

# Dropping out in a culture of poverty?

A case study on secondary and tertiary school dropouts on Curaçao



**Marleen Revenberg**

August 2015

Radboud University Nijmegen



MINISTERIE VAN  
**ONDERWIJS, WETENSCHAP,  
CULTUUR & SPORT**



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*"Differences cannot be denied. They are a given and thus a point of departure for every attempt at meeting. We have to accept that there are distinctions in character, ethnic origins, social status, sexual preference, talent and upbringing. Difference is a part of the richness of being human. But where differences lead to inequality of treatment and to injustice, then each of us is called on to oppose it".*

- Queen Beatrix, Christmas Speech, December, 2002





Cirkels, circles

Sirkulo, Sirkulooo circles, circles  
Dunami bo man i djis konfiami give me your hand and just trust me  
Dunami bo man, kere den mi give me your hand and believe in me  
Kibra e sirkulo visioso life is a vicious circle  
Sa ku bo mes por disidi know that you can decide  
Ta bo ta doño di bo bida you are the owner of your life  
Dunami bo man i djis konfiami i pone bo fe den mi give me your hand , trust me, put your faith in me  
Pone bo fe den mi put your faith in me

Pijn is er om je sterker te maken  
De wereld draait rondjes daarom erven we kwalen en dragen we leed van onze moeders  
en van onze vaders en hun voorvaders,  
doormiddel van gewoontes en verhalen  
Mayra heeft een vertes voor die tuigicus,  
en Mayra heeft een baby in haar buik zitten  
de verwekker kent ze nauwelijks, maar natuurlijk houdt ze het, 13 jaar kijkt op naar haar oude zus  
Juraïsa kort rokje voelt zich vrouwelijk, alles wat ze aan haar zusje vertelt is vertrouwelijk.  
Altijd bezig, 2 kleine verschillende vaders, opgehaald door verschillende boys en verschillende wagens.  
Ze behandelen haar met respect maar zijn na het seksen weg, naar de volgende gewillige dame.  
Nu wilt dr zusje ook kinderen baren,  
we erven wat we voorgeschoteld krijgen, kijk hoe we cirkels maken.

Dunami bo man i djis konfiami give me your hand and just trust me  
Dunami bo man, kere den mi give me your hand and believe in me  
Kibra e sirkulo visioso life is a vicious circle  
Sa ku bo mes por disidi know that you can decide  
Ta bo ta doño di bo bida you are the owner of your life  
Dunami bo man i djis konfiami i pone bo fe den mi give me your hand , trust me, put your faith in me  
Pone bo fe den mi put your faith in me

Op school werd die gepest door de donkere kids, simpelweg omdat hij nog een paar tinten donkerder is.  
Mama zegt hem: focus, trek je d'r niks van aan.  
Trots van zijn moeder lief, en Robin is zijn naam.  
Ga'i chiki bo ta zeggen jongens tegen hem als die stoer wil doen, meer geen één van hem beledigd hem.  
Uit respect voor zijn grote broer doen ze rustig.  
Als Juny praat over zijn broer, hoort hij zijn moeder zuchten.  
Want kleine Juny's broer zit vast, en ze hadden een relatie die moeilijk was.  
Want elke keer dat hij zag pakte zijn broer het af,  
dus nu gaat die z'n snoepjes zoeken in zijn broer z'n kast.  
Hij vindt zijn snoepjes en hij vindt er een pistool bij, en morgen krijgt hij ruzie op het schoolplein.  
En mama zei hem: Ga naar school anders krijg je klappen  
Maar blijkbaar erft hij zijn grote broer zijn eigenschappen.

Cirkels

Wat ik ook doe ik kan je cirkels niet verbreken,  
Wat ik ook doe dat moet je zelf  
Ik weet niet hoe, ik al je wonden moet genezen  
Maar geef me je hart, heb vertrouwen, geloof me en steun op mij  
Ik zal er zijn

Dunami bo man i djis konfiami give me your hand and just trust me  
Dunami bo man, kere den mi give me your hand and believe in me  
Kibra e sirkulo visioso life is a vicious circle  
Sa ku bo mes por disidi know that you can decide  
Ta bo ta doño di bo bida you are the owner of your life

Maar geef mij je hand, heb vertrouwen, geloof me en steun op mij

Dunami bo man i djis konfiami give me your hand and just trust me  
Dunami bo man, kere den mi give me your hand and believe in me  
Kibra e sirkulo visioso life is a vicious circle  
Sa ku bo mes por disidi know that you can decide  
Ta bo ta doño di bo bida you are the owner of your life  
Dunami bo man i djis konfiami i pone bo fe den mi give me your hand , trust me, put your faith in me  
Pone bo fe den mi put your faith in me

Figure 1: Lyrics Cirkels - Fresku ft. Izaline Calister (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yvS3TEj7ok>. English translation can be retrieved in Appendix II)

## Preface

Marginalized people in society always have been in my vizier. I want to understand how they have gotten in such positions and what processes underlie that they became marginalized. Something in me also wants to offer a helping hand to these people. The first time that I did this abroad, was in an orphanage in Ghana in 2010. I was working as a volunteer there for three months. In 2013 I did a research in Morocco with a focus on single mothers for five months and now, in 2015 on school dropouts on Curaçao for three months. So the latter was already the third time that I have been abroad for a longer period of time. These journeys have given me many insights into the complexity of different cultures and different local effects of global processes. Moreover, what these journeys have shown me is, that Human Geography was the right choice for me. For me, it combines what I consider as important in life and to that end it combines passion with studying: human rights, marginalized people and sustainability with people at the heart of the web.

My internship of three months on Curaçao at the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, and more specifically the Mandatory Social Training, gave me the opportunity to do actual fieldwork research on Curaçao. This gave me the chance to observe the perspectives of school dropouts on their position in society. I own a big thanks you to Lizette Sambo-Velder and Patricia Pedro-Trustfull who gave me the opportunity to get into contact with 'their' school dropouts and many experts and who always lent me a hand. I would also like to thank all the others at the Ministry. You all made me smile every day!

I also owe much gratitude to Athena Cordilia, my translator, for her kind assistance. We have worked so many times together and she kept her spirit up, although we had some setbacks when the school dropouts did not attend. I am glad that we worked together well and that we have become good colleagues.

A special thanks to my uncle, aunt and cousins on Curaçao where I lived for 3 months! Thanks to them I felt like I lived there instead of only feeling like being a visitor or tourist for that period of time. And I was glad to have conversations with you about everything on Curaçao and my empirical data; they were valuable conversations to me. Also special thanks to my supervisor Lothar Smith for all the inspiration in the writing process of this thesis. The broad view with so many ideas and the lifting of sections to next levels are things that I really appreciate in the supervising and it has always helped me in my writing process. Furthermore, special thanks to my family, boyfriends, roommates and friends who were always there for me.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all the wonderful people I met on Curaçao during the interviews, symposiums and observations. Their enthusiasm and generosity showed me a relaxing attitude in life again. The contact with all the people of Curaçao also made me understand the song

Cirkels that is depicted in Figure 1. For me this song became a sort of Mantra during my research. It somehow says that certain things in life are already determined, with special regard to family, neighborhoods and social networks. Everywhere and everytime on Curaçao I saw elements of this song. But in contradiction to this, the lesson to be learned in this song is that one can escape what was written for him or her in advance and one can go his or her own way. This is what I saw everywhere and everytime on Curaçao as well.

However, this song is not to push you into a certain direction, neither to influence your mindset. Instead, this song is to take you with me in the context and spheres of Dushi Korsou. Accept my invitation into these atmospheres and listen to the song prior to reading this thesis!

Happy reading,

Marleen Revenberg

August 2015





*Figure 2: Street in Berg Altena*

## Executive summary

This thesis had the purpose to gain insight in possible factors influencing the motives of adolescents to drop out of secondary or tertiary education on Curaçao. To get insight in this, the umbrella of the situation of school dropouts in the society of Curaçao, is the causality between poverty and education, in which education as a phenomenon can be seen as a part of broader processes of the welfare model, globalization and social justice. Education often is perceived by society as the model for development, as well as the norm in society. To that end, this thesis will go beyond this society-perceived perception by taking self-perceived perceptions of school dropouts and their situation in society as an empirical starting point.

Mainly school dropouts enrolled in the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (OWCS) - my internship - are the target group, so I will not generalize all school dropouts on Curaçao. In order to sketch a general profile of these specific target group of school dropouts, big differences between them and their background are revealed. The respondents cover a substantial heterogeneity of respondents, whose backgrounds link to a particular set of variables that matter. Apparently, the group of school dropouts concerns a diverse group of people who not always find themselves in poverty-related circumstances. For some school dropouts poverty-related economic and social factors play an important role to drop out of school. But some blame other factors for their dropping out, like that they do not acknowledge the relevance of school for their development, with which school dropouts distinguish themselves from society by having a different norm. This points to more factors than only poverty as a cause of the phenomenon of dropping out of education. To that end, there are distinguished different internal, external, direct and indirect factors which can be economic, social, spatial and temporal factors that are interrelated to each other to a large extent.

Social factors are of frequent occurrence. Often, the families of school dropouts have a key role in the motives to drop out of school. These families are often single-parent families or families with mother and stepfather. Some of the parents live on social security, others are employed. Most of the respondents do not know if their parents are in the possession of a diploma. However, school dropouts often grow up in dysfunctional families, in which there is often physical abuse or neglect, no security net and lack of a role model. The dysfunctional families themselves do not realize that they are dysfunctional and therefore this dysfunctionality repeats itself from generation to generation. These families are part of the social network of school dropouts, but also friends are part of the social network of school dropouts. When addressed peer group pressure is possible, the social network can be a motive to drop out of school. Especially in the criminal or drugs circuit peer group pressure is a social factor. In this case, hardly attending school is a lifestyle.

The economic factors are interrelated with the social factors. This entails no access to money. It is alleged that these kind of school dropouts live in poverty. Often the respondents were in need of money, which was an important factor to drop out of school.

With regard to the temporal dimension, it is remarkable that all respondents who drop out at first temporal because they have the intention to finish school later. Though, in the meantime they do not attend school for several years. This points to short-sighted thinking of the dropouts. It is not unwillingness to go to school, but the temporal factors are more because of ignorance. Examples are pregnancies and becoming employed, which are respectively social and economic factors.

With regard to spatial factors, different flaws in systems can be addressed: flaws in the school systems, in the collaboration between different organizations and not sufficiently functioning of the police corps and the *Leerplicht*. These are all spatial factors that ease the motives to drop out. The flaw of these systems also pushes students away. Therefore these dropouts can be called pushouts as well.

An important part of that which influences the motives to drop out, are self-perceived perceptions and society-perceived perceptions of school dropouts and their future perspectives. Many of the school dropouts do not know what characteristics of a school dropout are, which points to their unawareness and a lightly mentally disabling. However, six out of twenty do identify themselves as school dropout, and six do not identify themselves as school dropout because they have the intention to finish school. Therefore, most of the respondents perceive themselves as a failure. In contrast with this vague self-perceived view, in society, school dropouts are often depicted and labeled as one group. Society-perceived characteristics of a school dropout are that they are lightly mentally disabled, they have problems with their behavior, they are unmotivated, rude, easily influenced by others, they have a bad self-image and they are short-term thinkers, they are not able to plan or foresee things, they do not speak Dutch and they come from poor, dysfunctional families. This points to the fact that many people draw conclusions about the whole disabled group of school dropouts, without looking at them as an individual.

When finding patterns in self-perceived future perspective, it is remarkable that dropouts all have primitive wishes for the future. By probing further, they point to the need of education to reach their goals in future, but most of them did not mention the need of education on their own initiative. A reason for this can be that they have idealistic ideas instead of realistic ideas about their future. Another reason can be that they are on the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training and give socially desirable answers. But most of all, they do not know how to have more chances in future, if they already think about their own future. Moreover, they are not aware of the need to plan their future. It seems to be easier for them to say something about the future of Curaçao or what they should do if they worked in government, instead of saying anything about their own future. In the future perspectives about Curaçao, insecurities about the future of Curaçao are of frequent occurrence.

Implicitly, this says something about their own future perspectives. Several assumptions are embedded in the future perspectives for Curaçao which could lead to better future perspectives for themselves. This seems to be unrealistic, and therefore they implicitly say that they are not sure if they will have good opportunities in the future themselves.

Society often perceives school dropouts as disabled and a fail in society, which can lead to fewer future perspectives. Moreover, generalizing can cause that an employer will not employ a school dropout. This can be strengthened by their appearance and performance, as there is a lack of social skills. Also the fact that they have a bad self-image limits their future perspectives. Furthermore, according to society school dropouts have less opportunities in future because they live day-by-day and do not plan. The fact that school dropouts are easily influenced is also causing less opportunities in future, as the peer group pressure or the lack of a good role model can lead to this. Society – in the sense of aid organizations – provides better future perspectives, but once school dropouts are discharged by such an organization it is likely that they will relapse into old habits, if school dropouts are not strong enough to give short shrift to the vicious circle of poverty. Moreover, it is the question whether or not this counts for all youth on Curaçao, by looking at the insufficient school system and the phenomenon of pushouts.

It can be concluded that dropping out of school on Curaçao is a broad phenomenon that is caused by many factors. Generalizing about the factors will cause overlooking the diversity of factors and people that are labeled as dropouts. Although a strong cohesion between dropout rate and poverty rate can be found, this is not the case in all parts of this research. Yet some respondents are not driven by poverty-related factors, since they do have economic resources or key language skills. For these dropouts other reasons than poverty-related reasons count. The phenomenon of dropping out of school is partly caused by poverty, but also by a suffocating system in society, which causes that school is not viewed as relevant by many in society and the norm of education as model for development is not acknowledged. By all means, it is not only poverty that causes the phenomenon.

Some people foresee other ways to success by acknowledging their human capital, without school or diploma. In the non-western world this is a more common phenomena, and it can be viewed as a lifestyle. This can cause a certain underdog position in the society of a group of people, to legitimate their own society-perceived fail. This underdog position or culture points to the culture of poverty to the model of Lewis (1966) in which it is likely that school dropouts find themselves. Several structural factors and persistent vulnerabilities that point to the phenomena of persistency of poverty can be addressed. This phenomena points to relative poverty, whereas absolute poverty points more to access to financial sources. The low access to money goes from generation to generation, which causes the persistency of the structural poverty and the poverty of an enduring type, as Du Toit (2005) argued. The social networks strengthen the disabled position of school dropouts with regard to future

perspectives, as they have social capital but they and people in their social network have a lack of human capital: no diploma and no knowledge of the Dutch post-colonial language. This leads to the fact that they cannot use their social network to obtain a job. The maintaining of the established order refers to a culture of poverty.

Where the culture of poverty has more to do with poor people, not all school dropouts are poor. Some do see changes in the global economy, which they cannot reach because of a glass ceiling in systems of society that keep them from changing. Though, this is widening the gap between poor and rich in society. No financial resources and no knowledge of the key language will widen this gap even more. While the interconnectedness between different parts of the world grows, the position and future perspectives of school dropouts will worsen. Therefore, it is likely that they are going to isolate themselves, while they were already excluded by others in society. But it can be argued reversely as well: it is not per se unjust that there is a gap between rich and poor in society, as people choose to live among others like themselves, as Michael Merry (2013) also argued. The gap between rich and poor in this case can be seen as a natural consequence of voluntary segregation, in which a culture of poverty does not have to be a problem of social injustice in society. According to Sen (1981) poverty can even be seen as a relative luxuriousness of the nation as a whole instead of suffering of the poor.

People that live in a culture of poverty become a problem for society if this causes the existence of two different cultures in two different circuits that are square to each other: informal and formal circuits. It is likely that the informal economy is important for people – such as school dropouts - in the lower circles of society. With regard to this informal economy, Castells (2010) goes one step further with his systematic inequality. According to Castells the future of irrelevant people - such as school dropouts - is already determined and in advance they do not have chances or prospects in future anymore. This includes school dropouts in the informal economy. These people form a new world: the Fourth World.

Nevertheless, school dropouts can be named Fourth World people or can cause social injustice in society because of the culture of poverty; it can also be seen as a natural consequence of voluntary segregation and relative luxuriousness of the nation as a whole. It is too simplistic to blame poverty-related problems for the existence of the phenomenon of dropping out of education. Moreover, generalizing about all school dropouts is not an aim and it is not possible since the research is conducted in a specific group of school dropouts on Curaçao. However, in order to prevent or limit the amount of school dropouts on Curaçao it is up to society to work on the embedding of education in society and it is up to the government to trigger the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of school dropouts or school dropouts in the making to make them part of society.





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*Figure 3: Expert session on school dropouts*

## 1. An introduction: exploring causality between poverty and education

*"Poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings".*

- Nelson Mandela, Make Poverty History Campaign, February 3, 2005

In this thesis secondary and tertiary school dropouts are central. In order to sketch an umbrella of their situation in society, this thesis provides insights in causality between poverty and education, in which education as a phenomenon can be seen as a part of the broader processes of the welfare model, globalization and social justice. Education often is perceived as the model for development in society. If school dropouts do not stick to this norm of attending education, this can have implications for the positive development of society, following the welfare model. Poverty processes can worsen these developments, as it can cause the disability to attend school. However, this thesis will go beyond this society-perceived perception by taking self-perceived perception of school dropouts as a starting point. With regard to this, the distinction between absolute and relative poverty will be a central distinction in this thesis. In this chapter, an introduction to the mentioned concepts will be provided. But before the elaboration of these concepts, some actual discussions on school dropouts in society of Curaçao will be highlighted.

### 1.1 Project Framework: An actual discussion highlighted

*"The number of school dropouts has been halved in 2020".*

-Statement made by Ralph Schreinemachers at an expert session on school dropouts: Action Program Youth Development Curaçao 2015-2020, March 12, 2015, Willemstad

One day in March I had the opportunity to attend an expert session on school dropouts. Several stakeholders from different organizations were present: stakeholders of the Ministry of OWCS (Education, Science, Culture and Sport), representatives of organizations in the field and directors of schools. This expert session was organized by the 'Action Program of Youth Development 2015-2020' and currently their main focus is to minimize the rate of school dropouts by bringing all stakeholders together. Therefore, it was really a big opportunity for me to be part of this action program and to get to know the stakeholders and their different perspectives on school dropouts.

In my opinion, one thing that happened in this session marks one discussion that is held in society nowadays. A number of statements were made, and all attendees were asked to move their

body to "yes", "no" or "in between". The most remarkable statement was: *"the number of school dropouts has been halved in 2020"*.

All stakeholders took their position, and I will never forget who attended which position. All stakeholders of the Ministries chose for "yes". Almost all stakeholders of the organizations in the field and directors of schools chose for the "no" option. I and some other doubters were in the middle - I was skeptic but took into account my position as research intern at the Ministry of OWCS, I will discuss this later on in this thesis. Why was there this clear separation between stakeholders?

The leaders of the session asked the people why, and the sector director of the Ministry of OWCS – who moved into "yes" – answered: *"Hope, we have to keep on believing that we can manage it. If we as Ministry do not believe in it, who else in our society does believe in it"*<sup>1</sup>.

The key word in her answer – *hope* – reveals the way systems on Curaçao works, especially in the Ministry. They believe in everything and they want everything to change and to get better. But they do not have the capacity to manage changes, as their mentality and culture is inactive and based on hierarchy and absence of collaboration. In contradiction, the stakeholders of organizations in the field who were attending at "no" seemed more realistic, as they stand closer to the school-dropouts. The reaction of these people on the quote of the sector director was irritation and astonishment. This explains the way society thinks about the policy of the Ministry. *"Nothing happens"* is commonly used by representatives, consisting of teachers of schools and organizations in the field. This indicates that there is a gap between practice and the policy at the Ministry. Nevertheless, there are many programs coordinated by the Ministries to minimize the rate of school dropouts, such as the Mandatory Social Training where I did my research internship.

Another discussion in society about the system of Curaçao focuses on the school system, as in every symposium or interview the question rises if we are speaking about dropouts or pushouts. The term pushout refers to victims of the school system, whereas the term dropout refers to other factors that cause somebody not going to school. I will elaborate on this later.

The wish of the Ministry to keep hopeful is strengthened by the pressure of the Netherlands which still provides subsidies, albeit that Curaçao is a country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, just like the Netherlands itself. In order to receive these subsidies they have to report about a policy and results, of course.

## 1.2 Poverty and social justice

According to Tromp (2007) – the director of the Central Bank – *"Curaçao's tourism is a rising star"*. Tourism – as a form of globalization - can be considered as the main contributor to the foreign exchange income and the welfare model of Curaçao with an amount of 24.4% according to the Central

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<sup>1</sup> Lizette Sambo-Velder, Sector Director Ministry of OWCS, March 12, 2015, Willemstad

Bank of Curaçao and St Martin (2014). However, putting this into context it seems that there is also another – more dark - side of the so called star, wherein it is presumably not the case that all citizens benefit of the tourism sector, or in other words globalization and the welfare model. This other side of the star refers to visible signs of *structural poverty* (e.g. Jaffe, 2006; Goede, 2009). According to the statistics of the Central Bureau of Statistics (2014), many citizens of Curaçao are facing poverty every single day. The most commonly used measurement of inequality and income disparity or distribution is the Gini coefficient<sup>2</sup>. On Curaçao this Gini coefficient amounted 0.412 in 1992, 0.423 in 2001 and 0.415 in 2011 (CBS, 2014). These numbers suggest Curaçao is a rather unequal place, regarding income distribution. Besides this indicator also other statistics of the Central Bureau of Statistics indicate that poverty is the order of the day for some citizens. Considering 2011 as Census, the CBS (2014) states that 25.1% of the households of Curaçao live below the poverty line and in 2001 this rate was even higher at 33.7%<sup>3</sup>.

