status. The story of Ahmed, who dropped out of the university of applied sciences twice in order to work, illustrates this dilemma: '*when I look back, it was good [to work], you earn your own money and it gives you more … not self-confidence … .but more self-respect. You are proud of yourself and what you're doing*'. Continuing, he explains that his decisions are influenced by belonging to different groups: the neighbourhood friends that are mostly in (higher) education; and the full-time working friends he got to know later through his job. Initially he too was orientated toward school life; Ahmed talks about his friends '*doing 'studies' and some of them even have finished their masters*', expressing mixed feelings of admiration and envy. At the same time, as part of the second group he questions the dominant discourse that you need a good education to 'make it' in life: '*I have friends that have shown me that there are many ways to make it … you don't have to study to make it in life, but you can also do it in a different way*'. However, Ahmed decided to start up his education a third time, as he still aspired to become a primary school teacher. Ahmed's narrative not only illustrates the impact of (neighbourhood) friends on his aspirations and choices, but also shows that these evolve as the outcome of personal preferences and social influences.

Another way to make money, besides working, was to engage in illegal activities. Although the young men did not mention a criminal career as part of their future aspirations, most acknowledged the appeal of 'easy money'. Many also said it was easy to get into these kinds of activities through local social networks, and that the neighbourhood formed a context in which this was seen as acceptable. Christian, for example, initially aspired to become a lawyer, and he started secondary higher general education. However, for reasons described below, he had to switch to vocational education and was eventually kicked out of school because of truancy and bad behaviour. He noted:

> Until I was 14 I was a very gentle kid (…) I had good grades, was gaming a lot, had a couple of good friends. And then it started, suddenly I had another group of friends, and they started doing things (…) I did some criminal things with people from my neighbourhood, stealing and stuff.
>
> […] That this is seen as nothing serious, is because of the neighbourhood I live in. It's all being made easier here, if you know what I mean […]. Because I see it happening around me, and it wasn't punished by the people around it, it influenced my thoughts.

While Christian's narrative shows the negative influence of the neighbourhood social environment on his aspirations, several others saw deviant activities as ineffective for achieving their long-term aspirations. As noted by Efe: '*You see it happening: a boy sells drugs, gets arrested*'. Marouane expanded:

> There are quite some people that are a bit stuck in life. But I don't really take notice, you know. You just have to think: I don't want to be like them. Instead I just want to work, and raise my [future] children, things like that.

Most of the young men, like Marouane, felt that they were not 'passively' influenced by the neighbourhood social environment, or more specifically by their peers. They emphasise their own agency, deciding to focus on school, work or raising a family.

Most of the young men were aware of the importance of choosing the right (neighbourhood) friends. Damin and Yassin, both holding high aspirations, are rather selective about who to hang around with. Damin, who described himself as ambitious regarding school and work and also stressed the importance of staying physically fit, felt supported in his selectivity by his neighbourhood friends:

> The friends I hang around with have the same points of view as I have. Regarding the future … having a good job, work, training together [fitness]. They have the same motivation, or insights, what is important.

Similarly, Yassin, who described himself as rather successful, having found a good job in accountancy, explained:

> I used to have a very large group of friends […] but I learned from my mistakes. You notice that people start talking behind your back, making things up to defame you. Because they see you becoming successful. In the end I chose to reduce my group of friends, and only hang out with the people I know from the beginning. And they really stimulate me.

These narratives depict the neighbourhood as a place of connections. They describe the forms and functions of locally situated connections that influence one's current activities and aspirations. These connections are being navigated by the young men in different ways, illustrating the interaction between individual agency and neighbourhood structures. Through the young men's activities, the social context is also relationally reproduced or challenged. The social interactions and behaviour of people shape the local social and physical environment and help create 'context' for their neighbours (Cummins et al. 2007). On the one hand, the young men talk about how negative norms and values are being reproduced by young people in the neighbourhood. Rafik, for example, notes that '*Many children look up to older ones. When the young people of 16, 17 do bad things, the little ones think that's tough and will do the same later. And so everything continues …* '. At the same time, the overt agency in the narrative of for example Marouane challenges the idea that deviant behaviour is the norm in deprived neighbourhoods, and as such might contribute to creating an environment that stimulates (younger) peers to do well in school and work.

Discussion

This study investigated how young ethnic minority men from low-income neighbourhoods experienced and navigated the impact of the neighbourhood social environment on their educational and occupational aspirations. It showed that there is not one single, uniform way of growing up in a low-income neighbourhood. What the narratives had in common was that almost all of the respondents aimed for rather mainstream futures: a good level of education and a good job. Even though they recognised the problems in – and the negative reputation of – their neighbourhood, they felt neither constrained in their horizons nor discouraged by their immediate circumstances or experiences (see also Kintrea, St Clair, and Houston 2015). Other studies on young people in low-income neighbourhoods tend to approach them as a unitary group and to concentrate on the negative effects of growing up in these neighbourhoods (McKendrick, Scott, and Sinclair 2007; MacDonald and Marsh 2001). The youth transitions discussed in this study, however, show that such descriptions may be too simplistic. The young men we interviewed had to deal with the negative consequences of living in a deprived neighbourhood, but they also developed different ways to counter these. This is in line with St Clair and Benjamin's performative and dynamic model of aspirations (2011) that shifts the emphasis away from deficit thinking towards

a resource-based model, under the assumption that people are doing the best they can with what is available to them.

While the young men's aspirations and experiences that influenced them are heterogeneous, the formation of their aspirations has several things in common, which is the key insight of our study. First of all, young adults' aspirations are constructed from the perceived **social resources** available to them through particular (neighbourhood) places and people. The social contacts within and outside the neighbourhood influenced how young men think about their future, while the neighbourhood stigma imposed by outsiders – and how this stigma is acted upon – can also play a role. Our findings are in line with the notion of St Clair and Benjamin (2011) of aspirations having performative value: they reflect the expectations and constraints inherent in the different (social) settings young people find themselves in and are determined by genuine expectations for the future, but also by the contextual needs of the moment. Furthermore, the young men's stories revealed reciprocal relations between the neighbourhood context and young men's behaviour; through their behaviour and choices they either reproduce or challenge the aspirations prevailing among their peers. Future research needs to take into account that young people shape their aspirations in ways that both reflect and feed back into their social contexts.

The second commonality is that the young men's aspirations were formed through the **active navigation** of (neighbourhood) social space. The respondents were not 'passively' influenced by their neighbourhood but consciously made choices between school, work and other activities or about who to hang around and who to avoid. Many of the young men indicated that *they* were the ones who had positive aspirations and actively adopted ways to achieve these aspirations, emphasising their own agency, while they perceived others in their neighbourhood as failing. In line with Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) individualisation thesis, this illustrates that young men feel responsible for their life-course and feel they can actively shape their own life (see also Wyn and Woodman 2006). At the same time, they might minimise their perceptions of discrimination and the negative effects of living in a deprived neighbourhood. Such perceptions may be psychologically threatening, thwart their sense of belonging, and put a strain on their social interactions (Bourguignon et al. 2006).

Thirdly, the narratives showed that the young men's choices and situations were not static but **evolving** (see also St Clair and Benjamin 2011). Some switched between school and work, some connected with or broke away from neighbourhood friends, which impacted their aspirations. Moreover, through different – often neighbourhood-based – experiences and by becoming older, they adjusted their aspirations, in accordance with the notion of 'learning time'. Research and policies regarding transitions to adulthood could take this notion into account. Right now, policy and practice emphasise the extent to which a successful and timely transition into adulthood has happened. Instead, attention should be paid to the processes and choices in young people's transitions, not just to the outcomes. As Skrbis et al. (2012, 68) explain, in current society '*life pathways are no longer consistently ordered, the markers that indicate progression from childhood to adulthood (e.g. the end of full time education, the commencement of paid work, marriage, childrearing) become ambiguous*'. Rather than following a linear transition into adulthood, there is increasingly room for changing the order of the different stages in these transitions, to omit particular stages or to return to an earlier stage (Brannen and Nilsen 2002).

Neighbourhoods are thus more than loci of obstacles and opportunities for educational and occupational aspirations among young minority men. In the construction and maintenance of connections to people and places, we see the development of a networked or relational sense of place. Our study indicates a need to explore the meaning of 'neighbourhood' through a relational lens; that is, studying the neighbourhood as a set of relations that are continually made and re-made (Jones 2009). Our findings highlight that young men navigate these sets of neighbourhood relations in different ways and that they can influence aspirations in dynamic ways.