Structural poverty is a century-old problem and can be taken in its broader sense of 'poverty of an enduring type'. Du Toit (2005, p.15) describes structural poverty as the following:

*Structural poverty is crucially shaped - and is likely to be maintained - by the interactions between asset poverty, cash hunger, job insecurity and unemployment, the 'thin-ness', limited nature, and ambiguity of 'social capital' and their subjection to exploitative power relations. These interactions renders sustained escape from poverty quite unlikely.*

According to Du Toit, people can hardly escape poverty if the ways in which they are positioned in society, such as their access to resources, have not been changed. Thereby, poverty related problems in society are growing in complexity and magnitude, whereas the resources of governments appear to be far from sufficient to stem the tide (e.g. Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). Structural poverty does not have a one-size-fits-all-solution. If structural poverty leads to the breakdown or disruption of society or to social or spatial injustice, the problem is growing in complexity and it becomes more difficult for governments to tackle the problem. This is not new and referring to the Christmas Speech by Queen Beatrix in 2002 differences in society are there on different scales: *"Difference is a part of the richness of being human. But where differences lead to inequality of treatment and to injustice, then each of us is called on to oppose it"*<sup>4</sup>. In addition, Nelson Mandela stated that poverty is man-made<sup>5</sup>, which refers to

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<sup>2</sup> This coefficient varies between 0 and 1, whereby 0 reflects complete equality and 1 indicates complete inequality; so the higher the coefficient, the more income inequality

<sup>3</sup> The poverty line is defined as the income level at which a household have sufficient resources to live a healthy life. The poverty line for a standard household – two adults and two children - is appointed at Naf. 2195,- per month (CBS, 2008). This absolute limit is lower than a social poverty line, in which besides physical needs, the need for a social life is taken into account.

<sup>4</sup> Queen Beatrix, Christmas Speech, December, 2002

<sup>5</sup> Nelson Mandela, Make Poverty History Campaign, February 3, 2005

the foundational principle for seeking to increase justice or to decrease injustice in society, as social and spatial injustice can be found in every society (Soja, 2010). According to Soja (2009) seeking to increase justice or decrease injustice is a fundamental objective in all societies, and so it is for the government of Curaçao, for sustaining human dignity, fairness and development progress.

Here a crucial point in this research is reached, as the government seeks to increase justice and claims that there is poverty, by referring to the statistics by the CBS. However, this refers to *absolute poverty*. Absolute poverty measurement is based on a comparison of resources to needs (Foster, 1998). According to Foster (1998) a person or family is identified as poor if its resources fall short of the poverty threshold. One can argue that this overlooks standards of living that varies one-for-one. In line with this, questions that arise are: what is the perception of poor people on Curaçao themselves? Do they also seek to increase social and spatial justice? Do they recognize themselves as being poor? Or is it a lifestyle and a way of living in a culture of poverty? These questions are taking into account the position of 'the poor', as perceived by themselves. This refers to relative poverty, and as it may be clear it is a world of difference from absolute poverty.

Relative poverty takes into account standards of living. For instance, the Human Development Report of the UNDP (2014) describes poverty as relative with the following dimensions: (a) the material standard of living, (b) the quality of social functioning and (c) the perception of one's own situation. One can refer to the *culture of poverty* model of Oscar Lewis (1966) and the report on the Negro Family by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965) as well. Lewis argued that sustained poverty generated a set of cultural attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices, and that this culture of poverty would tend to perpetuate itself over time, even if the structural conditions that originally gave rise to it were to change. Moynihan argued that the black family was caught in a tangle of pathology that resulted from the cumulative effects of slavery and the subsequent structural poverty that characterized the experience of many African Americans. This is also what can be found in the song *Cirkels* in Figure 1. In the culture of poverty model and the report the behavior of low-income population in reference to cultural factors is taken into account. Thereby, Sen (1981) emphasizes the relative component of some discussions that lead to the opinion that the prevalence of poverty in the country is not only a form of the suffering of the poor but of a relative luxuriousness of the nation as a whole.

One topic in which the 'absolute poverty versus relative poverty question' can be raised is the high amount of dropouts of school. Balfanz and Letgers (2004) found a strong relationship between absolute poverty and the dropout rate: the higher the percentage of a school's students living in absolute poverty, the higher the dropout rate. From a governmental point of view, this high amount of school dropouts indicates that something is fundamentally going wrong in society (e.g. CBS, 2014; Reda Sosial, 2004; Antilliaans Dagblad, 2014; UNICEF, 2013). For years and years there have been high amounts of school dropouts. Moreover, in the eighties and nineties the government of Curaçao

mentioned it the 'lost generation'. But nowadays a high amount of dropouts is still the order of the day. The question is if education is relevant in the eradication of poverty. Is education a model to gain development in society? And do school dropouts themselves want education? Does education work as the norm in society? Are dropouts the failure of the national economy and welfare model? Does education fit in the future perspectives of dropouts? And do dropouts identify themselves as dropouts? Or is dropping out of school a lifestyle? Do they see other possibilities for their future that they can reach without education?

### 1.3 School dropouts

According to the CBS (2015) the percentage of dropouts is the part of the population that does not have a graduation between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. The total percentage of dropouts on Curaçao - considering 2011 as Census - is estimated at 36.2%. This percentage represents the share of school dropouts relative to the total population, in which the population contains people older than 10 years old that do not attend school. In contradiction, in 2001 (Census 2001), this percentage was 45.2%. So ten years earlier the percentage was higher. Also the absolute amount of school dropouts was a little bit higher in Census 2001 (2592) compared to Census 2011 (2466). This is all scheduled in Table 1 below.

	Percentage	Absolute	Population*
<b>Census 2001</b>	45.2%	2592	5737
<b>Census 2011</b>	36.2%	2466	6811

*\*Population 10yrs+ and not attending school*

*Table 1: Amount and percentage of school dropouts by gender in Census 2001 and Census 2011 (Adapted from: CBS, 2015)*

In order to put these percentages in perspective: the average school dropout rate in the EU member states was 12% in 2012 (CBS, 2014). The Netherlands was having a dropout rate of only 2.1% in 2013 (CBS, 2014).

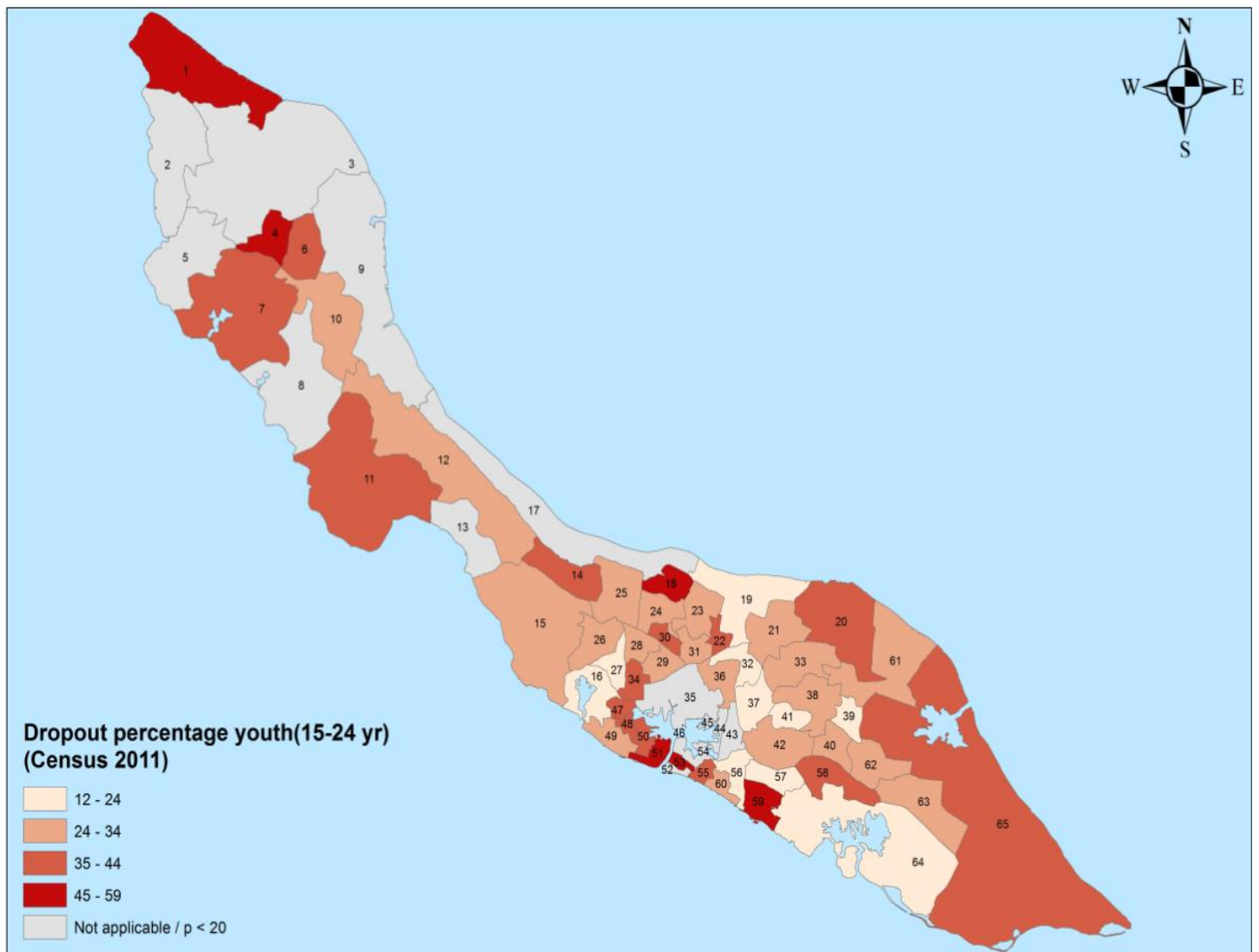
Of the people on Curaçao older than 10 years old and not attending school, 42.4% of all males is estimated as school dropout, whereas 29.1% of all females is estimated as school dropout. This can be seen in Table 2 (next page).

Census 2011	Percentage	Absolute	Population*
Male 15-24 years	42.4%	1536	3619
Female 15-24 years	29.1%	930	3192

\*Population 10yrs+ and not attending school

Table 2: Amount and percentage of school dropouts by gender (Adapted from: CBS, 2015)

The spatial dispersion of school dropouts is depicted in Map 1 below. The numbers of neighborhoods that correspond with the numbers on the map, are represented in Appendix I. The red areas, with the highest percentage of school dropouts are Seru Fortuna (18), Otrobanda (51), Scharloo (53) and Koraal Specht (59). These are areas with a high rate of unemployment and a high rate of people that live below the poverty line. In Chapter 4 of this thesis more attention will be given to the situation in neighborhoods on Curaçao.



Map 1: School dropout percentage youth (15-24 yr) (Source: CBS, 2014)

By zooming in more on school dropouts, their disadvantaged position in today's knowledge-based society comes into view, as they are not in the possession of a diploma. Partly because of this, there is a high rate of unemployment on Curaçao and many people live on social security as dropouts have a higher chance to become unemployed. Most of those who are registered as unemployed are unskilled or low-skilled workers, although these may not all be dropouts. The gap and mismatch between education and employment has widened, because it works on in the further career scope of these dropouts, as basic knowledge and language skills – not only Papiamentu – are lacking, but which are essential for employment opportunities, especially in the tourism sector. Besides, the personal and social development of school dropouts is in danger and they are at risk of a life of poverty and social exclusion. Dropouts also have a higher change to get behavioral problems and to become active in the informal or criminal circuit (CBS, 2015).

To provide these dropouts a second change to prepare for the labor market, the Mandatory Social Training<sup>6</sup> was implemented in 2006, which is part of the Ministry of OWCS since September 2014 (Rijksoverheid, 2010). The Mandatory Social Training is embedded in a legal framework and has a mandatory character. All adolescents of 16 up to 24 who fit the conditions are obligated to participate in the Mandatory Social Training. On structural basic more or less 500 adolescents are participating. The aim is to help them gaining a 'start qualification' for more opportunities at the labor market (Ministerie van OWCS, 2007).

Speaking in terms of absolute and relative poverty, it seems that the point of view of the dropouts and the government differ. Here we come to the main problem addressed in this proposal, which is that on the one hand there is a culture of poverty among the dropouts, whereas on the other hand the government is seeking to increase justice in society which can have an suffocating effect for dropouts, for example by providing the Mandatory Social Training by the Ministry of OWCS. This is rather paradoxical and a discrepancy can be addressed.

From the point of view of the dropouts in a culture of poverty, several factors can maintain their situation, such as their social networks including social capital, social cohesion and social control. These mechanisms may have - consciously or unconsciously - influences on their decisions or their position in life as these are part of the continuities of one's daily life (e.g. Karelis, 2007; Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts & Whatmore, 2012; Granovetter, 1973;1983; Curley, 2010). This may cause on the one hand safety, but on the other hand it may reinforce to get entangled in the social network that makes it more difficult to look out of the box and do other things than people in your network do. In this regard it is important to take into account the small-scale domesticity of people's lives, as well as the neighborhood in which they are living and the social network by which they are surrounded (Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

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<sup>6</sup> In Dutch: Sociale Vormingsplicht

#### 1.4 Research objectives and research questions

This thesis sheds a new light on the phenomenon of persistency of poverty, from an actor-oriented perspective. The emphasis is on the perceptions of those who dropped out of school. These perceptions are meaningful, since my internship will be at the Mandatory Social Training in the Ministry of OWCS on Curaçao. In supplementing to the lack of knowledge in the background of dropouts the Mandatory Social Training asked for, the effectiveness of their program can improve which can result in more justice in society, more development and less poverty, basically and simply speaking. Especially the perspectives of dropouts about their situation are useful in terms of effectiveness of programs. By using the vulnerable position of dropouts as a focus, it is able to obtain a richer understanding of the individual motives and trajectories of dropouts, as well as from the implications of such dropouts for the culture of poverty, a just society and development progress of society. More abstractly, this research adds deeper, contemporary insights in the motives to drop out, with which it is also able to provide specific recommendations for minimizing of the discrepancy between the point of view of the government and the point of view of dropouts. The following main question will be central in this research:

*What influences the motives of adolescent to drop out of secondary and tertiary schools on Curaçao?*

Sub questions that have been addressed are:

- 1) *What patterns can be found in general characteristics of adolescents that can play a role in their motives to drop out of school on Curaçao?*

This sub question can be considered as a descriptive question, in which the group of adolescents and general founded patterns will be described. Several school dropouts will be portrayed to describe the phenomenon of dropping out of school by adolescents and what their position is in society as a symptom. There will be shed light on this sub question in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

- 2) *What factors play a role in the motives of adolescents to drop out of school on Curaçao?*

This question can be considered as an explanatory question, by analyzing intern and extern conditions that causes their choice or that forces them to drop out of school. The created portraits in sub question one will be the starting point, from where motives and conditions will be elaborated on. A distinction will be made between economically, socially, spatially and temporally motives and dimensions, taken into account that they are interrelated with each other. This question critically

assesses the role of the different factors that underlie the motives to drop out of school. There will be shed light on this sub question in Chapter 6.

3) *What are self-perceived and society-perceived future perspectives for school dropouts on Curaçao?*

This question logically follows from the questions before. It sheds light on how dropouts view themselves and their position in society now and in future as well as (b) how people in society view them and see their position in society now and in future. In Chapter 7 of this thesis light will be shed on this sub question.

### 1.5 Societal relevance

Balfanz and Letgers (2004) found a strong relationship between absolute poverty and the dropout rate: The higher the percentage of a school's students living in absolute poverty, the higher the dropout rate. Structural poverty related problems in society are growing in complexity and magnitude, whereas the resources of governments anywhere in the world appear to be far from sufficient to stem the tide (e.g. Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). Structural poverty does not have a one-size-fits-all-solution. The Human Development Report (2014) argues that if people remain at risk of slipping back into poverty because of structural factors and persistent vulnerabilities, development progress will remain precarious. In other words this can be called the phenomena of *persistence of poverty*.

If school dropouts often find one selves in disabled positions in society that are related to the persistence of poverty, this can lead to a breakdown of society or to social and spatial injustice. Because of this, the relevance to research school dropouts and their backgrounds is heightened. School dropouts often will find oneself in the cycle of poverty without knowing about the possibility to skip this cycle, knowing how to skip this cycle or having possibilities to skip (Noguera, 2011). Neighborhoods where dropouts are living, often are also neighborhoods with a high unemployment rate and high percentages of poverty (CBS, 2015). This refers to the fact that school dropouts are living in a low socio-economic context. Indirectly or directly this context can influence the motives for dropouts to drop out of school. In this context, poverty can become self-perpetuating because there is created a social structure and network that can sustain the dynamics of poverty, as long as the school dropouts remain standing in the same context (Karelis, 2007). It becomes a matter of a closing circuit in which the cycle of poverty is likely to continue (Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Noguera, 2011). This circuit may be constructed without intention, but it may reinforce to get entangled in the social network, which can give rise to self-perpetuating as well. Because of this alleged entangling in the context and cycle of poverty there can be addressed a *context of persistency* in which dropouts are living and cannot escape and it is important to shed light on this. By focusing on the context, maybe

opportunities and interventions can be found to break through the context of persistency, to reach more opportunities for dropouts to go to school and less motives to drop out of school.

Furthermore, there can be a *discrepancy* between the point of view of the government and the point of view of the school dropouts. The dropouts are likely to have disabled position in society and are viewed as the fail of the national economy and welfare model, but it could be possible that they do not have a problem with their situation in society. The government is seeking to increase justice in society and to development of society, from the point of view that education is a key tool in development of a society, by trying to help dropouts with the Mandatory Social Training (Ministerie van OWCS, 2007). But the dropouts are viewed as dropouts, while it remains the question if they view themselves as dropouts as well and if they have the opinion that they need education for their future. To minimize the alleged discrepancy between the different points of views of the government and dropouts, it is worthwhile to research the feelings and perceptions of dropouts. Adding perspectives of dropouts in this case is valuable and it matters to fulfill the lack in knowledge, regarding their perspective of their position in society. If the problem definition of dropouts and the government does not match, it is a task for the government to make them match, by adapting their programs or by paying more attention to other institution that plays a role in the dropping out mechanisms. So the contribution of dropouts is requested in terms of effectiveness of programs of the government. If governments wish to get hold of a more effective poverty reduction policy, that requires knowledge of the lower groups of society. Social involvement and participation legitimize the research and shape a solid basic for actions in terms of recommendations for the Mandatory Social Training. By using the vulnerable position of dropouts as a focus, it is able to obtain a richer understanding of the individual motives and trajectories of dropouts, as well as from the implications of such dropouts for the culture of poverty, a just society and development progress of society to finally do recommendations for minimizing of the discrepancy between the point of view of the government and the point of view of dropouts.

Also an institution such as the World Bank with a generally quantitative attitude nowadays more applies the participation and qualitative method in poverty studies (Reda Sosial, 2004). Participative poverty investigation is a useful unique method for detecting the causes and the dynamics of poverty. For governments and other institutions concerned with poverty-related issues it is worthwhile to gain a better understanding of the real problems, the self-perpetuating of it and the backgrounds of people that drop out. Through gaining more insights in the background and motives of dropouts, the bull is taken by the horn which makes it relevance to research.

## 1.6 Scientific relevance

This research is embedded in the field of absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty often is referred to as a comparison of resources to needs (Foster, 1998). According to Foster (1998) a person or family is identified as poor if its resources fall short of the poverty threshold. As there are basically two standards for the determination for the same 'consumption norms' and the 'poverty line', the point of contradiction which has to be resolved is whether a person should be considered poor who falls short of the norms of prescribed standards of consumption or whose income lie below the poverty line.

But, in contradiction to absolute poverty some scholars take relative poverty as a starting point. This relative approach takes into account a standard of living that varies one-for-one. Thereby, Sen (1981) emphasizes the relative component of some discussions that lead to the opinion that the prevalence of poverty in the country is not only a form of the suffering of the poor but a relative luxuriousness of the nation as a whole. Also Lamont, Small and Harding (2010) point to a relative approach on poverty with regard to culture, which is back on the poverty agenda. The behavior of low-income population in reference to cultural factors is taken into account according to them. This is in line with the culture of poverty model of Oscar Lewis (1966) and the report on the Negro Family by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965). Lewis argued that sustained poverty generated a set of cultural attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices, and that this culture of poverty would tend to perpetuate itself over time, even if the structural conditions that originally gave rise to it were to change. Moynihan argued that the black family was caught in a tangle of pathology that resulted from the cumulative effects of slavery and the subsequent structural poverty that characterized the experience of many African Americans. Also the Human Development Report of the UNDP (2014) describes poverty as relative with the following dimensions: (a) the material standard of living, (b) the quality of social functioning and (c) the perception of one's own situation. Relative poverty can be taken in its broader sense of "poverty of long duration", as Du Toit (2005) argued.

It is important to provide insight in the causality between poverty and education. Balfanz and Letgers (2004) found a strong relationship between absolute poverty and the dropout rate: the higher the percentage of a school's students living in absolute poverty, the higher the dropout rate. Besides, the cultural background can have influences on the motives to drop out of school, which refers to relative poverty. It is worthwhile to shed light on the difference between absolute and relative poverty. This research goes beyond statistics by taking relative poverty as a starting point, assuming that there is a culture of poverty. This will have an added value for the literature on poverty.

Moreover, education as a phenomenon can be seen as a part of the broader processes of the welfare model, globalization and social justice. Education often is perceived as the model for development in society. If school dropouts do not stick to this norm of attending education, this can have implications

for the positive development of society, following the welfare model. Poverty processes can worsen these developments, as it can cause the disability to attend in school. It is important to shed light on the consequences of this educational norm and model for development in society, which can be viewed as a society-perceived perception.

Castells (2010) goes one step further by arguing that networks and hierarchies cause that some people fall out of the system and are no part of the system anymore. Castells calls these people irrelevant and together they form the Fourth World. This argumentation also fits in the development-oriented society and it is important to find out if people who not attend in school are irrelevant in society.

### **1.7 Thesis structure**

In the upcoming chapters, one will first come across the theoretical framework in which the umbrella of this thesis will be sketched. It provides insights in the causality processes of poverty and education, in which education as a phenomenon can be seen as a part of the broader processes of the welfare model, globalization and social justice. Also light will be shed on the role of social networks and the processes within this, as these processes can be a matter of importance with regard to dropping out of school. Next, to give meaning to the "why" of this thesis, the used methods will be described. Light will be shed on the qualitative method, phenomenology and case study. Also the limitations of the used methods and the challenges of doing fieldwork will be discussed. This chapter will be followed by a "context" chapter, in which the economic situation, the situation of the school systems on Curaçao and the routes of the Mandatory Social Training will be reviewed. This context is useful to give meaning to the three following empirical chapters. The first empirical chapter will capture the imagination and will describe general characteristics of the respondents. These characteristics will be reduced to eleven portraits. In the second empirical chapter factors that can cause the phenomenon of dropping out of school will be described, respectively economic, social, spatial and temporal factors, that are interrelated with each other. The third empirical chapter sheds light on (a) self-perceived perception and (b) society-perceived perception on school dropouts and their situation in society, as well as to their future perspectives. These empirical chapters will be followed by the discussion, in which will be discussed to what extent the theory is applicable to the empirical data on Curaçao. It highlights the discussion on the absolute versus relative poverty issue with regard to school dropouts on Curaçao. The conclusion will follow, in which an answer to the main question critically will be formulated. Moreover, the theoretical debate will discuss the theoretical concepts within the research field of this thesis. Last but not least, clear recommendations to the Ministry of OWCS, Mandatory Social Training, school boards, society and for further research will be done.





*Figure 4: Dropouts of Feffik vsbo school*

## 2. The framework of school dropouts

*"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere".*

- Martin Luther King, Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

In order to get more insights in possible factors that influences motives of adolescents to drop out of school, in this chapter different concepts will be set out. In order to sketch an umbrella of their situation in society, this chapter firstly provides insights in the concepts of poverty and education, in which education as a phenomenon can be seen as a part of the broader processes of the welfare model, globalization and social justice. Therefore, the social and spatial (in)justices in society will be discussed, because this can be a matter of importance for society-perceived perceptions of school dropouts. It will be followed up by a part focused on urban poverty, in which point of views of scholars in the field of social and spatial (in)justices are taken as a starting point. In the following chapter light will be shed on a postcolonial approach on language that can widen the gap between rich and poor and can make school dropouts more disabled. Then one will come across the importance of social networks in the motives for adolescents to drop out of school. Lastly, all these concepts will be portrayed in a conceptual model, which represents the connections between the different concepts.

### 2.1 Phenomenology

As an underlying philosophy, phenomenology will be described. It involves the description of subjective meanings and lived experiences of individuals concerning certain phenomena (Creswell, 2007). It focuses on personal experiences and perceptions of life. According to Adams & Van Manen (2008) *"Phenomenology is the reflective study of pre-reflective or lived experience [...] it tries to show how our words, concepts, and theories always shape (distort) and give structure to our experiences as we live them"* (p. 615). Hereby, phenomenologist's have taken into account that patterns of experiences probably may be similar to experiences of others and may be recognized by these others. *"In other words, the focus is on the direct description of a particular situation or event as it is lived through without offering causal explanations or interpretive generalizations"* (Adams & Van Manen, 2008, p. 618). Though, a universal essence can be drawn by drafting these personal narratives of live experiences. *"The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence"* (Creswell, 2007, p. 58).

In a geographical context phenomenology gives attention to the environmental, spatial and geographical aspects of human experiences, actions, situations, values and meanings. In Warf (2006) phenomenological geographers have argued that in the field of geography is often spoken about models of rational human actors whose interactions lead to patterns. But focusing on the place as an

emotion, feeling and community, all tied to an authentic experience, should be taken more into account in geography according to Warf (2006). Place in this thesis can be seen as the living environment of the school dropouts, which can be the neighborhood.

## 2.2 Globalization, the welfare model and education

A theoretical explanation of globalization is meaningful, as it is connected to today's welfare model. The welfare model can be seen as an economic dimension of globalization and its meaning matters, as the welfare model can be portrayed as the norm in the world of today. One of the tools that plays a key role in the welfare model is education that is often seen as door to economic development. In the context of Curaçao it is likely to find influences of globalization, for example in the tourism sector, where the goal is to have profits. This is strongly connected to the welfare model. Moreover, globalization and its welfare model can also have its influences on school dropouts and the amount of school dropouts, their motives to drop out and their mindset. For instance, globalization can have unconscious influences in the mind-set of Curaçao's inhabitants, as they get confronted with the world and the people around them that differ from them in different ways. It seems that school dropouts do not fit in the ideal picture of the welfare model – including following education. For these reasons it is important to shed light on globalization, the welfare model and education.

Globalization in itself is a very complex phenomenon that refers to the growing interconnectedness of the world (Inda & Rosaldo 2002). It is made up of all kinds of relationships, varying from technological advancement to physical necessities as infrastructure. Different parts of the globe are becoming more connected with each other through mobilities and flows of: *"capital, people, commodities, images, and ideologies"* (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002, p.2). According to Pacione (2009) the phenomenon of globalization can be understood by different dimensions: economic globalization, political globalization and cultural globalization. In this respect, economic globalization refers to *"arrangements for the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services"* (Pacione, 2009, p. 8). These arrangements include for example new international division of labor, the emerging Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and the global financial system. The political globalization can be considered as different forms of power and its applications and concentration. Multi-state political-economic powers are important actors concerning the global power (Pacione, 2009). The dimension of cultural globalization can be *"seen in arrangements for the production, exchange and expression of symbols that represent facts, meanings, beliefs, preferences, tastes and values"* (Pacione, 2009, p. 8). These mentioned dimensions are important to understand the flows, mobilities and the interconnectedness of the world.

Many authors show the shifting importance from places as discrete entities to networks of places and the flows between them (Robinson, 2005; Smith, 2003; Taylor, 2004; Marcuse & Van

Kempen, 2000). Certain networks are based on the changing economic, social and spatial structures, caused by different processes of globalization. Castells (2010) argued for a meta-network society whereby the world consists of networks of world cities. According to Smith the world society is "... *constituted across space as a myriad of linkages, connections and relations – a 'space of flows'* (p. 30, *ibid*). He emphasizes the rising significance of a space of flows over a space of places.

Some scholars view the benefits of globalization, as others emphasizes the disadvantages. This depends on the concept of development that is used. Development in itself is a contested term, and depending on the used definition, one can address whether there is development. The Development Education Program of the World Bank defines the concept as: "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, n.p.). In this definition light is shed on sustainable and long-term development. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) definition is: "*To lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of a community*". The UNDP puts more emphasis on the economic and social dimension of development, and limited attention for the environmental dimension in this definition.

Masson (2001) emphasizes the benefits of globalization and puts strong emphasis on the economic dimension of development by stating that trade openness by developing countries leads to growth and that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is an increasingly important driver of national economies. According to Masson (2001) "*strong growth gives governments the resources to improve the prospects of the poor*" (p.1, *ibid*). Instead of this argumentation, Stiglitz (2006) puts emphasize on the rise of insecurity and poverty and too little consideration for impact on environment, while he does acknowledge that capital flows increase manifold to developing countries. Stiglitz (2006) states that the emphasis in literature regarding globalization often is on economic growth, as he argues that not income, but standard of living matters that also comes more to the fore in the definition of development of the UNDP.

Though, in a globalizing world more and more poverty and welfare exists next to each other. Welfare and economic growth is mostly seen as the norm in today's globalizing world. That refers to the economic dimension of globalization, as the welfare model is basically an economic model. More technological developments that leads to more consumption and more production is the order of the day. To reach a certain level of welfare, several sources are need, such as employees. A high level of unemployment constitutes a threat to the welfare model, which often is the case in developing countries and so it is on Curaçao. By having the welfare model as standard in society, it is desirable that all citizens contribute to this welfare model and economic development of society. One of the important tools to gain this, is education. Therefore, education has developed as a norm in society

which is similar to the welfare model as a norm. The dark side of these norms is that if one is not in the position to meet these norms, it can be viewed as a fail for the national economy. Globalization can worsen this, as it causes the bigger role for the welfare model and thus education in society. It is likely that the gap between skilled people and non-skilled people will widen.

### 2.3 Social and spatial (in)justice in society

*"Educated people are easy to lead but difficult to mislead".*

-The Minister of Education and Culture, O.V.E. Leeflang, Leerplicht, 2007

Curaçao's inhabitants are living in an unjust geography. As is stated before, trade openness can lead to growth, as well as to insecurity and poverty (e.g. Masson, 2001; Stiglitz, 2006). The dominant development paradigm – welfare model – produces inequities. This causes the exclusion of some citizens in the welfare model, for example dropouts. However, all citizens have the right to development according to the UN Declaration on the right to Development (1986).

*The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized. The human right to development also implies the full realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, which includes, subject to the relevant provisions of both International Covenants on Human Rights the exercise of their inalienable right to full Sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources.*

Therefore, seeking to increase justice or to decrease injustice is a fundamental objective in all societies, a foundational principle for sustaining human dignity and fairness (Soja, 2009). According to Soja (2010) justice has a geography wherein the equitable distribution of resources, services and access is a basic human right. Building on current concerns in critical geography and the new spatial consciousness, Soja (2010) interweaves theory and practice, offering new ways of understanding and changing the unjust geographies in which ones live. The analysis of the interactions between space and society is necessary to understand social injustices and to formulate territorial policies aiming at tackling them (Soja, 2010). It is at this junction that the concept of spatial justice has been developed. Spatial justice links together social justice and space. Consequently, both justice and injustice become visible in space.

Furthermore, the Millennium Development Goals are other worldwide tools to gain more justice in societies, which range from halving extreme poverty rates to providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 (MDGs, 2015). In 2000, heads of government of 189 countries agreed on this and they promised to put effort to meet the needs of the world's poorest. Curaçao is one of those countries. According to the Minister of Education and Culture O.V.E. Leeflang:

*Young people constitute the wealth of a nation. It is important to invest in them in order for the wealth to come to full development. In 2000, heads of government of 189 countries around the world made a promise, which has been laid down in the eight Millennium Development Goals. These eight goals will have to lead to a fifty per cent reduction in poverty in 2015. Therefore, one of the most important instruments in tackling poverty is to make sure primary education for all children is taken care of. The adjustment of the school age from the age of four until that of 18 is a policy instrument to reach this goal.<sup>7</sup> (Ministerie van Onderwijs en Cultuur, 2007)*

This states that the government is using tools to gain more justice in society De Leerplicht<sup>8</sup> – that was adapted in 2007 - is also a tool to minimize the amount of dropouts and thus to minimize the gap between skilled and non-skilled people.

## **2.4 Urban poverty: a city of the rich and a city of the poor**

There is not one way to measure poverty; the complexity of the phenomenon of poverty reflects the complexity of measuring it. Generally, there can be distinguished between absolute and relative poverty. Balfanz and Letgers (2004) found a strong relationship between absolute poverty and the dropout rate: The higher the percentage of a school's students living in absolute poverty, the higher the dropout rate. Absolute poverty measurement is based on a comparison of resources to needs (Foster, 1998). According to Foster (1998) a person or family is identified as poor if its resources fall short of the poverty threshold. As there are basically two standards for the determination for the same 'consumption norms' and the 'poverty line', the point of contradiction which has to be resolved is whether a person should be considered poor who falls short of the norms of prescribed standards of consumption or whose income lie below the poverty line. The absolute standard is independent of current data.

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<sup>7</sup> *De Jeugd is de rijkdom van een natie. Daarin moet worden geïnvesteerd zodat die rijkdom zich kan ontwikkelen tot volle wasdom. In het jaar 2000 hebben regeringsleiders van 189 landen over de hele wereld een belofte gedaan. Deze belofte hebben zij vastgelegd in de acht Millennium Ontwikkelingsdoelen. Deze acht doelen moeten leiden tot halvering van de wereldwijde armoede in 2015. Eén van de meest belangrijke instrumenten in de bestrijding van armoede is daarom ook de zorg voor primair onderwijs voor alle kinderen. De aanpassing van de leerplichtige leeftijd van vier tot en met 18 jaar is een beleidsinstrument om dit doel te bereiken.*

<sup>8</sup> In English: Compulsory Education

In contradiction, the relative approach takes into account a standard of living that varies one-for-one. Amartya Sen (1981) points to the problem of choosing which criteria of poverty needs to be included and he advocates for a broader view on poverty since he noticed violation of the elementary conditions by the poverty measures. Thereby, Sen (1981) emphasizes the relative component of some discussions that lead to the opinion that the prevalence of poverty in the country is not only a form of the suffering of the poor but a relative luxuriousness of the nation as a whole. Also Lamont, Small and Harding (2010) point to a relative approach on poverty with regard to culture, which is back on the poverty agenda. The behavior of low-income population in reference to cultural factors is taken into account according to them. This is in line with the culture of poverty model of Oscar Lewis (1966) and the report on the Negro Family by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965). Lewis argued that sustained poverty generated a set of cultural attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices, and that this culture of poverty would tend to perpetuate itself over time, even if the structural conditions that originally gave rise to it were to change. Moynihan argued that the black family was caught in a tangle of pathology that resulted from the cumulative effects of slavery and the subsequent structural poverty that characterized the experience of many African Americans. Also the Human Development Report of the UNDP (2014) describes poverty as relative with the following dimensions: (a) the material standard of living, (b) the quality of social functioning and (c) the perception of one's own situation. Relative poverty can be taken in its broader sense of "poverty of long duration". Du Toit (2005, p.15) described structural poverty as the following:

*Structural poverty is crucially shaped - and is likely to be maintained - by the interactions between asset poverty, cash hunger, job insecurity and unemployment, the 'thin-ness', limited nature, and ambiguity of 'social capital' and their subjection to exploitative power relations. These interactions renders sustained escape from poverty quite unlikely.*

So according to him, people can hardly escape poverty if the ways in which they are positioned in society, such as their access to resources and relations with others, have not been changed, which is in line with the argumentation of Lewis (1966) and Moynihan (1965).

In this study the position of dropouts in society will be further explored in an urban context where poverty and welfare are existing next to each other: it has an urban focus on Willemstad. In the literature regarding "globalizing cities" is a growing consensus that changing spatial divisions have accrued visibly in the recent years. There is argued that there is something new and different about the spatial patterns within cities, in comparison with cities in the past. Internal spatial patterns seem to play a different and variable role in cities today. Cities are based on different foundations or patterns which results in a high amount of different cities. Cities can consist of service-adapted patterns,

manufacturing-based patterns; traditional patterns or patterns of the periphery which are important for the central city patterns.

Zooming in on the scale of cities, rapid changes and processes are having a serious effect on the spatial and social division within a city. According to Marcuse & Van Kempen (2000) a certain pattern can be addressed:

*Within cities, the ghettos are increasingly separated from the rest of the city, while the same holds true, though in a different way, for the exclusionary enclaves of the rich. Areas that are socially and spatially between these two extremes also separate themselves out from the rest of the city more and more. (Marcuse & Van Kempen, 2000, p.1)*

Processes of inclusion and exclusion of and in different groups are addressed in the city, and have become central issues in globalizing cities. This can have influences on the behavior or motives of dropouts. Dropouts can be excluded within a certain group, or dropouts are disabled to get a job since they are not in the possession of a graduation and are excluded from society where the welfare model is the norm. Scholars such as Tonkiss (2014) claim that *“poverty creates inequality and richness creates inequality”*<sup>9</sup> to describe the division between these two groups in economic terms. This economic inequality and social distinction have different material consequences such as a raising gap between poor and rich that can be almost equalized with skilled and non-skilled people. Also raising divided cities can be addressed with a disappearing middle class. These urban spaces are causing the reproduction of these inequalities and social distinction. As Tonkiss (2014) poses in her book:

*The accident of geography can come to be a kind of social fate, as poverty, crime or environmental blight stick doggedly over time to poor, unsafe or degraded spaces. This sticky geography of economic and social injustice consigns certain bodies to certain places, and then makes it hard for them to get out. (Tonkiss, 2014, p.89-90)*

Here it is clear that patterns of division are playing a prominent role in an urban space like Willemstad. This also refers to the material consequence of income inequality: segregation which is visible in Willemstad. Henri Lefebvre saw segregation as the spatial caricature of difference. Segregation is often associated with the concentration of the urban poor, but a visible trend is the self-segregation of the rich: the biggest segregated group of people (Tonkiss, 2014). Following Tonkiss' argumentation, increasing income inequality is accompanied by the rich and poor *“pulling apart spatially”*. This refers to spatial patterns of socio-spatial segregation that are variously organized around lines of racial and

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<sup>9</sup> Prof. Fran Tonkiss, “Divided cities: inequality and urban injustice”, Alexander von Humboldt Lecture, November 10, 2014

ethnic difference and class disparity. But this also occurs due to the maintenance of social distance within spaces and the reproducing of inequality in which cities are machines. This causes the persistency of patterns of division in cities, not only spatially but also socially. Moreover, this reinforces the inequalities and makes it really complex. This is also what Tonkiss said: *"the complexity of inequality today, reflects the complexity of cities"*<sup>10</sup>.

Moreover, Castells (2010) goes one step further because he came up with the Fourth World. According to Castells there is hierarchy involved in the new informational, global and networked economy that can result in the emerging of the Fourth World. The system can cause that people are not part of any system in society. These people are fallen out of the system and the network, and therefore Castells describes these people as irrelevant people who form a new world: the Fourth World. According to Castells more and more people fall out of the network. He states that it is not about rich and poor, but about in and out.

By shedding more light on the emergence of urban poverty other characteristics of globalizing cities appear. In poor neighborhoods living conditions of the poorer cause the dominance of the informal landscape, which consists of micro and small-scale employment and activities that are not legal recognized, regulated and protected (Simone, 2004). Concerning this informal economy, Simone (2004) argues that cities are not functional destinations, but meeting places of people and their willingness to interact with one another as infrastructure is really important: *"This infrastructure is capable of facilitating the intersection of socialities so that expanded spaces of economic and cultural operation become available to residents of limited means"* (p.407, *ibid*). Combinations of objects, spaces, persons and practices become an infrastructure providing for and reproducing life in the city. In this sense this infrastructures act as foundations of continuities in everyday lives (Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

Also Fainstain emphasizes that we now have *"a city of the rich and a city of the poor"*<sup>11</sup>. It contradiction to these views, it is Merry (2013) who argues against this negative framing of dividing cities. He introduced the *"voluntary"* component in dividing yourself from *"the other"* among people like yourself to have a certain comfort zone. Following his argumentation, there can be argued that it's no problem that there are low socio-economic neighborhoods and higher socio-economic neighborhoods on Curaçao. It goes beyond and against the negative and *"involuntary"* emphasizes in previous literature. Factors that can force spatial patterns of *"involuntary segregation"* are often related to income levels, ethnic differences and class disparity. But focusing on *"voluntary segregation"* other factors can be addressed. The word *"freedom"* is central in these voluntary form of segregation<sup>12</sup>. For

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<sup>10</sup> Prof. Fran Tonkiss, "Divided cities: inequality and urban injustice", Alexander von Humboldt Lecture, November 10, 2014

<sup>11</sup> Prof. Susan Fainstein, "Justice in the Neo-liberal City", Alexander von Humboldt Lecture, October 8, 2014

<sup>12</sup> Prof. Michael Merry, "Disadvantage, choice and spatial justice", Alexander von Humboldt Lecture, December 1, 2014

example, every person has the "*freedom of conscience*" which refers to the freedom to think whatever that persons wants to think. For example, it can be possible that dropouts do not see themselves as dropouts or they might think they do not need school. Also "*freedom of association*" is a matter of importance in this, because every person is free to choose with whom he or she wants to interact or not. This can also be the case for dropouts as they choose to have their network in their neighborhood. Moreover, Merry is mentioning the "*principle of homophily*" that refers to the tendency of people to associate and connect with people among his own sort. This is a principle that might be important for dropouts. Within this, similar backgrounds and common interests can bound people. Merry emphasizes, that all these factors can establish the willingness of people to segregate from others. This relates to the culture of poverty on Curaçao, in which these voluntary factors can be at play.

Another consequence of globalization and her emergence of urban poverty and the growing gap between rich and poor, is that globalization is in the minds of all people. Their minds are globalized through internet and media, but poor people do not have resources to buy the newest gadgets. If they cannot afford these high technological gadgets, their activities in the criminal sector are growing (Tonkiss, 2014).

## 2.5 Postcolonial approach on language

A postcolonial approach on language can help to investigate whether school dropouts find oneself in a disabled position in society because their native language is Papiamentu. According to Fanon (1952; 1986), who wrote an analysis of Negro's in the Antilles that are confronted by using native language. He described that black people will be proportionally whiter if their mastery of the language that white people use become better: "*mastery of language affords remarkable power*" (Fanon, 1952, 1986, p. 9). Hereby it is assumed that mastering the language of the former colonizer, the civilizing nation, can open previously closed doors to success. Conversely, not mastering the language of the former colonizer, can close doors to success. When looking at such language problems, Fanon referred to Professor D. Westerman who claimed that "*the Negroes' inferiority complex is particularly intensified among the most educated, who must struggle with it unceasingly*" (Fanon, 1952, 1986, p. 14). They constantly have to behave and go with the culture of the whites. These behaviors are used because the high educated blacks must feel equal with European people and their achievements. High educated black writing and talking in their dialect languages are a rarity. Black people want to prove they are in the possession of these language skills, according to Fanon. Because of this, the gap widen between rich and poor because of this. Using Fanon's work on language can help to investigate whether school dropouts are advantaged or disadvantaged by (not) mastering a language.

## 2.6 The importance of social networks

To investigate if social networks play an important role in the alleged culture of poverty and in the factors and motives to drop out of school, it is important to measure the social network. Social networks can be defined as *"The people – especially kin, friends and neighbors – to whom an individual is tied socially, usually by shared interests and, in many cases, values, attitudes and aspirations"* (Gregory et al., 2012, p.696). According to Gregory et al. (2012) most people are members of different social networks. These networks form the place where most social interaction takes place.

These networks exist in the human living environment of school dropouts and therefore this environment can be a matter of importance. Focusing on the scale of a neighborhood, gives insights in the re-emerging of the neighborhood as important settings for many processes, such as shaping social identity (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). A city could consist of socially cohesive but increasingly divided neighborhoods. There may be ethnic or religion-based cohesive communities living side-by-side. But human needs and problems are not isolated in neighborhoods, but rather interrelated. Intuitively, it would seem that as a source of social identity the neighborhood is being progressively eroded with the emergence of a more fluid, individualized way of life (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). Though, most people live in narrow worlds of neighborhood and cosmopolitan intellectuals seem all too ready to forget or to deny the small-scale domesticity of most people's lives (Pahl, 1991 in Forrest & Kearns, 2001). This small-scale view of one's life is important to take into account, by viewing the importance of their social networks which could exist within neighborhoods, but could also exist in between or in other neighborhoods; social networks do not equalize neighborhoods. Social cohesion, social capital and social control are part of the continuities of one's daily life and are of frequent occurrence. This is maintained by the social networks and contacts people have.