Notes

1. Wirth (1945): a minority group is: *'any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.'*. The young men in our study are considered a minority because of their non-Dutch ethnic background.
2. In the Netherlands the term 'person with a migration background' is used if the person or at least one of the parents was born outside the Netherlands. This definition is also used by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) to describe the composition of neighbourhoods, divided into the percentage of people with a western migration background, non-western migration background, and native Dutch.
3. Overvecht is one statistical area in the municipal databases, divided in several rather similar sub-neighbourhoods. Zuilen is part of a larger statistical area 'Northwest', and also within the Zuilen neighbourhood a distinction can be made between a gentrifying part and a part that is more disadvantaged. Therefore when presenting the data for Zuilen, the range is given for the different percentages of the sub-neighbourhoods.
4. While in our study the young men's experiences did not seem to differ by migration background, differences in experience between and within migrant groups would be an interesting avenue for future research.
5. All participants were born in the Netherlands, but had at least one parent born abroad. The young men self-identified with the Dutch nationality as well as with the ethic/cultural background of their parents.
6. In the final grade of primary school, around age 12, students are steered to one of three main tracks based on their abilities, as assessed by a primary school leavers attainment test (CITO) and teacher recommendations. The tracks are pre-university (vwo), higher general education (Havo, giving access to university of applied sciences) and vocational school (vmbo). Vocational school consists of four learning paths ranging from more theoretical courses to more vocational courses: the theoretical, mixed, middle management-oriented and basic profession-oriented learning path. Post-secondary vocational education (mbo) also has four levels ranging from assistant training (level 1) to middle-management training (level 4). Education is compulsory until the age of 18 or until a basic qualification has been obtained (graduated havo, vwo or first two years of mbo).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by Utrecht University, Dynamics of Youth.

ORCID

Kirsten Visser http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3680-5794
Catrin Finkenauer http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5429-0627
Gonneke W.J.M. Stevens http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9929-7972

References

Abrams, F. 2010. *Learning to Fail: How Society Lets Young People Down*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Anderson, E. 2000. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: WW Norton & Company.

Andersson, R., S. Musterd, G. Galster, and T. Kauppinen. 2007. "What Mix Matters? Exploring the Relationships Between Individuals' Incomes and Different Measures of Their Neighbourhood Context." *Housing Studies* 22 (5): 637–660.

Archer, L., S. Hollingworth, and A. Halsall. 2007. "`University's not for Me — I'm a Nike Person': Urban, Working-Class Young People's Negotiations of `Style', Identity and Educational Engagement." *Sociology* 41 (2): 219–237.

Archer, L., S. Hollingworth, and H. Mendick. 2010. *Urban Youth and Schooling*. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education.

Baars, S. W. 2014. *Place, Space and Imagined Futures: How Young People's Occupational Aspirations are Shaped by the Areas They Live in*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester.

Barry, M. 2005. *Youth Policy and Social Inclusion*. London: Routledge.

Bauder, H. 2001. "Culture in the Labor Market: Segmentation Theory and Perspectives of Place." *Progress in Human Geography* 25 (1): 37–52.

Beck, U., and E. Beck-Gernsheim. 2002. *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*. London: Sage.
Bourdieu, P., and L. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Bourguignon, D., E. Seron, V. Yzerbyt, and G. Herman. 2006. "Perceived Group and Personal Discrimination: Differential Effects on Personal Self-Esteem." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 36 (5): 773–789.
Brannen, J., and A. Nilsen. 2002. "Young People's Time Perspectives: From Youth to Adulthood." *Sociology* 36 (3): 513–537.
Brown, G. 2011. "Emotional Geographies of Young People's Aspirations for Adult Life." *Children's Geographies* 9 (1): 7–22.
Brown, G. 2013. "The Revolt of Aspirations: Contesting Neoliberal Social Hope." *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 12 (3): 419–430.
BRP. 2021. *Basisregistratie Personen*, Gemeente Utrecht, on: utrecht.incijfers.nl, last accessed 29-11-2021.
Burke, P. J. 2006. "Men Accessing Education: Gendered Aspirations." *British Educational Research Journal* 32 (5): 719–733.
Cahill, C. 2000. "Street Literacy: Urban Teenagers' Strategies for Negotiating Their Neighbourhood." *Journal of Youth Studies* 3 (3): 251–277.
CBS. 2017. *CBS in uw Buurt: 'Overvecht' and 'Noordwest'*, https://cbsinuwbuurt.nl/, accessed on 20-8-2020.
CBS. 2018. *Opleidingsniveau per Wijk*. Den Haag: CBS.
Charsley, K., and H. Wray. 2015. "Introduction: The Invisible (Migrant) Man." *Men and Masculinities* 18 (4): 403–423.
Chaskin, R. J. 2013. "Integration and Exclusion: Urban Poverty, Public Housing Reform, and the Dynamics of Neighborhood Restructuring." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 647 (1): 237–267.
Croll, P. 2008. "Occupational Choice, Socio-Economic Status and Educational Attainment: A Study of the Occupational Choices and Destinations of Young People in the British Household Panel Survey." *Research Papers in Education* 23 (3): 243–268.
Cummins, S., S. Curtis, A. V. Diez-Roux, and S. Macintyre. 2007. "Understanding and Representing 'Place' in Health Research: A Relational Approach." *Social Science & Medicine* 65 (9): 1825–1838.
Evans, K. 2002. "Taking Control of Their Lives? Agency in Young Adult Transitions in England and the New Germany." *Journal of Youth Studies* 5 (3): 245–269.
Evans, K. 2007. "Concepts of Bounded Agency in Education, Work, and the Personal Lives of Young Adults." *International Journal of Psychology* 42 (2): 85–93.
Feliciano, C., and Y. R. Lanuza. 2016. "The Immigrant Advantage in Adolescent Educational Expectations." *International Migration Review* 50 (3): 758–792.
Fordham, S., and J. U. Ogbu. 1986. "Black Students School Success: Coping with the "Burden of 'Acting White'"." *The Urban Review* 18 (3): 176–206.
Furlong, A., A. Biggart, and F. Cartmel. 1996. "Neighbourhoods, Opportunity Structures and Occupational Aspirations." *Sociology* 30 (3): 551–565.
Galster, G. C. 2012. "The Mechanism(s) of Neighbourhood Effects: Theory, Evidence, and Policy Implications." In *Neighbourhood Effects Research: New Perspectives*, edited by M. van Ham, D. Manley, N. Bailey, L. Simpson, and D. Maclennan, 23–56. Dordrecht: Springer.
Gewirth, A. 1998. *Self-Fulfillment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Gorard, S., B. H. See, and P. Davies. 2012. *The Impact of Attitudes and Aspirations on Educational Attainment and Participation*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
Gotham, K. F. 2003. "Toward an Understanding of the Spatiality of Urban Poverty: The Urban Poor as Spatial Actors." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27 (3): 723–737.
Gottfredson, L. S. 1981. "Circumscription and Compromise: A Developmental Theory of Occupational Aspirations." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 28 (6): 545.
Granovetter, M. S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (6): 1360–1380.
Gunter, A. 2008. "Growing Up Bad: Black Youth, Road Culture and Badness in an East London Neighbourhood." *Crime, Media, Culture* 4 (3): 349–366.
Gutman, L., and R. Akerman. 2008. *Determinants of Aspirations*. Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning: University of London.
Hardgrove, A., E. Rootham, and L. McDowell. 2015. "Possible Selves in a Precarious Labour Market: Youth, Imagined Futures, and Transitions to Work in the UK." *Geoforum* 60: 163–171.
Harding, D. J. 2009. "Violence, Older Peers, and the Socialization of Adolescent Boys in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods." *American Sociological Review* 74 (3): 445–464.
Horton, J., and P. Kraftl. 2006. "What Else? Some More Ways of Thinking and Doing 'Children's Geographies'." *Children's Geographies* 4 (01): 69–95.

Jones, M. 2009. "Phase Space: Geography, Relational Thinking, and Beyond." *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (4): 487–506.

Kao, G., and M. Tienda. 1998. "Educational Aspirations of Minority Youth." *American Journal of Education* 106 (3): 349–384.