Many scholars recognize the importance of social capital within these social networks. The work of Bourdieu (1986) on social capital has been important. In his work social capital is defined as *"the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition"* (in Richardson, 1986, p. 248). Bourdieu points to the benefits of individuals by participating in a group. Also Gregory et al. (2012) point to this: *"The idea that access to and participation in groups can benefit individuals and communities"* (p.689, ibid). Putnam (in Van Deth, 2003) emphasizes the importance of reliability and engagement regarding social capital within social networks. The amount of social capital that someone possesses, is dependent on the number of connections he or she can use and on the amount of capital that each of these connections possesses.

Blokland and Savage (2008) pose the limitations of social capital, as having connections does not automatically mean having access to resources. Only through social interactions social capital can be created. Social networks are not a natural given, but must be constructed. According to Bourdieu

*"the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term"* (in Richardson, 1986, p. 249). This means that it takes effort to reproduce social capital; it takes time and energy, which (in)directly is economic or human capital, to maintain social networks. Human capital refers to people's knowledge, skills and energy (Pacione, 2009). In terms of skills, the emphasis is on recognized skills, which in practice means that a graduation is mandatory – which is not the case for school dropouts. Therefore, the economic or human capital can be seen as development oriented. One can have knowledge, skills and energy, but without recognized skills many constraints in society can come across their path. The different types of capital (cultural, human, social and economic) can be converted into each other, but economic capital is at the root of the other forms of capital. Social and cultural or human capital are indirectly also economic capital. For example, while economic capital gives access to some goods or services, others can only be obtained through the use of social capital. So the expenditure of time and energy in care and concern about one's connections is economically not a wastage, but can be seen as an investment in human capital. This capital is development oriented

All these types of capital, can make that a person belongs to a certain class with a status. For Marx, the ownership of capital by a specific class is the basis of inequality and social domination in capitalist societies (Pacione, 2009). But in general the rule is the higher the economic and human capital, the higher the economic class or status. The role of social capital is different, as people from all classes can have social capital. But people from low classes – presumably such as school dropouts - will have other social capital than people from high classes do have. For example this can cause that people from high class have social capital that helps them into a job, while people from low class have social capital but people therein are mainly unemployed, which causes that their social capital cannot help them to find a job. This leads to more economic progress in high classes than in low classes and it can become a vicious circle that causes a gap between rich and poor.

An important distinction regarding social capital within social networks is made by Granovetter (1973; 1983). He came up with a theory on the *"strength of weak ties"*, which has been a highly influential research for social network studies. Granovetter defines a tie and its strength as: *"a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie"* (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361). He distinguishes *strong ties* and *weak ties*, which is similar to the work of Curley (2010) who distinguishes *bonding and bridging ties* of capital. Granovetter puts forward the idea of a *"forbidden triad"*, which means that when friend A has a strong connection with friend B, and friend A also has a strong connection with friend C, B and C will also be connected. The triad in which B is not connected to C does not occur. According to Granovetter and Curley, ties can form a *"bridge"* between different persons of unconnected groups.

Strong ties cannot form bridges, because when A has a strong connection with both B and C, B and C also have a strong connection with each other, and therefore whatever is to be spread out remains confined within the small group of contacts. Consequently, Granovetter argues that for diffusion across larger social distances weak ties are more valuable than strong ties. Through weak ties more people can be reached, as these weak ties function as bridges unconnected groups. This means that a high amount of people can be found within a social network.

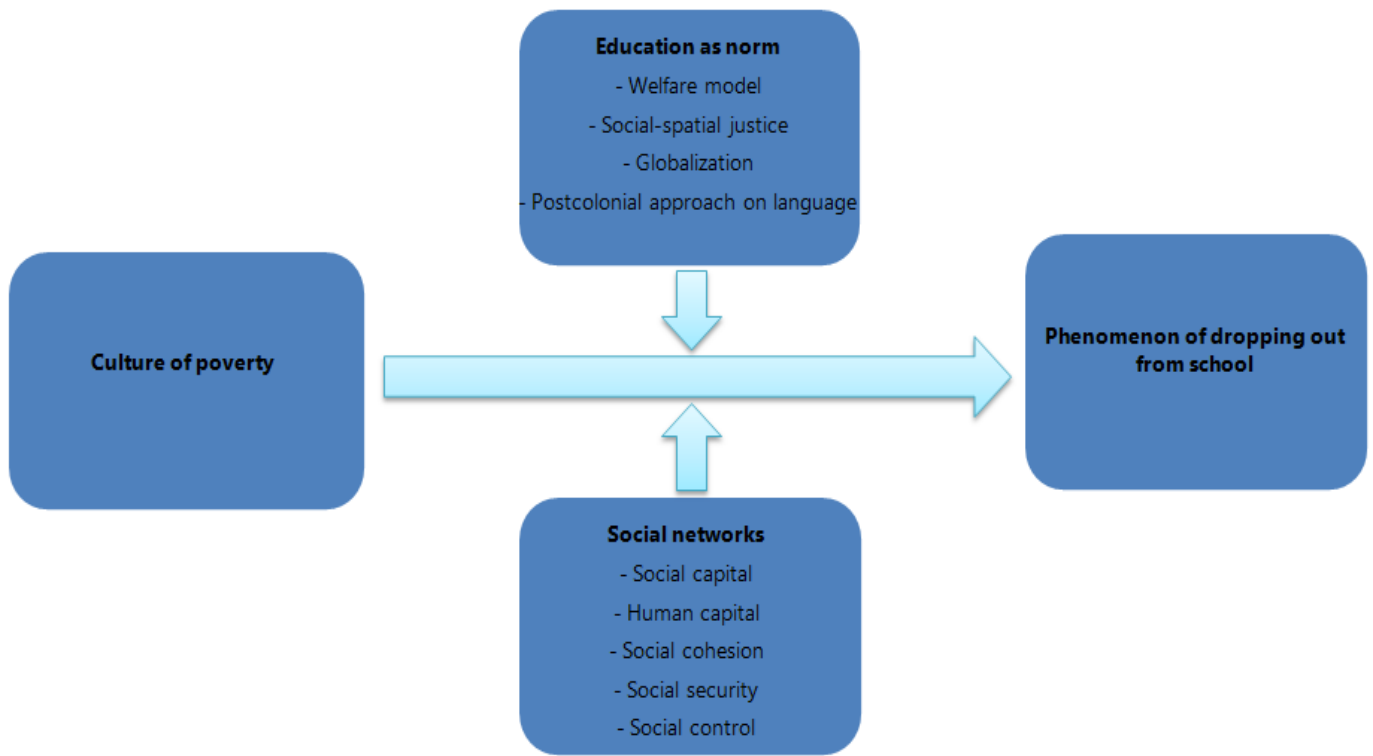
With regard to social contact, the similarity hypothesis can be confirmed: people tend to search for people that are similar to themselves (Laumann, 1996). This implies that *meeting* does not automatically leads to *mating* (Blokland & Savage, 2008). Instead of this, policy makers often do expect this. However, the similarity hypothesis causes social networks that exists of people that are similar to themselves, with regard to their economic and social status.

Social control often plays an important role, as a part of social capital, which refers to unwritten rules and perceptions about the interaction between citizens (Kleinhans, Priemus & Engbersen, 2007). In this, weak ties are enough for the maintenance of social control. Meeting the expectations of others in your social network does also play an important role in social control, wherein a certain status of a group of a person is considered as important (Kleinhans et al., 2007). Therefore, social capital including social control can be considered as crucial for the maintenance of social networks.

A recent critique on social networks is that scholars have a too static perception of social networks. Somerville (2011) argued the emphasize in literature is on the creation and sustaining of social networks, but it does overlook how new networks are established. Besides, scholars sometimes argue too simplistic about connections that automatically result in the creation of social capital, whereas it takes effort to reproduce social capital as mentioned before. For these reasons Schapendonk (2014) revisits the work of Granovetter and Bourdieu and came up with a dynamic approach to social networks which has four elements: 1) the changeability of network connections in a morphological sense (new ties and lost ties); 2) the changeability of network connections in terms of their character (changing power relations and new forms of exchange); 3) the effort that is needed to create and maintain social networks and accumulate social capital (networking practices, networking capital, and network work); 4) the relational aspect of networks (the interdependency of social relationships). By focusing on these elements, researchers move away from "*network determinism*".

## 2.7 Conceptual model

All described concepts have relations with each other, which is portrayed below in the conceptual model in Figure 5.



*Figure 5: Conceptual model*

Starting with the position in a culture of poverty, this refers to the position of school dropouts. Different (intervening) factors in their everyday life and in society are causing the phenomenon of dropping out of school. Firstly, education is society-perceived as the norm in society, which includes the welfare model, the search for social and spatial justice, globalization and growth and the postcolonial approach on language. This seeking to increase justice and the existence of the welfare model are maintained by governments. It is alleged that this has a suffocating effect for adolescents, which can lead indirectly to dropouts. Dropouts who do not meet the standards of the welfare model and do not follow education are excluded, but the government tries to include these people in society. Furthermore it is assumed that social networks – including social capital, human capital, social cohesion, social security and social control – are important for school dropouts and their motives to drop out, and it is alleged that this are important aspects in the persistency of the culture of poverty. In total, for adolescents the suffocating effect of education as a norm and the position within social networks, can lead to the phenomenon of dropping out of school.



*Figure 6: 2<sup>nd</sup> National Youth Dialogue*

### 3. Methods and techniques

In this chapter light will be shed on the methods, techniques and strategies that are used to collect data. Data for this research is conducted by doing fieldwork in Willemstad on Curaçao. A case study on school dropouts will be done, so the interviews with them are the most important unit of analysis. An explanation on the choices before and during the fieldwork will be given in this chapter by discussing used methods such as case study, literature study, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with school dropouts and experts, symposiums and observations. An elaboration on the data analysis by thematic coding will follow. Lastly, some elaboration on the ethical aspects, challenges and limitations of doing fieldwork will be done.

#### 3.1 Research strategy

The research strategy that is used in this thesis is a combination of different strategies. A qualitative approach is applied because the research has the aim to have access to the perspectives and feelings of the school dropouts by conducting in-depth interviews. Doing qualitative research is in line with viewing the character of social reality and taking a deeper look in it. Within this, there is chosen for phenomenology as the approach or method (Creswell, 2007). It can be viewed as the underlying philosophy of this thesis. Furthermore, within the qualitative research strategy is chosen for a case study that is typical connected to qualitative research (Yin, 2003). A single case study is a useful research method because it is about a clearly identifiable case which can be demarcated very well (Creswell, 2007). In this single case study there is focused on school dropouts, wherefore there will be focused on their personal emotions and experiences. More specifically, the case study is mainly on school dropouts who enrolled in the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training, as it is the program of the Ministry of OWCS.

To collect extensive and detailed data it is worthwhile to use various sources of information (Creswell, 2007). By combining different sources a more complete and convincing interpretation can be build; the so called triangulation. Yin (2003) argues that six different sources of information are the best way to conduct information, which advise will be followed in this inquiry: documents, archives, direct observations, participating observations, videos and interviews.

Interviews will mostly be conducted with respondents - school dropouts- , but also with representatives - experts from organizations, schools, CBS and the government (e.g. Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). The latter refers to someone who is not the target in the research, but someone who will be asked to report about others or situations. The representative provides in-depth insights and expert information on elements of a culture, society or social scene. A respondent is the target one would like to know more about during research. The respondent reports about herself or himself and his or her

situation and the perception of it. The respondents are the dropouts, or in other words, they are my target group. Interviews with them will be mostly conducted with dropouts who enrolled the waiting list of the program Mandatory Social Training. A translator helped me to conduct the interviews. The dropouts will provide the most valuable information to answer my central question and therefore the in-depth interviews with school dropouts are the most important empirical part of this research. Also the symposiums and the observations are an important part of the empirical data, as they provide a broad picture of the situation. Desk research is an important source and primary and secondary sources are used.

### **3.2 Case study**

Case study is a design or a method which is typically connected to qualitative research (Yin, 2003). A single case study is a useful research method because it is about a clearly identifiable case which can be demarcated very well (Creswell, 2007). In this single case study the focus is on school dropouts, especially on the personal emotions and experiences of this specific group of people. In it the underlying philosophy of phenomenology comes into the picture that puts the focus on the feelings and emotions of school dropouts. An in-depth understanding of the personal perceptions of dropouts on their own position in society and the emotions and experiences of these people are valuable. A phenomenological approach does not seek to find generalizations; although some people might have the same feelings or experiences, from which certain universal conclusions can be drawn so one could give recommendations for a more effective Mandatory Social Training.

In terms of the unit of analysis, the case study is mainly on school dropouts who enrolled the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training, as it is the program of the Ministry of OWCS. In total I interviewed 17 school dropouts who enrolled in the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training. I interviewed 3 more school dropouts at AJJC, a juridical organization<sup>13</sup>. In chapter 3.4 I will elaborate on the strategic clustering and sampling of these respondents.

### **3.3 Literature study**

All stages of this thesis required literature study. Especially for the first part of this thesis, in which the project framework and theoretical framework are shaped, e.g. the preparatory phase of the research with literature on globalization, social justice, poverty and social networks including social cohesion and different kinds of capital. In a later stage, many representatives gave me literature on e.g. education systems. Also documents of the Ministry of OWCS became part of this research with documents about e.g. the Leerplicht, the Mandatory Social Training. Also the Central Bureau for

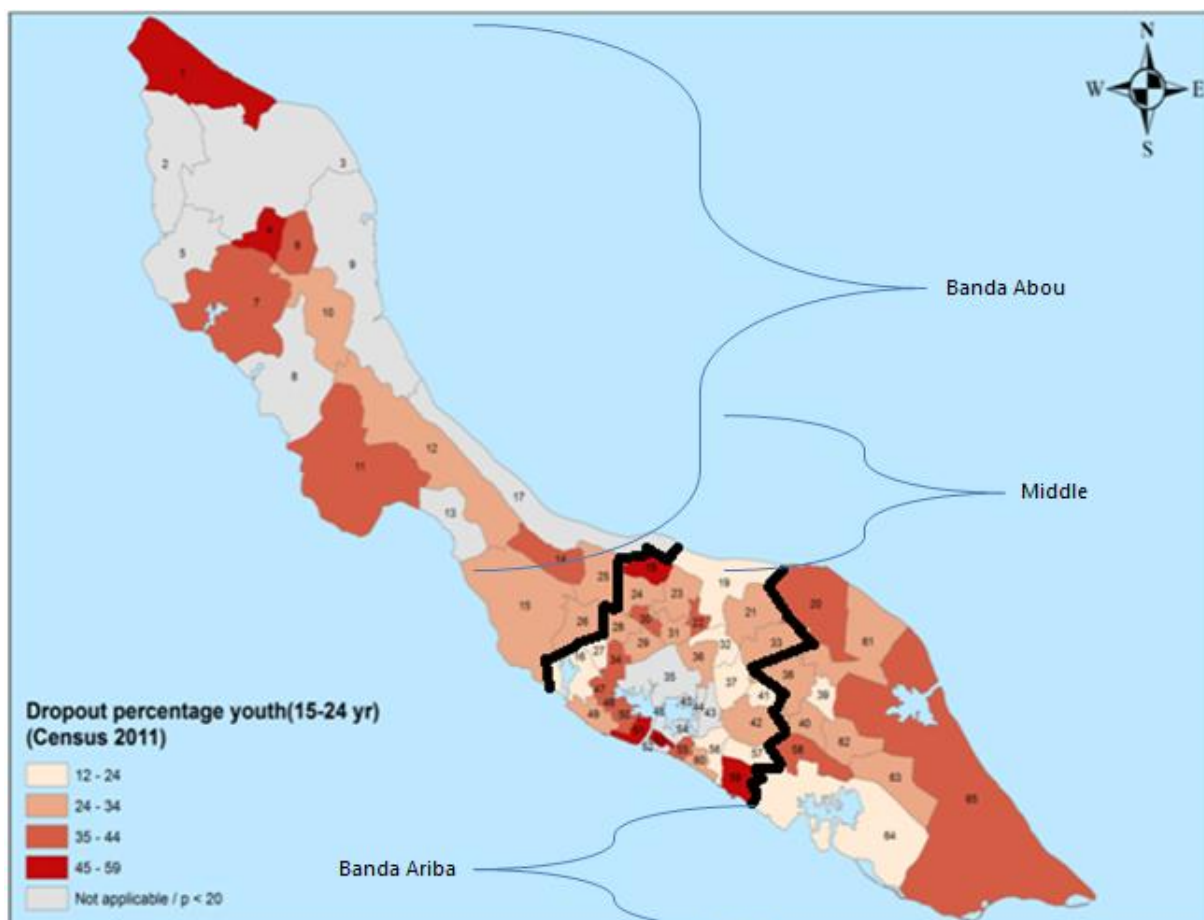
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<sup>13</sup> AJJC in Dutch is: Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao

Statistics offered researches about neighborhoods and their status on Curaçao. These documents are at least as valuable as the literature on concepts of the theoretical framework the research is based on.

### 3.4 In-depth interviews with school dropouts

As mentioned before, the interviews with respondents – school dropouts – are the most important empirical part of the research. These in-depth interviews embody the living world of school dropouts. Prior to the fieldwork strategic clustering and sampling was applied to categorize the school dropouts. In my internship within the Mandatory Social Training I had the opportunity to obtain insights in the waiting list of this program. In the waiting list 89 school dropouts were enrolled - each number in Table 3 (next page) represents a school dropout. These school dropouts were categorized on the basis of three criteria: gender, age and borough of Willemstad. The boroughs are divided into three groups, respectively Banda Abou (West), Banda Ariba (East) and Middle Willemstad. The names of these three major boroughs are commonly used by citizens of Curaçao to give an indication of the part where one is living. This is shown in Map 2 below.



Map 2: Curaçao divided into three research areas: Banda Abou (West), Banda Ariba (East) and Middle Willemstad (Adapted from: CBS, 2014)

With regard to age, two groups are made. Respectively a group from 15 to 20 years old and another group from 20 to 24 years old. This division is made with regard to the ages of dropouts at the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training: these categories include all ages of that list. Both categories consist of five ages, which makes this division transparent.

Also a distinction in gender is made. This is important because the situations of females and males often differ. The strategic clustering and sampling, including the three criteria mentioned result in Table 3 below.

	<b>F 15-20</b>	<b>M 15-20</b>	<b>F 20-24</b>	<b>M 20-24</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Banda Abou (West)</b>	9, 10, 15, 18, 27, 32, 40, 47, 54, 70, 84	24, 34, 35, 39, 49, 62, 65, 69, 80, 81, 83, 86, 91, 92	3, 7, 8, 12, 45, 63, 77	6, 42, 44, 46, 66	<b>37 (41.6%)</b>
<b>Banda Ariba (East)</b>	23, 29, 57, 71, 72,	5, 14, 16, 21, 36, 58, 59, 73, 78, 79, 85	4, 31, 48, 50, 53, 61, 76, 90	26, 60, 64, 88	<b>28 (31.5%)</b>
<b>Middle Willemstad</b>	11, 19, 22, 37, 51, 52, 75	1, 17, 25, 30, 33, 41, 68, 87, 89	2, 20, 28, 38, 55, 56	13, 43	<b>24 (26.9%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>23 (25.8%)</b>	<b>34 (38.2%)</b>	<b>21 (23.6%)</b>	<b>11 (12.4%)</b>	<b>89</b>

*Table 3: Strategic clustering and sampling of school dropouts*

As one can see, the 89 school dropouts who enrolled the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training are categorized. Each school dropout represents a number. On the basis of this model, the goal was to have an in-depth interview with at least 2 respondents of every category. I have tried to pick numbers of each category randomly to conduct at least two interviews of each category in the end. All the 89 respondents were contacted by phone for an appointment.

Naturally, I admit and I am aware of the fact that not all school dropouts of Curaçao have been taken into account in the sample. This research provides insight in a small and specific category of school dropouts, so generalizing about all dropouts on Curaçao will be avoided. Moreover, I interviewed 3 dropouts who are not enrolled in the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training, but who are of a juridical organization called AJJC. I interviewed people of that organization in addition to the respondents of the Mandatory Social Training to have a broader overview of the school dropouts on Curaçao - they are included in Table 4 (next page) as 'AJJC' with a number. Although I interviewed three school dropouts of AJJC, generalizing about all dropouts on Curaçao is not possible and it is certainly not the aim of this research.

As can be seen in Table 4 below, I managed to have an in-depth interview with respondents of every category, except for the category male in the age of 15-20 from Banda Ariba. Later in this chapter I will elaborate on this non-response. The numbers of the respondents I interviewed are marked in bold. Furthermore it is clear that in the category of male in the age of 15-20, only dropouts of AJJC were reached, and no dropouts of the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training. In some categories it was too difficult to have interviews with two respondents, but in other categories four interviews were conducted. In total I had in-depth interviews with 20 respondents, 17 dropouts who are enrolled in the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training and 3 dropouts who are in the AJJC.

	<b>F 15-20</b>	<b>M 15-20</b>	<b>F 20-24</b>	<b>M 20-24</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Banda Abou (West)</b>	9, <b>10</b> , <b>15</b> , 18, 27, 32, 40, <b>47</b> , 54, 70, 84	24, 34, 35, 39, 49, 62, 65, 69, 80, 81, 83, 86, 91, 92, <u><b>AJJC1</b></u> , <u><b>AJJC2</b></u>	3, 7, 8, 12, <b>45</b> , 63, <b>77</b>	6, 42, 44, <b>46</b> , <b>66</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Banda Ariba (East)</b>	23, <b>29</b> , 57, 71, 72,	5, 14, 16, 21, 36, 58, 59, 73, 78, 79, 85	<b>4</b> , 31, 48, 50, 53, <b>61</b> , 76, 90	<b>26</b> , 60, 64, 88	<b>28</b>
<b>Middle Willemstad</b>	11, <b>19</b> , 22, 37, 51, 52, 75	1, 17, 25, 30, 33, 41, 68, 87, 89, <u><b>AJJC3</b></u>	<b>2</b> , <b>20</b> , <b>28</b> , <b>38</b> , 55, 56	<b>13</b> , 43	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>92</b>

*Table 4: Twenty respondents marked in bold*

Since the language of most school dropouts is Papiamentu, we called people of Table 4 with the help of a translator, 2 persons per category. My translator was Athena Cordilia, a 25 year-old female from Curaçao who was also doing an internship at the Ministry of OWCS. Her educational level is higher professional education (Rotterdam). She has lived her whole life on Curaçao, except for the years in which she studied.