Kintrea, K., R. St Clair, and M. Houston. 2015. "Shaped by Place? Young People's Aspirations in Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods." *Journal of Youth Studies* 18 (5): 666–684.

Koster, M., and K. J. Mulderij. 2011. *Gezellig en Gewend: Jongeren Over Wonen en de Toekomst in een Herstructureringswijk*. SWP Publishers: Amsterdam.

Levitas, R., C. Pantazis, E. Fahmy, D. Gordon, E. Lloyd-Reichling, and D. Patsios. 2007. *The Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion*. Bristol: University of Bristol.

Lewis, O. 1959. *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty*. New York: Basic Books.

Lin, N. 1999. "Building a Network Theory of Social Capital." *Connections* 22 (1): 28–51.

Lupton, R., and K. Kintrea. 2011. "Can Community-Based Interventions on Aspirations Raise Young People's Attainment?" *Social Policy and Society* 10 (3): 321–335.

MacDonald, R., and J. Marsh. 2001. "Disconnected Youth?" *Journal of Youth Studies* 4 (4): 373–391.

Martin, D. G. 2003. "Enacting Neighborhood." *Urban Geography* 24 (5): 361–385.

Marzi, S. 2018. "'We are Labeled as Gang Members, Even Though We Are Not': Belonging, Aspirations and Social Mobility in Cartagena." *Development Studies Research* 5 (1): 15–25.

McKendrick, J. 2015. "The Spectre of Poverty in Distant Futures Without University: Reflecting on Aspirations for Their Pre-Adolescent Children among Parents from Deprived Neighbourhoods in Glasgow." *Scottish Educational Review* 47 (2): 100–104.

McKendrick, J., G. Scott, and S. Sinclair. 2007. "Dismissing Disaffection: Young People's Attitudes Towards Education, Employment and Participation in a Deprived Community." *Journal of Youth Studies* 10 (2): 139–160.

McKenzie, L. 2015. *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Milner IV, H. R. 2007. "Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen." *Educational Researcher* 36 (7): 388–400.

MiMen. 2015. *Experiences of Young Migrant Men and Their Well-Being. An Empirical Study from Seven European Countries*. CJD Hamburg + Eutin: Hamburg.

Morrow, V. 2008. "Ethical Dilemmas in Research with Children and Young People About Their Social Environments." *Children's Geographies* 6 (1): 49–61.

Musterd, S., R. Andersson, G. Galster, and T. Kauppinen. 2008. "Are Immigrants' Earnings Influenced by Characteristics of Their Neighbours?" *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 40 (4): 785–805.

Nayak, A. 2006. "Displaced Masculinities: Chavs, Youth and Class in the Post-Industrial City." *Sociology* 40 (5): 813–831.

Pimlott-Wilson, H. 2011. "The Role of Familial Habitus in Shaping Children's Views of Their Future Employment." *Children's Geographies* 9 (1): 111–118.

Quaglia, R. J., and C. D. Cobb. 1996. "Toward a Theory of Student Aspirations." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 12 (3): 127–132.

Raco, M. 2009. "From Expectations to Aspirations: State Modernisation, Urban Policy, and the Existential Politics of Welfare in the UK." *Political Geography* 28 (7): 436–444.

Reay, D. 2004. "'It's All Becoming a Habitus': Beyond the Habitual Use of Habitus in Educational Research." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25 (4): 431–444.

Salikutluk, Z. 2016. "Why Do Immigrant Students Aim High? Explaining the Aspiration–Achievement Paradox of Immigrants in Germany." *European Sociological Review* 32 (5): 581–592.

Schoon, I., and S. Parsons. 2002. "Teenage Aspirations for Future Careers and Occupational Outcomes." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 60 (2): 262–288.

SCP. 2020. *De Sociale Staat van Nederland – Onderwijs*. Den Haag: SCP.

Sharkey, P., and J. W. Faber. 2014. "Where, When, Why, and for Whom Do Residential Contexts Matter? Moving Away from the Dichotomous Understanding of Neighborhood Effects." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40: 559–579.

Shildrick, T., and R. MacDonald. 2007. "Biographies of Exclusion: Poor Work and Poor Transitions." *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 26 (5): 589–604.