My translator called the respondents. It appeared that the non-response was high: some phone numbers were wrong, sometimes one was already enrolled in the program so the list of people was a little outdated or sometimes they simple did not pick up their phone. This has all been reported. Of course, I was aware of the fact that it demanded voluntariness of the school dropouts to come for an interview. In the end I had appointments with more than 45 respondents, but only 17 of them showed up. This points to structural non-response for several reasons. It seems that they do not dare to say no at the moment someone of the Ministry – Athena - is calling. Furthermore, it seemed that

they live from one day to the next and have more than one appointment all the time. It is not that the respondents are unwilling to do an interview, but they seem to be more unacquainted with planning and making schedules. Also financial motives are playing a big role. It was remarkable that more respondents did not show up at the end of the month.

I adapted my schedule to the non-response, by making double appointments. Also we called the day before, one hour before and a few minutes before the appointment to remind them that they had an appointment. They did not always pick up their phone, so that did not always work. Once a boy told us that he could not make it because he had to work. Another person told us that he promised to be there on time. It appeared that the first boy showed up and the second person did not show up. This points to the fact that the behavior of this group of people - with regard to appointments - is unpredictable and this could be a reason for the non-response, especially in the category M15-20 from Banda Ariba.

A specified overview of the respondents is given in Table 5. For privacy reasons pseudonyms are used.

Respondents	Date	Name	V/M	Age	Neighborhood	Specific
1.	16-03-15	Richendel (66)	M	24	Banda Abou	Lelienberg (6)
2.	19-03-15	Cecilia (15)	V	17	Banda Abou	Lelienberg (6)
3.	19-03-15	Nohaila (10)	V	19	Banda Abou	Seru Fortuna (18)
4.	23-03-15	Pamela (4)	V	20	Banda Ariba	Montana Rey (62)
5.	31-03-15	Juleisy (20)	V	23	Midden	Berg Altena (55)
6.	14-04-15	Renisha (2)	V	22	Midden	Buena Vista (29)
7.	14-04-15	Regine (38)	V	20	Midden	Koraal Specht (59)
8.	14-04-15	Quincy (26)	M	20	Banda Ariba	Montana Rey (62)
9.	17-04-15	Kendrick (46)	M	20	Banda Abou	Lelienberg (6)
10.	17-04-15	Ironaiska (47)	V	18	Banda Abou	Lelienberg (6)
11.	17-04-15	Anoushka (61)	V	20	Banda Ariba	Santa Rosa (38)
12.	17-04-15	Shalomi (19)	V	17	Midden	Steenrijk (60)
13.	06-05-15	Shahainy (28)	V	20	Midden	Berg Atena (55)
14.	06-05-15	Mirecy (29)	V	17	Banda Ariba	Montana Rey (62)

<b>15.</b>	18-05-15	Lwidjino (AJJC1)	M	18	Banda Abou	Seru Fortuna (18)
<b>16.</b>	18-05-15	Eymoson (AJJC2)	M	18	Banda Abou	Souax (14)
<b>17.</b>	21-05-15	Jeandric (13)	M	20	Midden	Brievengat (21)
<b>18.</b>	21-05-15	Gilmerson (AJJC 3)	M	18	Midden	Buena Vista (29)
<b>19.</b>	22-05-15	Alicia (77)	V	23	Banda Abou	Souax (14)
<b>20.</b>	22-05-15	Dianara (45)	V	21	Banda Abou	Seru Fortuna (18)

*Table 5: The respondents specified*

### 3.5 In-depth interviews with informants

In addition to the in-depth interview with school dropouts, experts and representatives of various organizations offered me valuable information as well. In Table 6 below one can see that 14 in-depth interviews with informants were conducted, who all represent another organization. Representatives of schools, the Ministry or an adviser of the Ministry, the Central Bureau for Statistics, judicial organizations or newspapers or other societal organizations were interviewed. The nationality varied between Dutch and Antillean. This high variety of organizations and nationalities raises the validity of this research. All information of the representatives made it possible to view the situation of dropouts from a helicopter perspective.

<b>Informants</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>1.</b>	11-03-15	Jan Gubbels Complemented by Lizette Sambo-Velder	Dutch Antillean	Advisor in Education; Sector director Ministry of OWCS
<b>2.</b>	12-03-15	Humphrey Kuridama	Antillean	Teacher Mandatory Social Training
<b>3.</b>	16-03-15	Rochandell Welvaart	Antillean	Head of Teachers in Mediaschool, uitvoeringsorganisatie SVP
<b>4.</b>	17-03-15	Henk van Oorspronk	Dutch	Teacher Dr. Albert Schweitzer College (havo/vwo)
<b>5.</b>	20-03-15	Mirian Molenveld	Dutch	Director Marnix College Cas Cora en Rio Canario (vsbo)
<b>6.</b>	23-03-15	Mike Jacobs	Antillean	Head of Social Statistics, Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)
<b>7.</b>	23-04-15	Anonymous	Dutch	Employee Antilliaans Dagblad
<b>8.</b>	31-03-15	Mildred Francisca	Antillean	Director AJJC, Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao
<b>9.</b>	15-04-15	Lucille Hernandez	Antillean	Director AGO Montana Praktijkschool
<b>10.</b>	24-04-15	Judeska Pauletta	Antillean	Social worker at GOG (JJIC)

				Justitiële Jeugd Inrichting Curaçao
<b>11.</b>	29-04-15	Jacqueline Sparren	Antillean	Director SIFMA SBO school
<b>12.</b>	05-05-15	Stephen Ebecilio, Carla Mariano	Antillean	Psychologist and social worker Brasami Verslavingskliniek
<b>13.</b>	11-05-15	Els Alders van de Geijn	Dutch	Director Broeder Puus Tienermoederinternaat
<b>14.</b>	18-10-15	Two hairdressers	Antillean	True Hair & Beauty

*Table 6: Overview of informants*

### 3.6 Focus group discussions

Another interesting interview method, is a focus group discussion (Berg, 2004). A focus group discussion is a discussion in which a group of people is asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a service, idea or problem. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. The added value can be the higher output of information, as the respondents or representatives can complement each other and react on each other.

The first focus group discussion is conducted with three experts or representatives as is scheduled in Table 7 below. I had an interview before with Lucille and with Jan separately before. Lucille is the head of a school with the lowest level that a high school can have. Jan is an advisor of the Ministry of OWCS. A remedial educationalist, who is an employee at Lucille's school, was also attending.

<b>Informants</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>1.</b>	15-04-15	Focus group Lucille Hernandes, Jan Gubbels en Yaniek	Antillean, Dutch, Dutch	Director AGO, Advisor education, remedial educationalist

*Table 7: Focus group discussion with informants*

The second focus group is conducted with four respondents. Prior to the focus group discussion I had already interviewed these school dropouts separately. Kendrick and Ironaiska are cousins and come from Banda Abou and Richendel and Quincy are friends who come from Banda Abou and Banda Ariba, and together they formed the focus group, as can be seen in Table 8 (next page).

Respondents	Date	Name	M / V	Age	Neighborhood	Specific
1.	17-04-15	Focus group Richendel, Quincy, Kendrick and Ironaiska	M M M V	24, 20, 20, 18	Banda Abou, Banda Ariba,	Lelienberg, Montana Rey

*Table 8: Focus group discussion with respondents*

### 3.7 Symposiums

I had the opportunity to attend a number of symposiums. The symposiums had different themes, and are scheduled in Table 9 (next page). The first symposium had an educational theme “Policy of education and educational innovation”. It took place at the University of Curaçao and speakers were Professor Charette Albertoe, who did a presentation about school dropouts in the judicial organizations, and Mike Jacobs of the CBS, with whom I did an in-depth interview later. He spoke about school dropouts on Curaçao in this symposium too.

The second symposium was an expert session on school dropouts and youth development. It was coordinated by the Action Program of Youth Development 2015-2020. Several stakeholders of different organizations were present: stakeholders of the Ministry of OWCS (Education, Science, Culture and Sport), representatives of organizations in the field and directors of schools. This expert session was organized by the ‘Action Program of Youth Development 2015-2020’ and their main focus at this moment is to minimize the rate of school dropouts by bringing all stakeholders together. An informative presentation was given by Elly Hellings, who is consultant, sociologist, text writer and project manager. Commissioned by the Ministry of general affairs she is leader of the Action Program of Youth Development. The purpose of this expert session was to bring all stakeholders together and work together in the field of youth development, especially dropouts. This resulted in the making of groups in which questions about how to solve the high amount of dropouts were to be answered.

The third symposium was a presentation by the Central Bureau of Statistics, in which the general situation of Curaçao was depicted. They also paid attention to how they conduct their data.

The fourth symposium contained dialogues with the youth of Curaçao, with the aim to involve them directly in the youth development of Curaçao. Again the leaders were of the Action Program of Youth Development 2015-2020. Many adolescents were attending. Elly Helling gave a presentation again, we needed to answer questions to find out who the other adolescents were and what they did during a day. Later, the group was divided into small theme groups to work on problems in society within the framework of youth participation. The results were reported to the Ministries later on. The

themes discussed in the small theme groups were: work and entrepreneurship, safety of neighborhoods, sports, criminality of the youth and education and training: norms and values. I attended the last group.

The fifth symposium was a Round Table of the youth of Curaçao. It took place in the National Library. It consisted of two parts. The first part brought together a Youth Pastor Curtis Meris, scientist and prior Minister of Education Omayra Leeflang, entrepreneur Gwendell Mercelina and employee of My Future Career Jealaine Alexander Wawoe. The themes of this Round Table were love, values and talent of the Youth of Curaçao. The second Round Table was with an expert on labor market orientation Donna Philbert, manager in schools and ex-Minister of Justice Magali Jacoba, employee of Reach Up Shahaira Baromeo Bakhuis and employee of Asosiashon di Guia PNA Angelique Elis. The discussion themes were home, school and work.

Symposium	Date	Theme
1.	23-01-15	Policy of education and educational innovation
2.	12-03-15	Expert session on school dropouts & youth development
3.	23-04-15	Central Bureau of Statistics
4.	24-04-15	2 <sup>nd</sup> National Youth Dialogue
5.	27-03-15	Round Table Youth Curaçao

*Table 9: Symposiums*

### 3.8 Observations

Observing is the active acquisition of information from a primary source (e.g. Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Observations function as complementary sources to the conducted interviews and also function as a starting point in the sense that you notice something and ask about that specific thing you observed in the interview. Observations have an added value as a source to grasp the broader picture of the situation of school dropouts. Direct and participating observations were conducted. An overview of the observations conducted is shown in Table 10 (next page).

Direct observations were conducted in the streets, in black taxis, at the Ministry of OWCS, in many neighborhoods and in supermarkets. Also my own experiences with criminality in the streets and in my neighborhood were used as an observation, as well as the school dropouts who did not show up as described in an observation report. Furthermore, participating observations were done four times. I had the opportunity to go with one of my respondents into her neighborhood where she showed me around. Furthermore, I participated in the Leerplicht brigade for one day. I also visited the Albert Sweitzercollege and the Marnix College for a day.

Observations	Date	Theme
1.	March until May	On the street: How do people move?
2.	March until May	In Black Taxis
3.	March until May	Neighborhoods: Souax, Seru Fortuna, Montana, Muizenberg, Sint Jacob, Buena Vista, Villaparken en Jan Thiel
4.	March until May	Supermarket and workers there
5.	March until May	Criminality in neighborhoods and meetings in my neighborhood
6.	March until May	At the Ministry of OWCS
7.	March until May	School dropouts who do not show up
8.	31-03-15	In Shalomi's neighborhood, together with her: Steenrijk 17-04-15
9.	29-04-15	A day with the Leerplichtbrigade
10.	13-05-15	A day at the Albert Sweitzercollege HAVO/VWO
11.	27-05-15	A day at the Marnix College: Cas Cora en Rio Canario VSBO

Table 10: Observations

### 3.9 Data analysis

The in-depth interviews of respondents and representatives I conducted were transcribed and analyzed thematically afterwards with Atlasti. The thematic coding was done by central themes that appeared from arising similarities or repeated disparities in the in-depth interviews with respondents, representatives, observations and symposiums. Thematic coding is desirable to structure the conducted empirical data and to find patterns, similarities and disparities in the data.

The aim of this research is to identify and gain insights in the motives to drop out of school and the relational perspectives and feelings of school dropouts on their situation. In order to develop an essence of this, thematic coding can be used to increase the comparability of the empirical data. The codes help to critically assess the different factors that influence the motives in the decision-making process of dropouts to drop out of school. The central themes in this research are economic, social, spatial and temporal factors that cause the phenomenon of dropping out of school. These themes are interrelated with each other, so it occurred that more factors are playing a role in similar cases. I will shed light on these themes in chapter 6 of this thesis. Other main themes are society-perceived and self-perceived perceptions on school dropouts and their future. I will elaborate on these themes in chapter 7 of this thesis.

In the analysis of the empirical data in the next chapters, one person of each category is chosen to make case profiles. Based on age, gender and borough of Willemstad 11 profiles will be described in total. A detailed analysis will be given with a representative per category in order to reflect on the key themes discussed in the theoretical chapter.

### 3.10 Ethical aspects, challenges and limitations in the field

Most of all scientific research questions have some ethical aspects. There can be a direct relation between this aspects and the research question, but the ethical aspects can also be related to research practices, processes or to the overall research field, or in the ways we understand the relationship between the researcher and research topic and communicate about the research. Questions of ethical nature come up very easily in humanities and social sciences, due to the complexity of the fields (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Many ethical issues will be raised in the following sections.

Firstly, having a white skin often is associated with being modern and rich and considered as such, which can have consequences for the validity of this thesis. The majority of the inhabitants has a colored skin, while I as a researcher have a white skin. This is partly because of the colonization by the Netherlands. Nowadays, Curaçao is a constituent state of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which is inhabited by over 40 nationalities (Goede, 2009). The majority of the inhabitants of Curaçao is Creole. The minority of inhabitants is Dutch, Chinese, people of islands near Curaçao such as Haiti and Jamaica and people from South America. The fact that the colonization in the past is seen as a period of oppression by some inhabitants, and this can be still an issue for some of them, can make them dismissive against white, Dutch, modern people.

Secondly, having a white skin can also be associated with being a tourist. Many tourists from all over the world visit Curaçao, but zooming in on the visitors from Europe, Dutch visitors to Curaçao stand out most (Goede, 2009). Dutch tourists can be seen as rich and modern as well, but walking and looking around in poor neighborhoods might be similar for the inhabitants to "*negative sightseeing*", in which slum tourism comes to mind as an example of this (MacCannell, 1976 in Steinbrink, 2012). Trying to experience poverty of the so-called "*other*" and walk through these "*places of the other*", may look like "*taking a look at the poor*". It can result in aversion by the inhabitants against the researcher, or in their eyes the tourist.

Thirdly, there is also the diverging rift between the insider and the outsider (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane & Muhamad (2001). The insiders can depict outsiders as intruders. The researcher can be seen as an outsider because he does not belong to Curaçao. This can produce a flat and incomplete image of certain places or certain people or experiences because respondents do not feel comfortable or do not feel like telling their story and there is a higher chance that they will give socially wanted answers. This can be the case at the Mandatory Social Training.

Fourthly, there are some limitations regarding the target group at the Mandatory Social Training. Once school dropouts are enrolled in this program they get paid by the Ministry of OWCS. The money can be a reason for dropouts to take part in the program, while they normally do not go to school. So one can argue that dropouts who want money in an easy way try to take part in the Mandatory Social Training. In this case school dropouts will be willing to take part in an interview, because they might think this will raise the chance that they will overflow from the waiting list to the Mandatory Social Training itself. This can also give rise to socially wanted answers.

But one can also argue more positively, in the sense that only the dropouts who are motivated to get a graduation, are enrolling themselves in the waiting list of this program. In this case it becomes even more important that generalizing about the respondents is not done. Thereby, I admit and am aware of the fact that not all school dropouts of Curaçao are taken into account in the sample. This research gives insight in a small and specific (possibly motivated) category of school dropouts, so generalizing about all dropouts on Curaçao will be avoided. Still, I interviewed 3 dropouts of a juridical organization in addition to the respondents of the Mandatory Social Training, which provides a broader overview of the total group of school dropouts on Curaçao. But generalizing about all dropouts is not desirable and it certainly is not an aim.

Fifthly, it was challenging to cope with a structural non-response of the dropout population. It appeared that the non-response was high: some phone numbers were wrong, sometimes one was already enrolled in the program so the list of people was a little outdated or sometimes they simply did not pick up their phone. This has all been reported. Of course, I was aware of the fact that the school dropouts had to come voluntarily to an interview. In the end I had appointments with more than 45 respondents, but only 17 of them showed up. This points to structural non-response for several reasons. It seems that they do not dare to say no at the moment someone of the Ministry – Athena – is calling. Furthermore, it seemed that they live day-by-day and have more than one appointment all the time. It is not so that the respondents are unwillingly to do an interview, but they seem to be more unacquainted with planning and making schedules. Also financial motives are playing a big role. It was remarkable that in the end of the month more respondents were not showing up.

I adapted my schedule to the non-response, by making double appointments. Also we called the day before, one hour before and a few minutes before the appointment to remind them again that they had an appointment. They did not always pick up their phone, so that did not always work. Once, one boy told us that he could not make it anymore because he had to work. Another person told us that he promised to be there on time. It appeared that the first boy showed up and the second person did not show up. This points to the fact that the behavior of this group of people – with regard to appointments – is unpredictable.

Furthermore, the official languages spoken on Curaçao are Dutch, Papiamentu and English. However, Dutch is the sole language for all administration and legal matters. Besides, the most widely spoken language is Papiamentu, spoken in all levels of society. According to the statistics (Census 2001), Papiamentu is the first language of 81.22% of the population of Curaçao whilst Dutch is the first language of 8% of the population. Notwithstanding, these numbers divide the population in terms of first language and do not account for the high rate of bilingualism in the population of Curaçao. Most of the people on Curaçao are able to converse in at least two languages (CBS, 2014). Interviewing people whose first language is Papiamentu and who do not have Dutch as first or second language may raise barriers in language which I can get confronted with in the field. Almost every school dropout I interviewed only spoke Papiamentu, so that I needed a translator. The ethnicity of my translator mattered and by taking a colored inhabitant of Curaçao might lower the social barrier, which can reduce the distance with a respondent stepwise. A limitation of having a translator is that I have secondarily-received information, because it is interpreted twice. Moreover, the received information of my translator was in Dutch, which means I also had to translate it into English, so it is translated twice. Anyhow, it is important to be aware of the fact that different interpretations of different situations appear by doing research that can have a taste of subjectivity, which makes it important to admit the limitations of interpretation in qualitative research (Vennix, 2010).

Despite all the limitations discussed it can still be argued that this research is doable and valid. Limitations in the field and being aware of these is required to act decisively in the field, to analyze data thoughtful and to provide thought-out patterns and essences in the end.



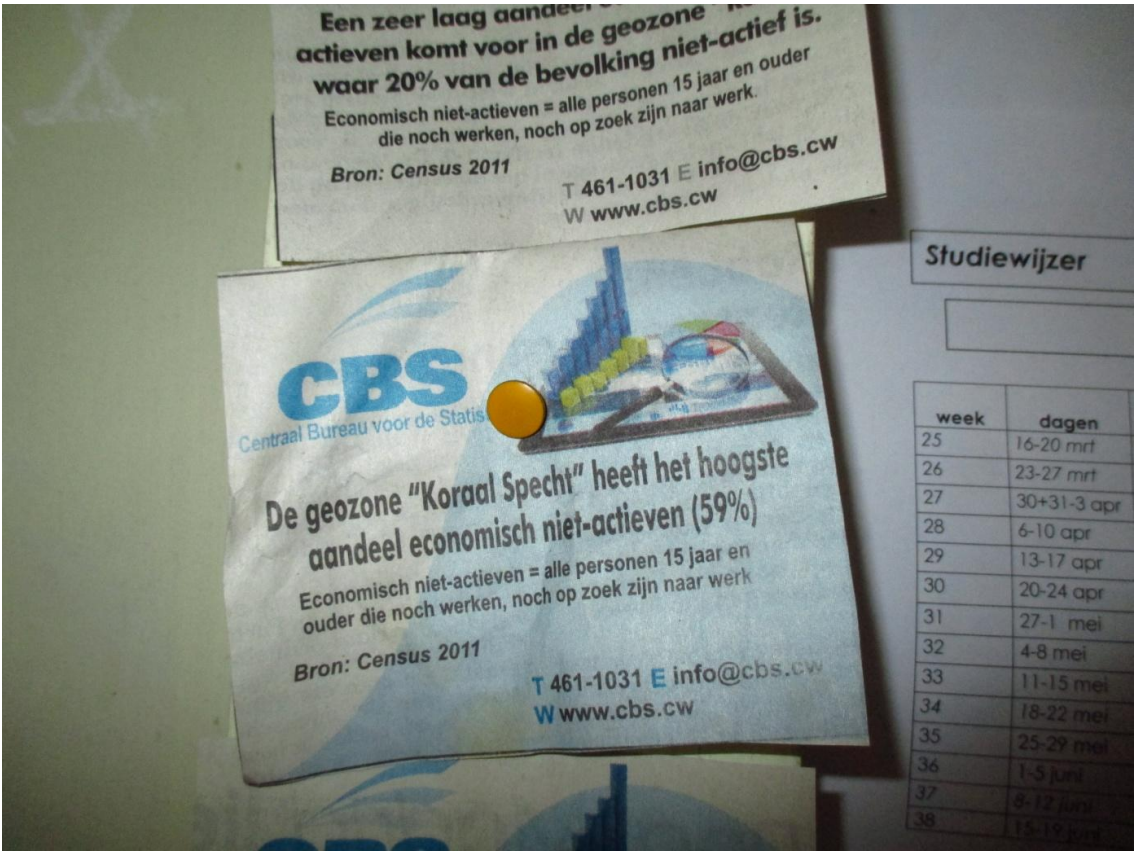


Figure 7: The geographical zone Koraal Specht knows the highest percentage of economically non-active people (59%)

## 4. The contextual situation on Curaçao

*"Do justice to diversity. Education must be adapted to the student, and the student should not adapt to the school system"*

-Jan Gubbels, adviser education, March 11, 2015

In this chapter some elaboration will be done to sketch the overall context of Curaçao in order to obtain a better understanding of the situation in which dropouts live.

### 4.1 Economic overview

#### 4.1.1 Sectors with the highest rate of employment

Curaçao is an island in the southern Caribbean Sea and is a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It is the biggest island of the Netherlands Antilles and it is inhabited by approximately 135,000 inhabitants of over 40 nationalities. Curaçao offers sand, sun, sea, history, art and culture, which makes it an attractive site for tourists. 'The Curaçao Experience' and 'The Best Kept Secret in the Caribbean' have been slogans for marketing and attracting tourists to Curaçao. The tourism phase started in the beginning of the twentieth century and the number of tourists increased in the fifties and sixties, though it stopped after 1969. After the departure of Shell and the takeover of the management of the refinery the declining economy needed a boost, for which tourism was again promoted from the mid-eighties on. *"Curaçao is an island with a growing Tourism Sector"* as can be seen from the graph below as well (Goede, 2009, p.52). One Naf is about €0.49.

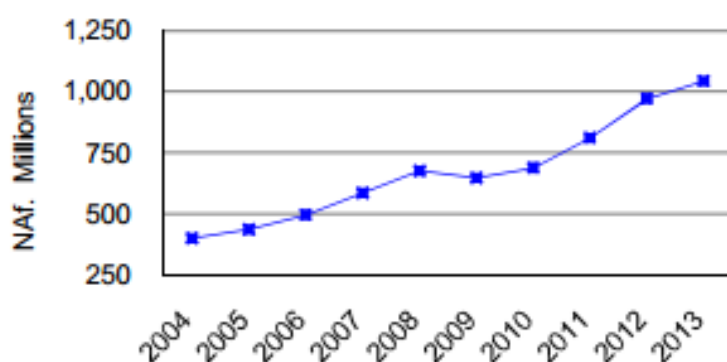


Figure 8: Balance of payments of tourism (Source: Central Bank of Curaçao and St. Maarten)

The tourism sector is not only a growing sector, it is also the sector which provides the largest rate of employment, so that the tourism sector can be considered as the most important sector for the welfare of Curaçao (Goede, 2009).

	Employment (per cent)
<b>Agriculture, fishing and mining</b>	0.8
<b>Manufacturing</b>	7
<b>Electricity, gas and water</b>	1.2
<b>Construction</b>	6.7
<b>Trade, restaurants and hotels</b>	26.8
<b>Transport, storage and communication</b>	6.4
<b>Banking, insurance and business service</b>	16.7
<b>Other services</b>	34.4
	100

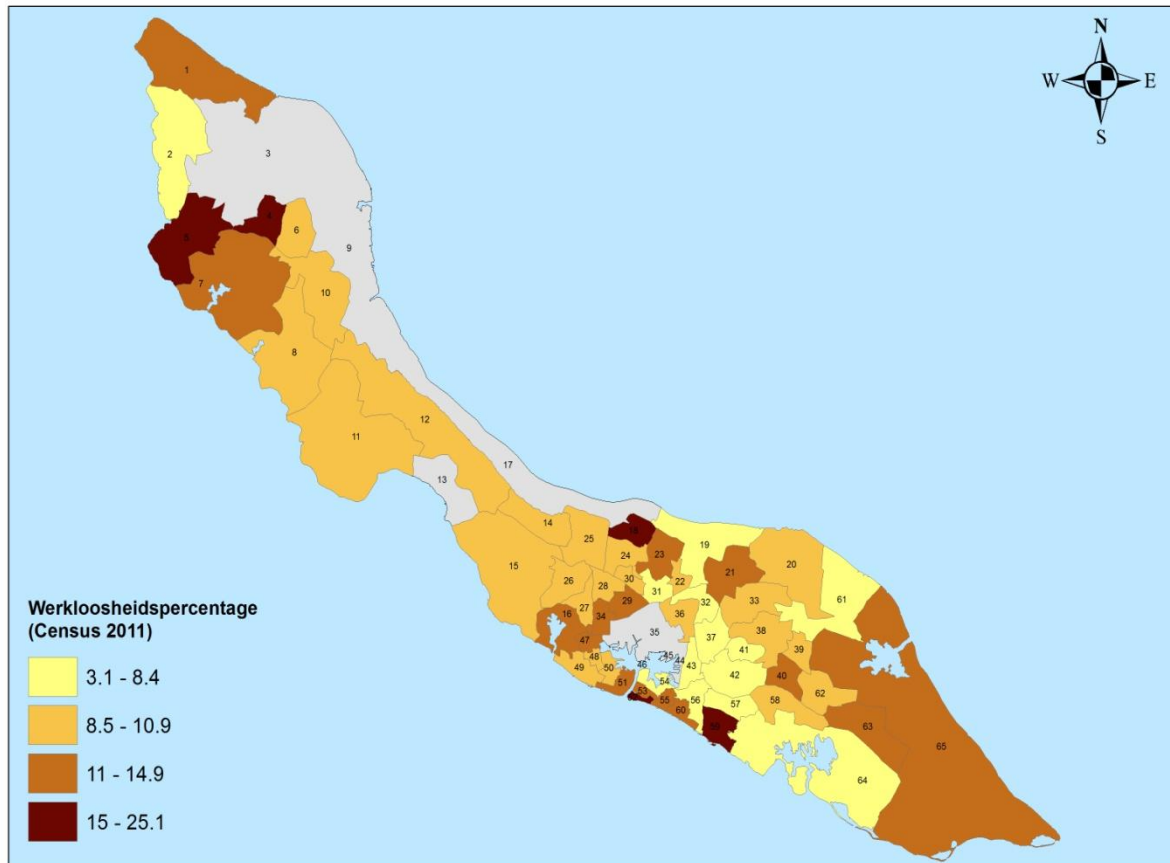
*Table 11: Employment on Curaçao by sector in 2005 (Adapted from: CBS, 2014)*

Table 11 (above) illustrates this notion. Tromp, as a president of the Bank of The Dutch Antilles, argues in addition to this notion: *"It is safe to say that the firms in the tourist sectors will continue to increase and will increasingly become important players in our economy"* (2007, p.5).

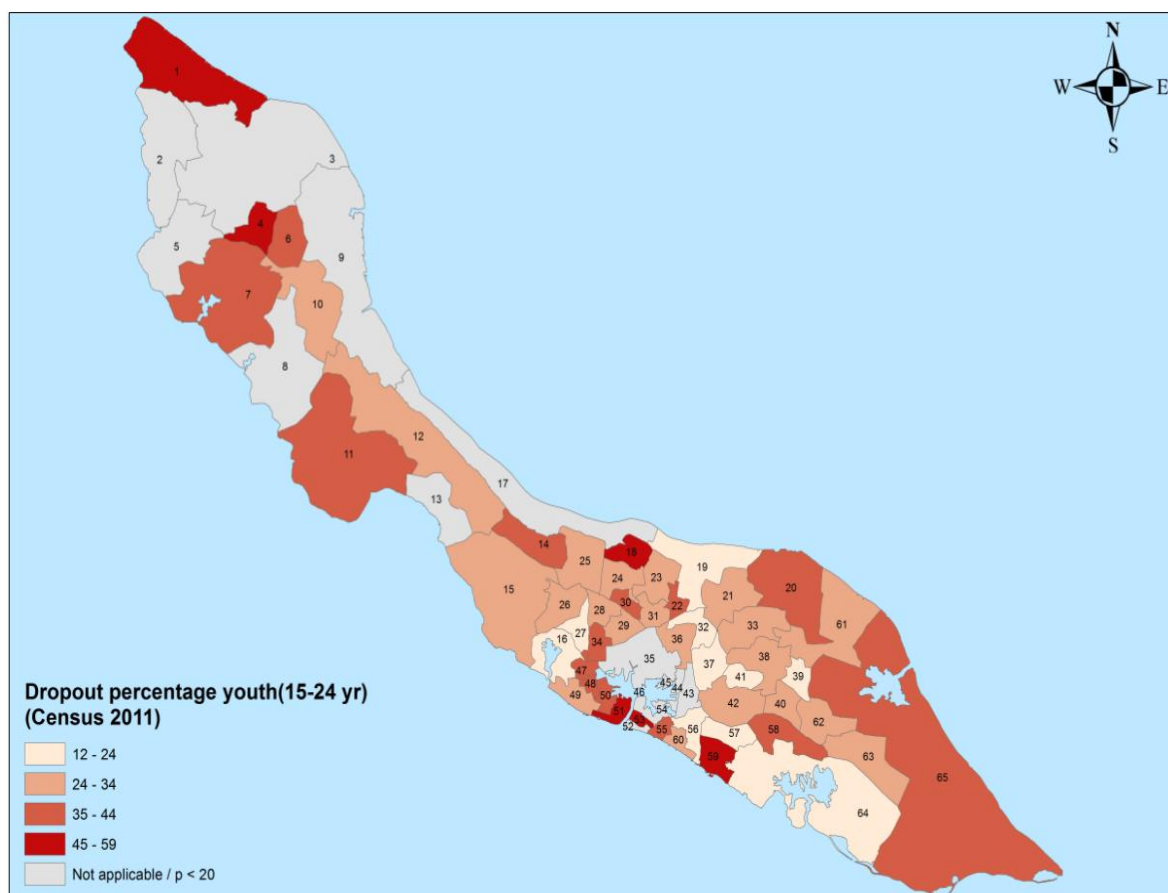
#### *4.1.2 Spatial divergence of unemployment rates*

The rate of unemployment is high. According to the Census 2011 (CBS, 2015) the unemployment rate is 9.9% of the total labor force. These unemployed people mainly concentrate in less developed neighborhoods. Map 3 (next page) is a reflection of the unemployment rates per neighborhood. In the category with the highest unemployment rates per neighborhood 15-25% of the population of the neighborhood is unemployed. The neighborhood Flip (4) with an unemployment rate of 25% is the neighborhood with relatively the most unemployed people, followed by Seru Fortuna (18) with 23%, Punda (52) with 17%, Westpunt (1) with 15% and Koraal Specht (59) with 19%.

Map 4 is depicted next to Map 3, to get insights in the overlaps between the rate of unemployment and the rate of school dropouts per neighborhood. Apparently, the neighborhoods with the highest percentages of school dropouts and unemployed people are the same neighborhoods. This especially counts for Koraal Specht (59), Seru Fortuna (18) and Flip (4).



Map 3: Percentage of unemployment by neighborhood (Source: CBS, 2014)



Map 4: Percentage of school dropouts per neighborhood (Source: CBS, 2014)

#### 4.1.3 Income distribution and poverty rate per neighborhood

By taking a look at the income distribution or disparity on Curaçao, it can be viewed as a rather unequal place with visible signs of poverty (Jaffe, 2006). A method to analyze the income distribution is the quintiles approach. Five quintile groups arise, based on all households ranked from low incomes to higher incomes. Each quintile contains 20% of all households and per quintile the total income of all households together is calculated. Then the share of each quintile group is calculated in the total of all incomes of all groups. Table 12 presents the statistics of these quintile groups. In 2011 households with the lowest income receive only 5% of the total income of all households. In contrast households with the highest income receive 48% of the total income of all households on Curaçao (CBS, 2014). Hence, the last group has an income which is 9.5 times higher in comparison with the poorest group. This number refers to the so-called 'wealth-poverty indicator'. In 1992 this indicator amounted to 10.6 and in 2001 this amount rose to 11.4. By contrast: for other countries in the world this wealth-poverty indicator is the following amount: Mexico 10.8 (2010), Suriname 17.8 (1999), Colombia 20.1 (2010), The Netherlands 5.1 (1999) and the United States 8.5 (2000). These results suggest that Curaçao has the middle position on an international scale (CBS, 2014).

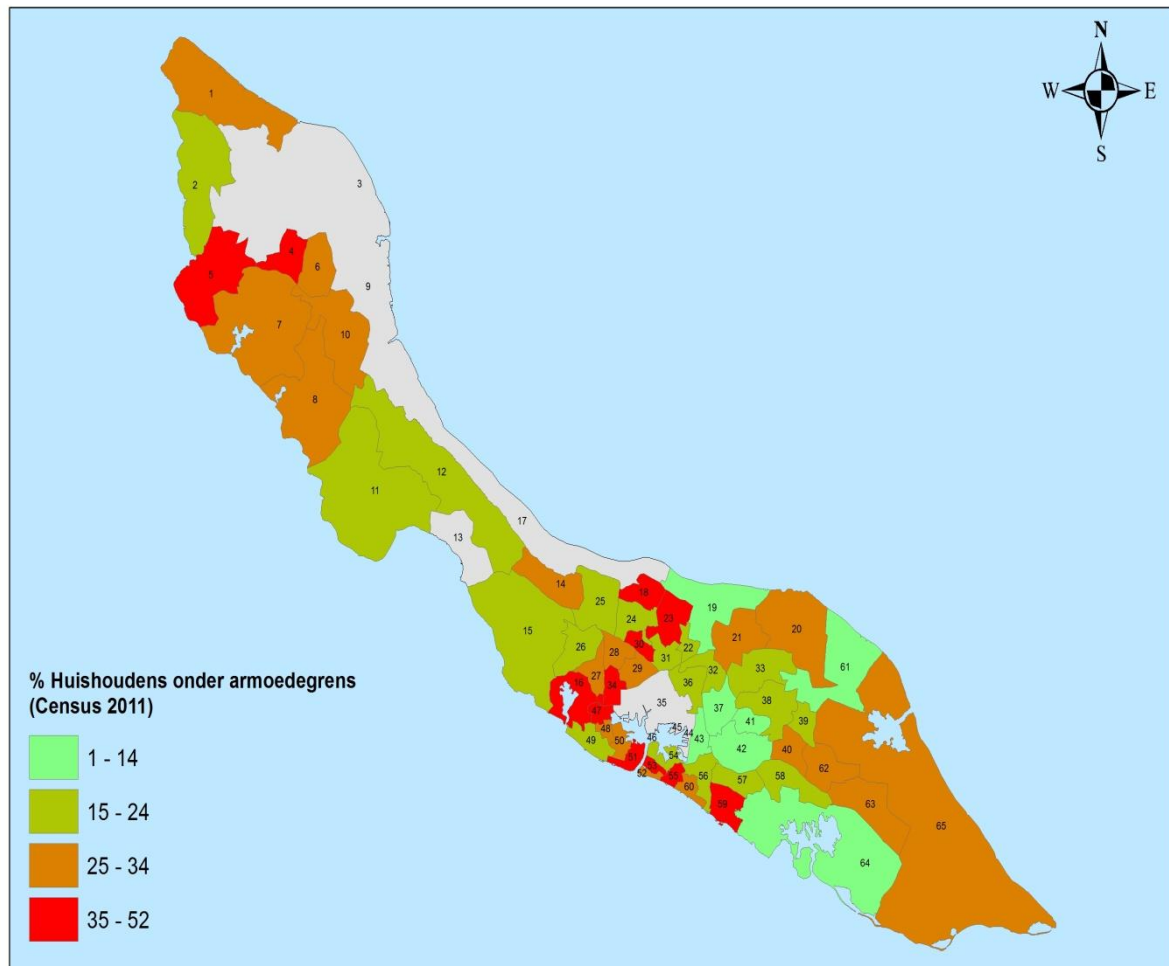
	1992	2001	2011
<b>1th 20% (lowest income)</b>	4	4	5
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> 20% (low income)</b>	10	9	10
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> 20% (middle income)</b>	16	15	14
<b>4<sup>th</sup> 20% (middle income)</b>	24	24	23
<b>5<sup>th</sup> 20% (highest income)</b>	46	47	48
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100
<b>Wealth-poverty indicator</b>	10.6	11.4	9.5
<b>GINI</b>	0.412	0.423	0.415

Table 12: Income distribution (Adapted from: CBS, 2014)

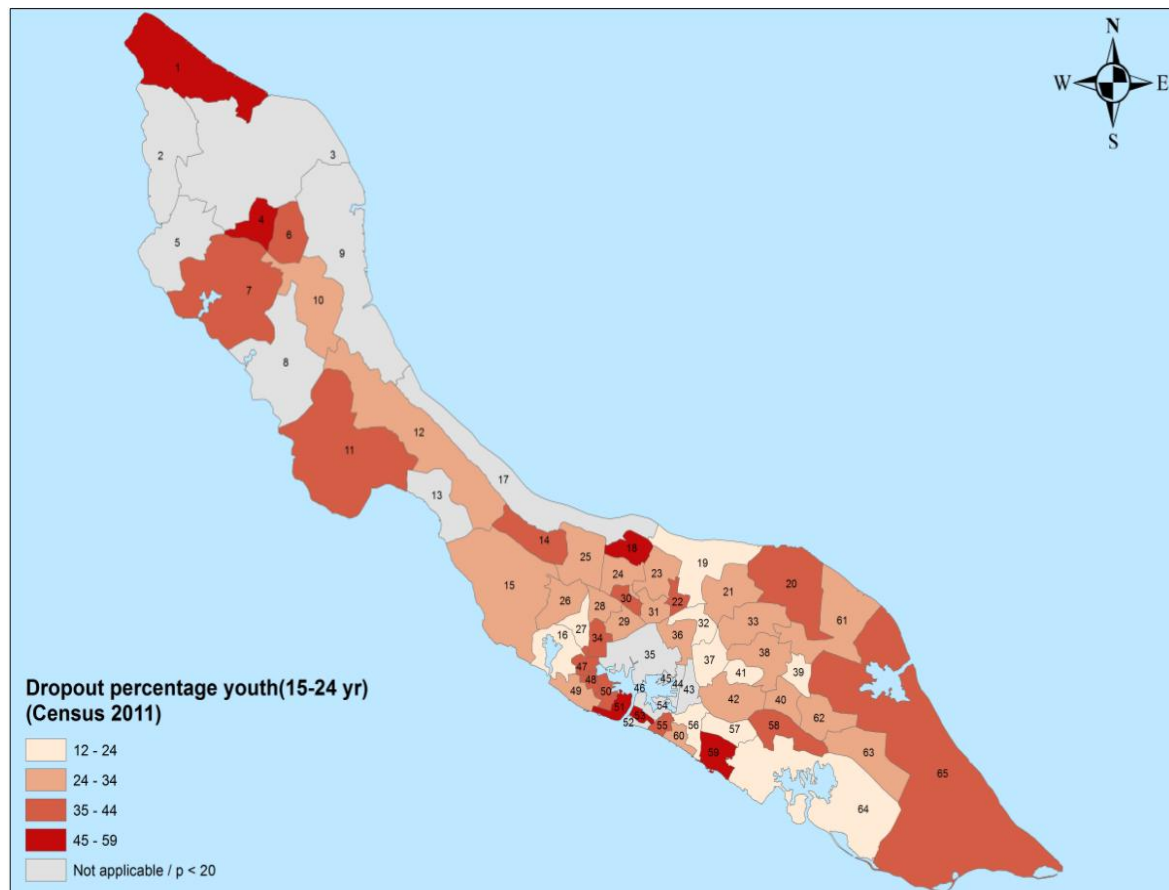
Besides this indicator the Gini coefficient is another way to measure income disparity and is intended to represent the income distribution of a nation's residents. It's the most commonly used measure of inequality. The coefficient varies between 0 and 1, whereby 0 reflects complete equality and 1 indicates complete inequality; so the higher the coefficient, the more income inequality. On Curaçao this Gini coefficient amounted to 0.412 in 1992, 0.423 in 2001 and 0.415 in 2011, as depicted in Table 12. These numbers suggest Curaçao is a rather unequal place, regarding income distribution.

This unequal distribution results in visible signs of poverty on Curaçao (Jaffe, 2006). According to the statistics, many citizens of Curaçao are facing poverty every single day. Considering 2011 as Census, the CBS (2014) states that 25.1% of the households of Curaçao live below the poverty line. Respectively, in 2001 this rate was even higher with 33.7%. In comparison to The Netherlands, in 2011 the rate of households living below the poverty line was 6.2%, whereas in 2001 this rate was 5.9%. This rate has increased in The Netherlands in the past years, whilst the rate has decreased on Curaçao over the same period of time. However, concentrating on the most recent statistics of each country, the Census 2011, an exceptional diverge in rates can be addressed. The rate of households living below the poverty line on Curaçao are more than four times higher than the rate of these households in The Netherlands.

In Map 5 (next page) the divergence of households living under the poverty line is viewed. Seru Fortuna (18) with 52%, Otrobanda (51) with 43%, Scharloo (53) with 46% and Koraal Specht (59) with 37% of the population in these neighborhoods live under the poverty line. This overlaps with the divergence of the rates of school dropouts per neighborhood, as depicted in Map 6 (next page).



Map 5: Percentage of households below the poverty line per neighborhood (Source: CBS, 2014)



Map 6: Percentage of school dropouts per neighborhood (Source: CBS, 2014)

## 4.2 School system

Since the fact that Curaçao is part of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, The Dutch education model was applied to the education system on Curaçao. Also the Central Exams are the same in The Netherlands as on Curaçao. Only the names of the different levels were adapted. Similar to the schools in the Netherlands, there are public schools, Protestant Schools and Catholic schools. The board of the public schools is the biggest as they count the most schools, and the most students can be found as well (De Vries & Menckeberg, 2009).

Since the Central Exams are also in Dutch, it is presumable that the language in school is Dutch. Moreover, Dutch is the sole language for all administration and legal matters. However, the most widely spoken language is Papiamentu, spoken in all levels of society. According to the statistics (Census 2001), Papiamentu is the first language of 81,22% of the population of Curaçao; Dutch is the first language of 8% of the population. Notwithstanding, these numbers divide the population in terms of first language and do not account for the high rate of bilingualism in the population of Curaçao. Many people are able to converse in at least two of the languages (CBS, 2014). Though, many schools do have the official or non-official language of Papiamentu (De Vries & Menckeberg, 2009). This implies that their Dutch is not that good.

Furthermore, literally, one can go to school for free for a couple of years on Curaçao. But there are some conditions before one can attend in school, that costs money. One of these conditions is that parents have to pay school fees. Also an uniform is obliged. And moreover, one have to pay transport costs for public transport if the parents are not able to bring them to school. On Curaçao it is the most ordinary thing for parents to bring their child to school. Having a car is a status symbol: walking and cycling is not usual. But sometimes adolescents are forced to take public transport, which is quite expensive for them.

Besides, the *Leerplicht* was adapted in 2007 by making the school age 4 until 18 years (Ministerie van Onderwijs en Cultuur, 2007). The current '*Leerplichtunit*' exists of two brigades, one school attendance officer and one coordinator. There is discussion in society about the function of the unit, as the coordination is not that good and there is only one attendance officer. Therefore many people call the *Leerplicht* an "*empty law*".<sup>14</sup>

## 4.3 Mandatory Social Training

Since my case study focuses specifically on school dropouts who enrolled in the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training, it is a matter of importance to provide some insight in the program of Mandatory Social Training. I will only indicate what the program offers, since my research focuses on preceding processes.