Sinclair, S., J. H. McKendrick, and G. Scott. 2010. "Failing Young People? Education and Aspirations in a Deprived Community." *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 5 (1): 5–20.

Skrbis, Z., M. Western, B. Tranter, D. Hogan, R. Coates, J. Smith, B. Hewitt, and M. Mayall. 2012. "Expecting the Unexpected: Young people's Expectations about Marriage and Family." *Journal of Sociology* 48 (1): 63–83.

St Clair, R., and A. Benjamin. 2011. "Performing Desires: The Dilemma of Aspirations and Educational Attainment." *British Educational Research Journal* 37 (3): 501–517.

Teney, C., P. Devleeshouwer, and L. Hanquinet. 2013. "Educational Aspirations among Ethnic Minority Youth in Brussels: Does the Perception of Ethnic Discrimination in the Labour Market Matter? A Mixed-Method Approach." *Ethnicities* 13 (5): 584–606.

Threadgold, S. 2011. “Should I Pitch My Tent in the Middle Ground? On ‘Middling Tendency’, Beck and Inequality in Youth Sociology.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 14: 381–393.
Threadgold, S., and P. Nilan. 2009. “Reflexivity of Contemporary Youth, Risk and Cultural Capital.” *Current Sociology* 57 (1): 47–68.
Tunstall, R., A. Green, R. Lupton, S. Watmough, and K. Bates. 2014. “Does Poor Neighbourhood Reputation Create a Neighbourhood Effect on Employment? The Results of a Field Experiment in the UK.” *Urban Studies* 51 (4): 763–780.
Utrecht, Gemeente. 2017. *Armoedemonitor* 2017. Utrecht: Gemeente Utrecht.
Utrecht, Gemeente. 2018. *Van Wijkaanpak Naar Buurtaanpak*. Utrecht: Gemeente Utrecht.
Utrecht, Politie. 2019. *Criminaliteit per 1000 Inwoners. Utrecht: Politie Utrecht.*
Utrecht, Gemeente. 2019. *Inwonersenquête*. Utrecht: Gemeente Utrecht.
Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, W. 2008. “Concentrating on Participation: Ethnic Concentration and Labour Market Participation of Four Ethnic Groups.” *Schmollers Jahrbuch (Zeitschrift fur Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften)* 128 (1): 153–173.
Van Ham, M., and D. Manley. 2010. “The Effect of Housing Tenure Mix on Labour Market Outcomes: a Longitudinal Investigation of Neighbourhood Effects.” *Journal of Economic Geography* 10 (2): 257–282.
Vigh, H. 2010. “Youth Mobilisation as Social Navigation. Reflections on the Concept of Dubriagem.” *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 18/19: 140–164.
Visser, K. 2019. “‘I Would Rather Choose a Mixed School’: Young People’s Secondary School Choice in a low-Income, Multi-Ethnic Neighbourhood.” In *Youth and the Politics of the Present: Coping with Complexity and Ambivalence*, edited by E. Colombo, and P. Rebughini, 153–164. London and New York: Routledge.
Visser, K., G. Bolt, and R. van Kempen. 2015. “’Come and Live Here and You’ll Experience It’: Youths Talk About Their Deprived Neighbourhood.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 18 (1): 36–52.
Visser, K., F. Sichling, and R. J. Chaskin. 2016. “Hot Times, Hot Places. Youths’ Risk Perceptions and Risk Management in Chicago and Rotterdam.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 20 (6): 763–779.
Visser, K., and A. K. Tersteeg. 2020. “Young People are the Future? Comparing Adults’.and Young People’s Perceptions and Practices of Diversity in a Highly Diverse Neighbourhood”. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 110 (2): 209–222.
Wirth, L. 1945. “The Problem of Minority Groups.” In *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*, edited by R. Linton, 347–372. New York: Columbia University Press.
Woodman, D. 2009. “The Mysterious Case of the Pervasive Choice Biography: Ulrich Beck, Structure/Agency, and the Middling State of Theory in the Sociology of Youth.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 12 (3): 243–256.
Wyn, J., and D. Woodman. 2006. “Generation, Youth and Social Change in Australia.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 9 (5): 495–514.