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<sup>14</sup> A day with the *Leerplicht*, March 29, 2015

The program of the Mandatory Social Training aims to provide a new or second chance to vulnerable adolescents in society who dropped out of school (Ministerie van OWCS, 2007). If the adolescents finish the program of Mandatory Social Training, they will receive a starting qualification. The target group for the program consists of adolescents who are in between the age of 16 and 25, they have to be inhabitants of the municipality and they cannot be in the possession of a starting qualification. At this right moment 89 adolescents are on the waiting list for this program. Once a school dropout takes part in the program, he or she receives 600 guilders per month, which is meant for transportation costs.

The program has three stages: a preliminary stage, a main course and an aftercare program. There are four different routes to gain the starting qualification, which all have the three stages. To divide the school dropouts over the right routes, a distinction is made in their educational background with SV1, SV2 and SV3. SV1 refers someone who needs social education and who needs to learn basic skills. It is someone who did not attend primary education a lot or at all. They have to learn how to function and participate in society independently. SV2 refers to someone who has basic education and who wants to learn skills that are needed for low-skilled work. SV3 refers to someone who has basic education and who wants to learn skills that are needed for access to vocational training.

The four routes that may fit these SV1, SV2 or SV3 are the following:

- *A: A route containing first education, then work in level SV3.*

The aim is to provide adolescents a bridge to further education on the basis of a good match in between what is missed in their education and what is required for the continuation in their education.

- *B: A route containing first education, then work in level SV2.*

In this route the aim is to provide life and survival skills and educating them in teaching skills for low-skilled work. Most of these adolescents have only attended primary school. The gaining of practical experience is important in this route.

- *C: A route to participation in society in level SV1.*

The aim in this route is to give general education to unskilled inhabitants. Because of specific circumstances the adolescent is not able to work. But it is important for them to participate in society. In this route life skills are important, as well as language skills. A part of it is educational training. The route also offers a view on work as a volunteer.

- *D: A route for integration in society of Curaçao in level SV1, SV2 or SV3.*

People who migrate to Curaçao have the opportunity to integrate. Often they are low- or unskilled workers.

So, there are four routes that offer a preliminary stage, a main course and an aftercare program that fits the educational background of a school dropout. Respondents of this research are enrolled in the waiting list of this program. Though, my research focuses on preceding processes of the phenomenon of dropping out of education.



*Figure 9: Single mother in front of her house*

## 5. Portraying school dropouts – on the same boat but not one of a kind

*"My mother had to pay for everything. My father is not with us."*

-Richendel, March 16, 2015

This chapter sheds light on eleven individual portraits of school dropouts. These portraits sketch symptomatic cases that are used to position dropping out of school as a phenomenon in society. The importance of these portraits and the selection of these portraits will be explained. After this, the actual portraits will be sketched. This sketching of portraits is alternated by describing general characteristics of all the respondents. These general characteristics will be evaluated on regarding the differences and similarities between these school dropouts, which will be elaborated on in chapter 6 – the next chapter.

### 5.1 Revealing the importance of portraits

Overall, this thesis sheds light on the perception of school dropouts on their position in society and within this, the underlying factors that cause the phenomenon of dropping out of school. It is important to shed light on the perspective of the dropouts themselves, as they are often spoken *about* in society, but there is a lack of speaking *with* them. Therefore, this research goes beyond society-perceived ideas that education is the norm and model in society to develop a society. It also questions the position of school dropouts in a culture of relative or absolute poverty. So in order to grasp the bigger picture of society, self-definition of the school dropouts is central. Therefore, 11 portraits will be sketched on the basis of the in-depth interviews. By doing so, their different situations will be elaborated on and different perspectives on life will be presented.

### 5.2 General characteristics and the selection of portraits

On the basis of the sampling of respondents, in total 12 categories exist, as can be seen in Table 13 as well. From each category 1 to 4 in-depth interviews are conducted, except for the category 'male 15-20 of Banda Ariba'. In this chapter 11 portraits will be sketched. This number has been chosen because of the 12 categories and the 1 category with non-response. These 11 respondents represent each category, in terms of gender, age and borough of Willemstad. But in order to choose one representative of each category – especially when there is more than one respondent per category – the general characteristics of the respondents will be given first. The figures below show an overview of the key characteristics per respondent. This forms the selection towards the 11 portraits.

In Table 13 the categories with its respondents is shown, with the respondents in bold represented.

	<b>F 15-20</b>	<b>M 15-20</b>	<b>F 20-24</b>	<b>M 20-24</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Banda Abou (West)</b>	9, <b>10, 15</b> , 18, 27, 32, 40, <b>47</b> , 54, 70, 84	24, 34, 35, 39, 49, 62, 65, 69, 80, 81, 83, 86, 91, 92, <b>AJJC1</b> , <b>AJJC2</b>	3, 7, 8, 12, <b>45</b> , 63, <b>77</b>	6, 42, 44, <b>46</b> , <b>66</b>	<b>37 (41.6%)</b>
<b>Banda Ariba (East)</b>	23, <b>29</b> , 57, 71, 72,	5, 14, 16, 21, 36, 58, 59, 73, 78, 79, 85	<b>4</b> , 31, 48, 50, 53, <b>61</b> , 76, 90	<b>26</b> , 60, 64, 88	<b>28 (31.5%)</b>
<b>Middle Willemstad</b>	11, <b>19</b> , 22, 37, 51, 52, 75	1, 17, 25, 30, 33, 41, 68, 87, 89, <b>AJJC3</b>	<b>2,20, 28, 38</b> , 55, 56	<b>13</b> , 43	<b>24 (26.9%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>23 (25.8%)</b>	<b>34 (38.2%)</b>	<b>21 (23.6%)</b>	<b>11 (12.4%)</b>	<b>89</b>

Table 13: School dropouts in categories

As mentioned before, 89 school dropouts in total were enrolled on the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training and they all got a number, except for the three of AJJC. Of this small group of dropouts, 49.4% is female, whereas 50.6% is male. The group within the age 15-20 is with 64% larger than the age group of 20-24 (36%). Furthermore, most respondents come from Banda Abou, which is the western part of Willemstad (41.6% as opposed to 31.5% of the East and 26.9% of the Middle).

By zooming in on my respondents one can see that 65% is female and 35% is male. This can be seen in Table 14 below.

	<b>F 15-20</b>	<b>M 15-20</b>	<b>F 20-24</b>	<b>M 20-24</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Banda Abou (West)</b>	<b>10, 15, 47</b>	<b>AJJC1, AJJC2</b>	<b>45,77</b>	<b>46, 66</b>	<b>9 (45%)</b>
<b>Banda Ariba (East)</b>	<b>29</b>		<b>4, 61</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4 (20%)</b>
<b>Middle Willemstad</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>AJJC3</b>	<b>2,20, 28, 38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7 (35%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 (25%)</b>	<b>3 (15%)</b>	<b>8 (40%)</b>	<b>4 (20%)</b>	<b>20</b>

Table 14: Respondents in categories

The biggest group, regarding female or male, is the age group 20-24 of females, with 40% of my respondents. This is depicted in Figure 10 (next page).

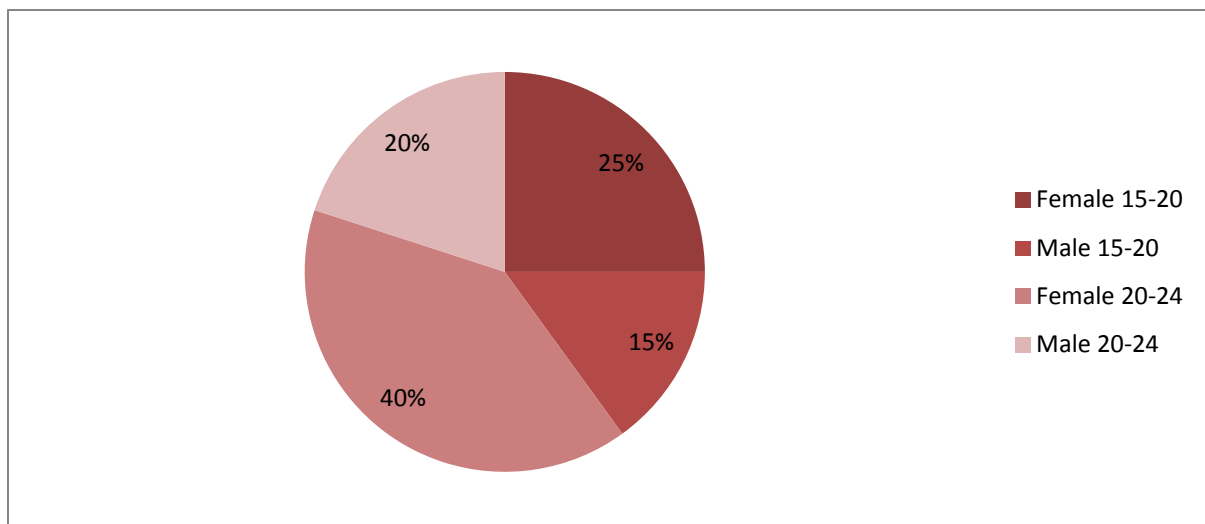


Figure 10: Division male and female

The group of twenty respondents is characterized by many other features. Figure 11 (below) shows an overview of the class in which they dropped out of school per gender and in total. Most respondents dropped out in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class of secondary school.

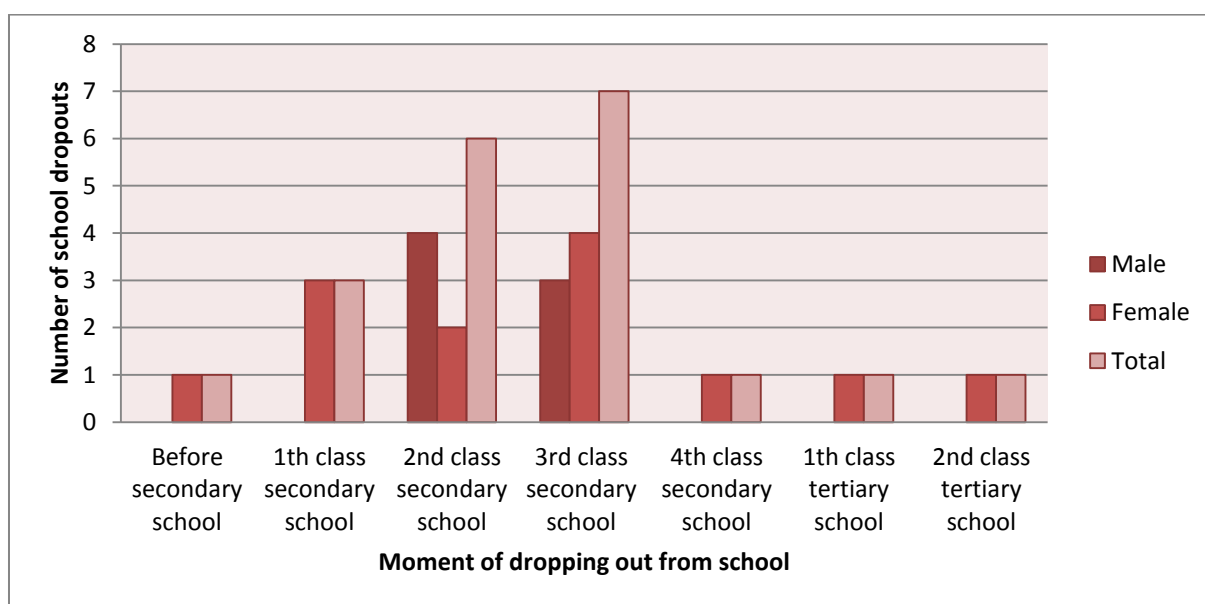


Figure 11: Moment of dropping out of school by gender and in total

In Figure 11 it can be seen that - regardless of gender - most respondents drop out of school in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class of secondary school, followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> class of secondary school. The 2<sup>nd</sup> class of secondary school is the center of gravity for males. The center of gravity for females can be found in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class of secondary school. It is remarkable that only female respondents dropped out in tertiary school or before secondary school.

The educational level of these dropouts is mainly VSBO (7 males/5 females). 25% of the respondents have the level of AGO, which is the lowest level within VSBO, respectively 5 females. One female dropped out before secondary school and two females dropped out in tertiary school: SBO. This can be seen in Figure 12 below.

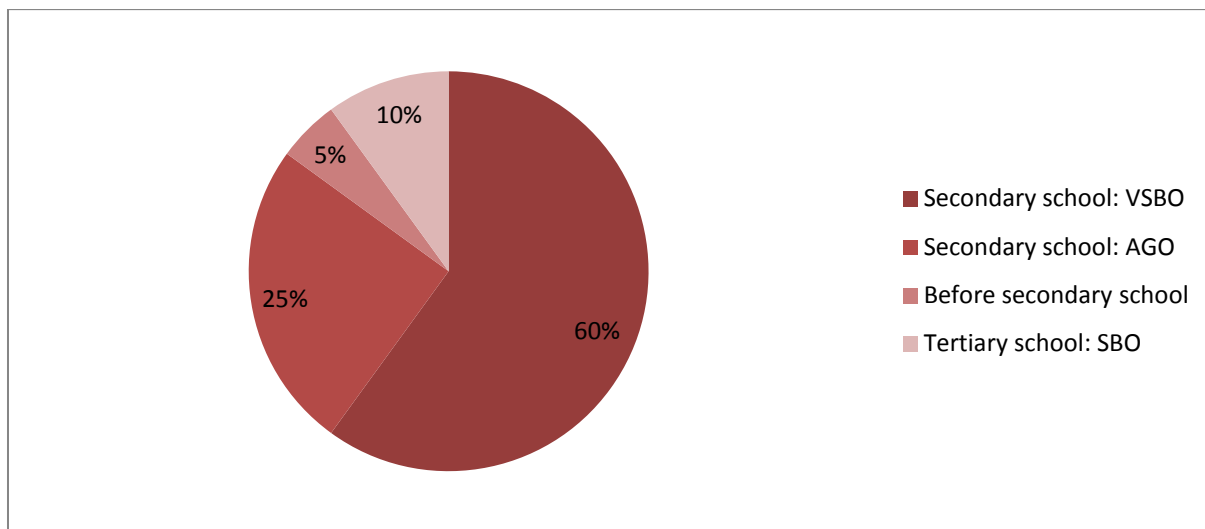


Figure 12: Educational level

For many of them it was a long time ago that they dropped out of school, as can be seen in Figure 13. The center of gravity for the entire group is 1 in the category of 1-2 years ago, followed by 2-3 years ago. It seems that the number of years ago that females dropped out of school is more widespread, whereas the number of years ago for males is more centered.

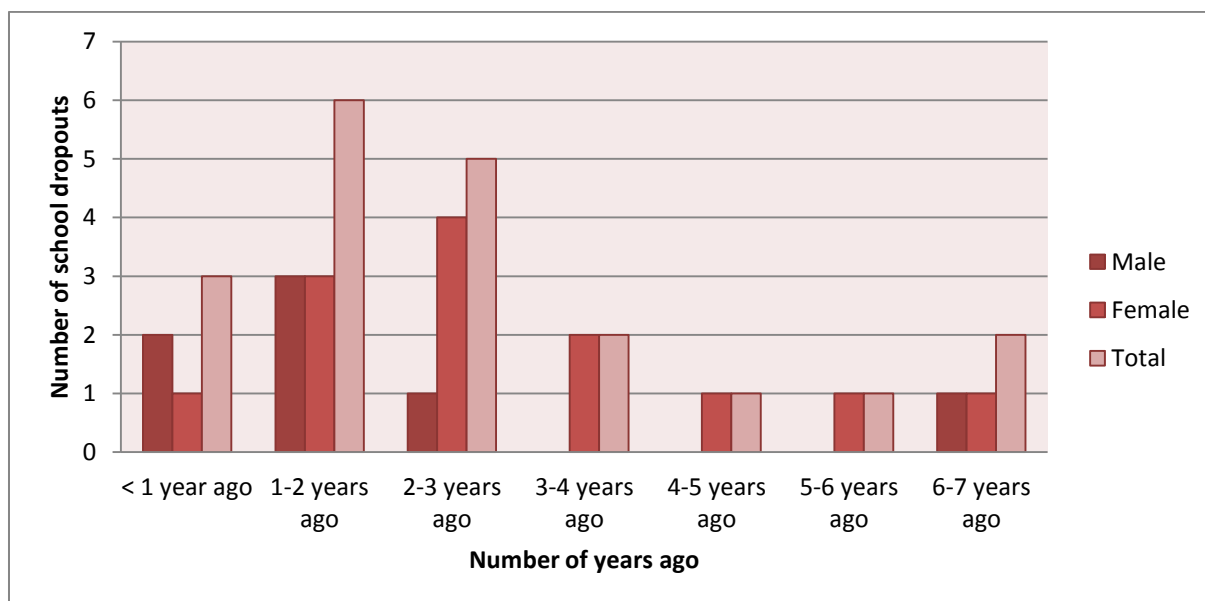


Figure 13: Number of years ago that respondents dropped out of school

Another feature of the group of respondents is if they are employed or unemployed. As can be seen in Figure 14 below, 45% of my respondents is employed. 20% of the entire group consists of employed males, and 25% of the group consists of employed females. The category unemployed females is the largest with 40%.

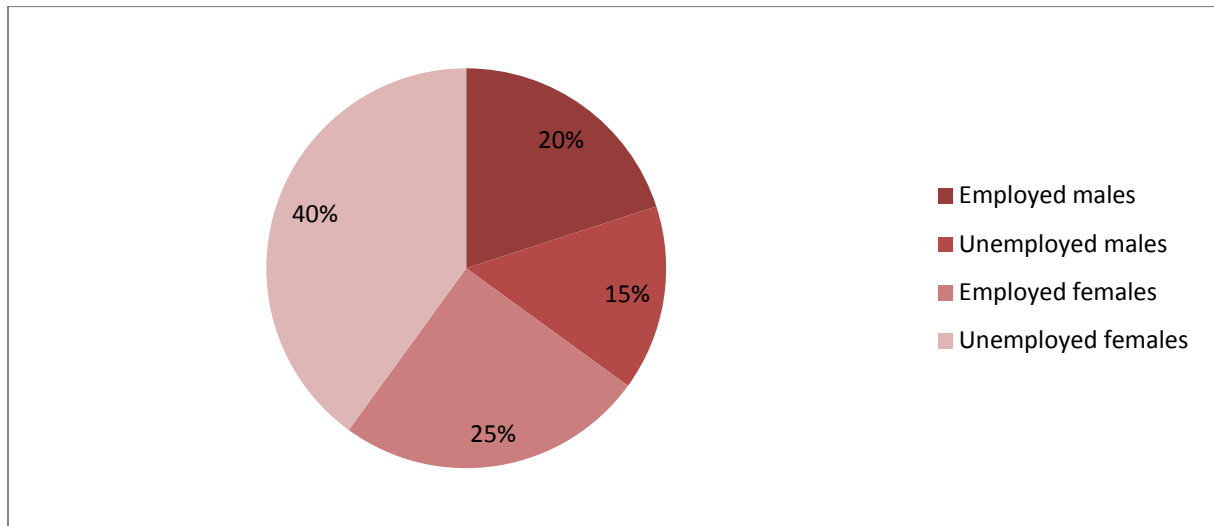


Figure 14: Employment by gender

By looking specifically at the group of females, four of my respondents are teenage mothers. This is similar to 31% (16%+15% in Figure 15) of the females. Two of them are in the age group of 15-20 and two of them are in the age group of 20-24 now. How this is proportional to the entire group of female respondents is depicted in the figure below. The male respondents did not have children, so they are not taken into account in the figure below.

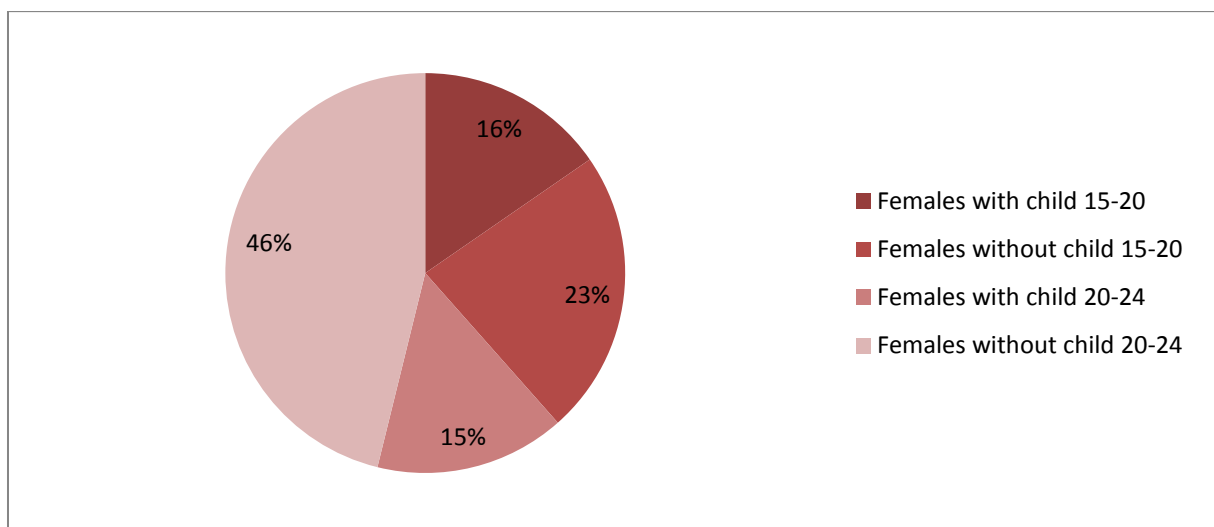


Figure 15: Females with and without child

Apart from being a teenage mother or not, there are more characteristics of the respondents as an entire group. As can be seen in Figure 16 below, 13% comes into contact with criminal justice, 9% of the respondents is using drugs, 13% is victim of physical abuse and 22% of the respondents indicates that they are victim of poverty. 43% of the respondents is not facing these issues.

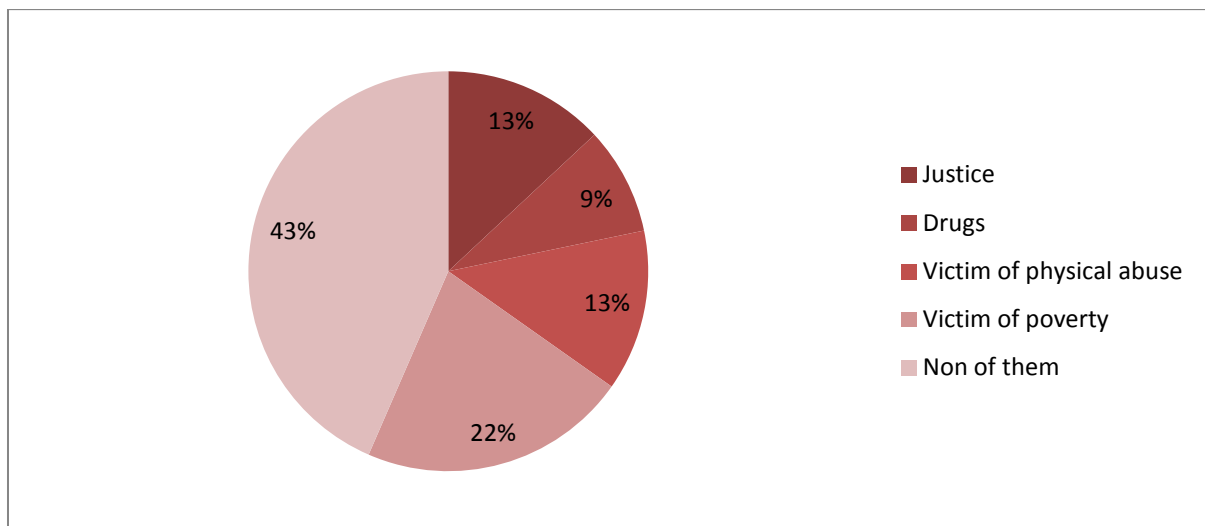


Figure 16: Situation of the respondents

In Figure 17 below the above mentioned issues are specified by gender. Most males have had contact with criminal justice, are using drugs or face poverty, whereas most females are victim of physical abuse, face poverty or are using drugs.

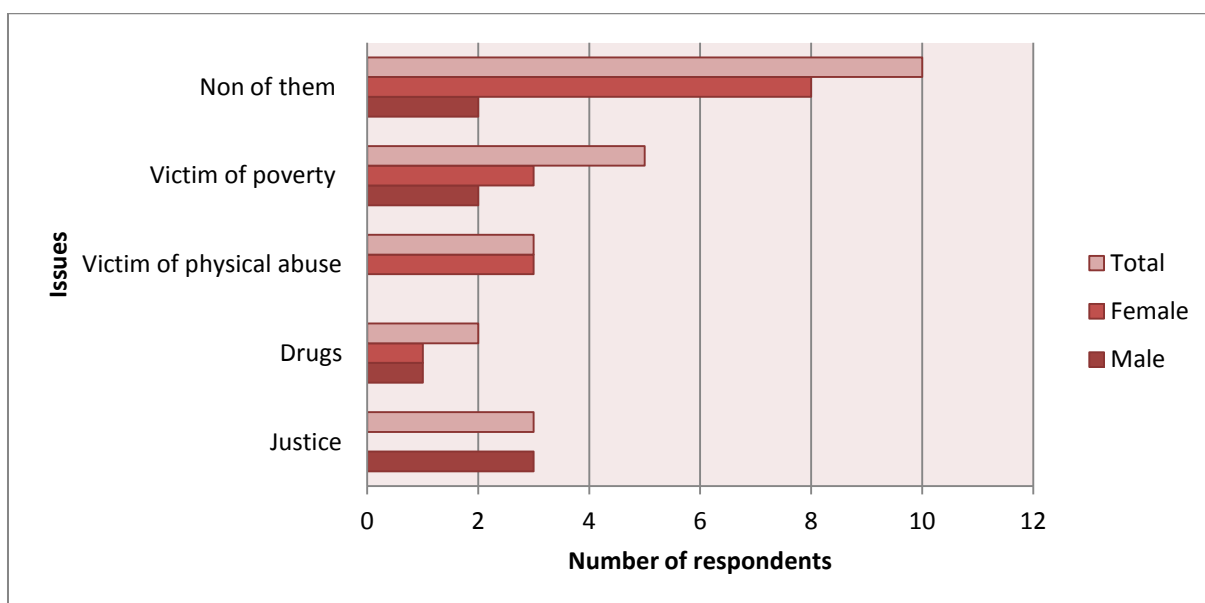


Figure 17: Situation of respondents by gender

Another feature is the family situation, which is divided into four categories as can be seen in Figure 18 below. It is remarkable that 55% of the families of the respondents is a single-parent family with only a mother. It is also remarkable that more two-parent families consist of stepfathers than fathers.

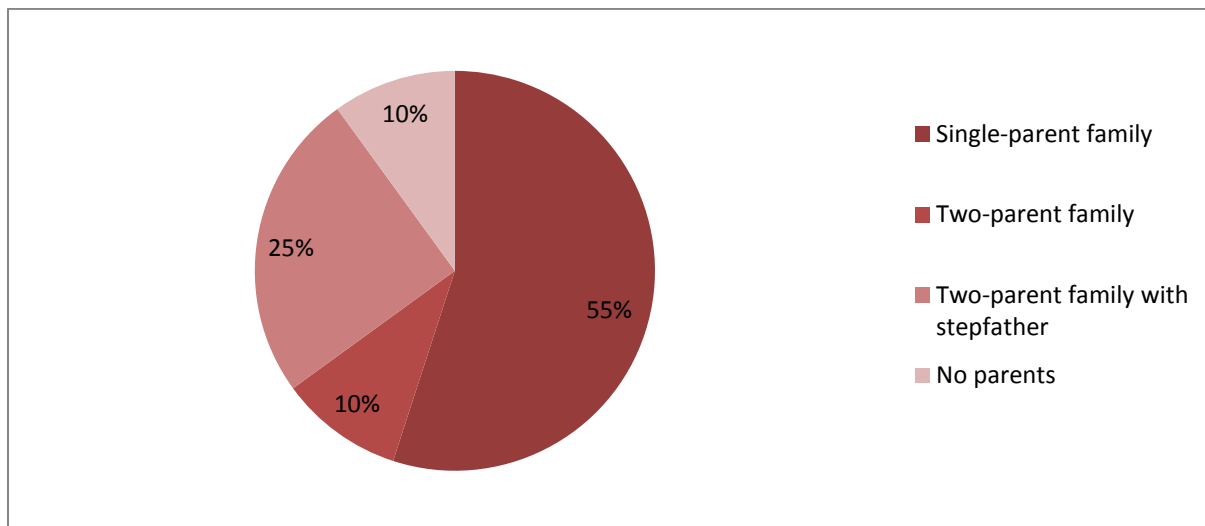


Figure 18: Family situation

Another feature is the situation of the parents and whether they are employed with or without diploma. This situation is figured in Figure 19, as perceived by the twenty school dropouts. Several characteristics can be found in the group of approximately 40 parents. Most of them are employed, especially the (step)fathers. The second-largest category is of parents who live on social security, especially mothers. It is remarkable that it is very often unknown if the parents are in the possession of a diploma.

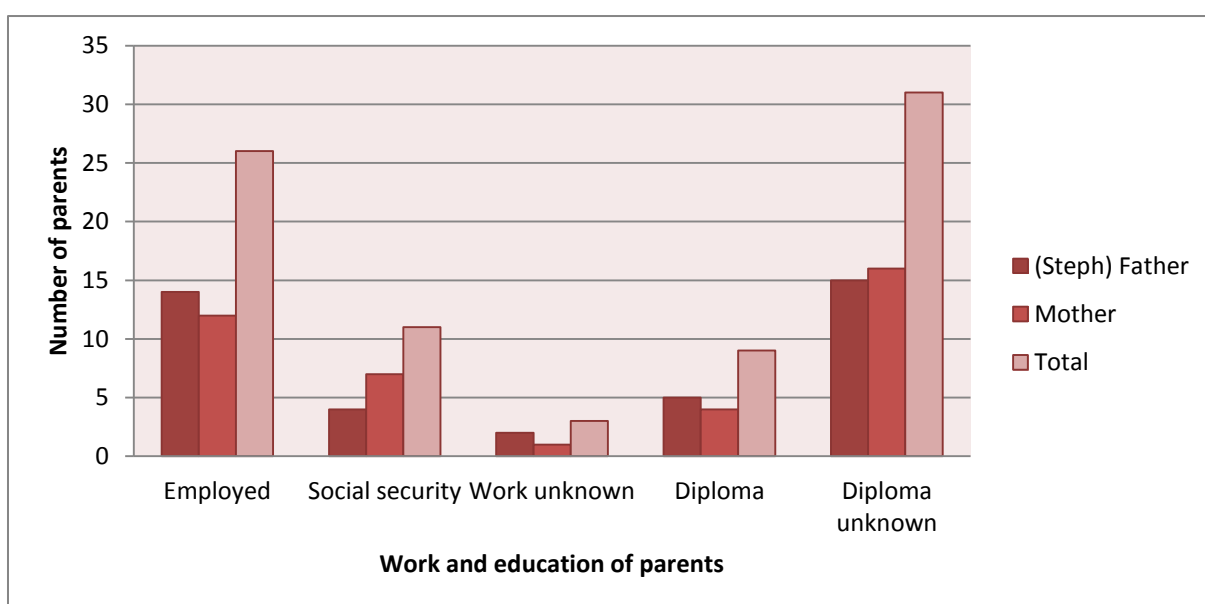
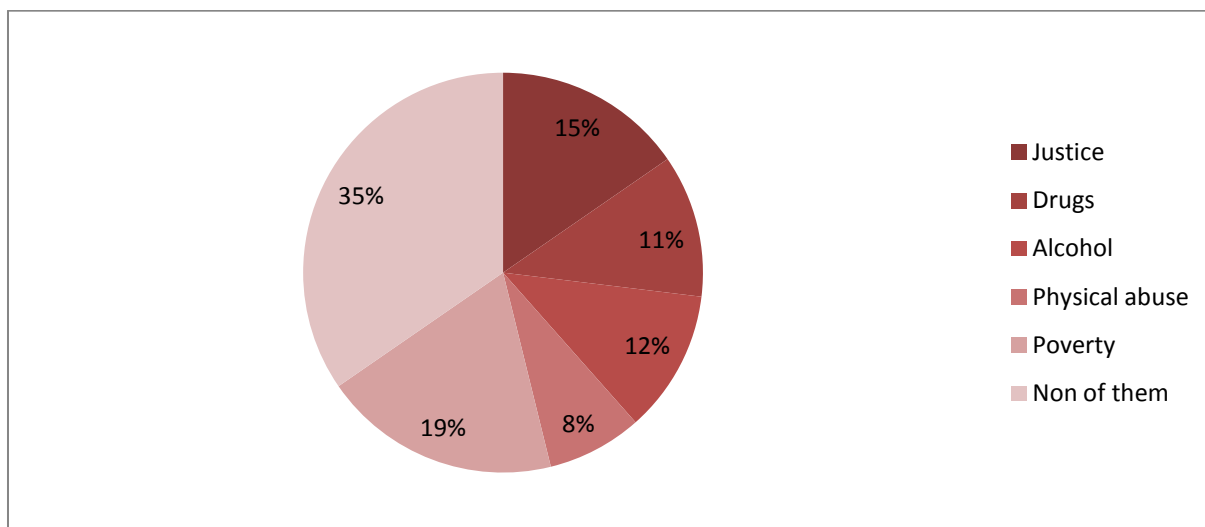


Figure 19: Situation of the parents

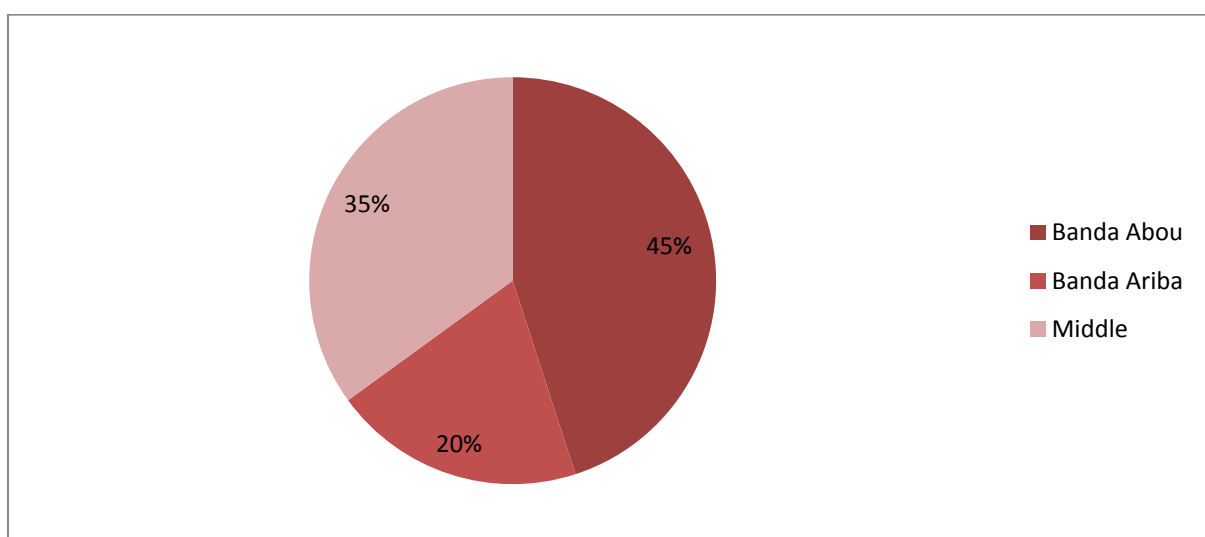
Furthermore, the families can be characterized by different features such as having contact with criminal justice, using drugs, using alcohol, facing poverty or facing physical abuse.



*Figure 20: Characteristics of families of respondents*

In Figure 20 it can be seen that poverty is the characteristic with the most frequent occurrence, followed by contact with criminal justice, using alcohol, using drugs and physical abuse. 35% of the family of respondents is facing none of these issues, as perceived by my respondents.

The borough of Willemstad of my respondents can also be specified. Most of my respondents come from Banda Abou (45%), followed by Middle (35%) and Banda Ariba (20%). This can be seen in figure 21 below.



*Figure 21: Borough of Willemstad*

In order to account for the representative per category, I specified the part of Willemstad where they come from with the specific neighborhood, as can be seen in Table 15 below. The neighborhoods can be a matter of importance in the culture of poverty. Within Banda Abou, 44.45% comes from Lelienberg followed by 33.34% from Seru Fortuna and 22.23% from Souax. Within Banda Ariba 75% comes from Montana Rey and 25% from Santa Rosa. Lastly, within Middle, 28.6% comes from Buena Vista and the same percentage is from Berg Altena followed by 14.3% from Steenrijk, 14.3% from Koraal Specht and 14.3% from Brievengat.

With regard to the general characteristics of these twenty school dropouts and their family and family situation that were previously given, a score is given to the respondents from 1 to 5 in each category, in which 1 represents 'not useful' and 5 represents 'very useful'. This score is put in brackets. If there is only one respondent in the category, I considered them as very useful, because they are the representative portrait of their category. However, it is very important to be aware of the subjectivity of giving scores to the different respondents, as interpretation plays an important role in this. The general characteristics were taken into account carefully in the distribution of the scores.

	<b>F 15-20</b>	<b>M 15-20</b>	<b>F 20-24</b>	<b>M 20-24</b>
<b>Banda Abou</b>	<b><u>10: Seru Fortuna (5)</u></b> 15: Lelienberg (4) 47: Lelienberg (4)	<b><u>AJJC1: Souax (5)</u></b> AJJC2: Seru Fortuna (2)	<b><u>45: Seru Fortuna (5)</u></b> 77: Souax (4)	<b><u>46: Lelienberg (5)</u></b> 66: Lelienberg (4)
<b>Banda Ariba</b>	<b><u>29: Montana Rey (5)</u></b>		<b><u>4: Santa Rosa (5)</u></b> 61: Montana Rey (4)	<b><u>26: Montana Rey (5)</u></b>
<b>Middle</b>	<b><u>19: Steenrijk (5)</u></b>	<b><u>AJJC3: Buena Vista (5)</u></b>	<b><u>38: Koraal Specht (5)</u></b> 28: Berg Altena (4) 20: Berg Altena (3) 2: Buena Vista (2)	<b><u>13: Brievengat (5)</u></b>

*Table 15: School dropouts per neighborhood*

Eleven portraits arise from these categorizing and scores. Within the respondents selection diversity of the respondents in all the different categories is pursued to gain insights in different backgrounds. The other in-depth interviews with school dropouts – my respondents – that are not used for the portraits, are referred to later, to outline the analysis and empirical information eventually. Also the interviews with experts, the symposiums and the observations will stay in the picture to emphasize arguments. But the central thread will be the eleven portraits.

### 5.3 The creation of eleven different portraits

Every portrait will be sketched in short, in which the living condition and the process of interviewing will be the matter of importance. In textboxes every portrait will be summarized, in order to stick to the thread.

#### **10: Nohaila**

*19 years old / Lives in Seru Fortuna – Banda Abou*

*Raped by her stepfather / Teenage mom / Abused by her partner / Living on her partner's social security*

This girl is the first girl that I interviewed on Curaçao. She is 19 years old and lives in Seru Fortuna. She appeared at the Ministry four hours later than the appointed time. The moment that I met her, she was very reserve. She looked very thin and not that shiny. Immediately, her appearance worried me. As usual during the interviews, I offered her a drink. Communication and feeling the good vibe was difficult, because of the language difference between my respondent and I. I hoped, that my translator could make her feel comfortable quickly. Not much later, it turned out that my first impression about her was right. After answering a few general questions, she told us that her stepfather raped her once. That was the reason that she is not living with her parents anymore. Then she started to cry and the atmosphere became even worse when she started to tell that her 42-year-old partner abuses her every single day. Nowadays, she lives with a partner who prohibits her to go outside the house. The reason is that she has another boyfriend of 19 years old, and she admits that. But her 42-year-old partner lives on social security and is addicted to alcohol. They have a child together, but the child lives at Nohaila's real father's house because Nohaila is being abused by her partner now. He started to do so since she was pregnant. Her baby is 9 months old now and she has not seen her for 6 months.

In the interview there was an intermezzo because my translator decided to bring in the coordinator of the Mandatory Social Training to talk with her. During an intake for the Mandatory Social Training a while ago they sent her to a relief organization. Apparently her situation and the situation at home had not changed. The coordinator wanted Nohaila to come back to the Ministry the next day to link her to a relief organization again. Besides, the coordinator wanted to call Nohaila's partner, to put his mind at rest and to calm him down (Nohaila was not in the house). A discussion between Nohaila and her partner followed over the phone. She was confused. I was touched by her story too and worried about her going back to her partner. I gave her some cookies and she disappeared. The next day she did not return. A consult on this matter and a way to help Nohaila were desirable.

**AJJC1: Lwidjino**

*18 years old / Lives in Souax – Banda Abou*

*Contact with criminal justice / Single-parent family / Lives in a boarding school / Mother lives on social security / Father is employed*

Lwidjino is one of the dropouts I interviewed at the AJJC, the judicial organization. Lwidjino is not enrolled in the waiting list of the Ministry, but is enrolled in AJJC. Lwidjino is a bright-looking person of 18 years old and it gave me a positive vibe to talk with him about his perspectives. He was a very open person who answered the questions extensively. His story was different from the stories I heard before, which astonished me. One year ago he was arrested and went to jail for a few days. After these days, the judge decided that he had to go to AJJC by force. He was living in an boarding school for seven years and he had had a fight with one of the coaches there.

According to him, the reason for living in a boarding house is that *“I wanted to try something else”*. Before, he lived with his mom in a single-parent family. His mother is unemployed and lives on social security in the neighborhood Souax. Lwidjino works and contributes financially to his mom. His father is not out of the picture: he still has contact with him.

**45: Dianara**

*18 years old / Lives in Seru Fortuna – Banda Abou*

*Teenage mom / Single-parent family / Mother lives on social security / Father is employed / 5 brothers from another father / Sometimes no food*

Dianara lives in Seru Fortuna and because of this I was prejudiced and I was aware of this when she did not meet my expectations with regard to her appearance. Dianara paid a lot of attention to her hair, make-up and clothing and was a really good-looking female. At this moment she is 18 years old and she is a teenage mom of a one-year-old daughter. She still has a relationship with the father of her baby girl, but they do not live together. She lives with her mother and 5 brothers in a single-parent family with only the mother. Her mother lives on social security and is not in the possession of a diploma. Her brothers and she all have a different father, and the mother does not live together with any of them. But Dianara has contact with her father, who works in The Netherlands. Besides, Dianara sometimes works as a hairdresser, and she contributes financially at home. Sometimes life was really hard, as they do not always have food for so many children at home. Besides, her brother committed illegal practices and had been in jail for a while.

#### **46: Kendrick**

*20 years old / Lives in Lelienberg – Banda Abou*

*Family compound / Employed / Two-parent family with stepfather / Stepfather lives on social security / Mother is employed*

Kendrick is the only portrait that is sketched of Lelienberg, where many of the respondents come from. This is more to the west on Curaçao. Kendrick is not very talkative. I noticed that he was uneasy and uncomfortable towards me. He is 20 years old and is from Banda Abou: Lelienberg. There he lives on a family compound with his mother and stepfather. His biological father lives and works in The Netherlands according to him, but he does not have contact with him. He does not know if his parents are in the possession of a diploma, but his mother works and his stepfather has an on-call contract, so he lives on social security as well. Kendrick works because he was in need of some money. He also contributes financially to the household he lives in.

Kendrick was also part of a focus group discussion. Again he was not that talkative, and he tended to let others answer the questions. His cousin was in the focus group as well, and because of her I obtained more understanding of the family compound where he lives. They are a big family and most of the adults work, except for the grandma and one aunt who is addicted to alcohol. The children go to school, except for Kendrick and his cousin, who is teenage mom.

#### **29: Mirecy**

*17 years old / Lives in Montana Rey – Banda Ariba*

*Employed / Two-parent family with stepfather / Physically abused by stepfather / Mother and stepfather employed*

Mirecy is a 17 year-old-girl from Montana Rey. She is one of my respondents who is not from Curaçao, but she is from Haiti. Mirecy is a very bright-looking female, but like most of my respondents she shows restraint. Mirecy is employed, and according to her she wanted to earn money to leave the house. She lives with her mother and stepfather, but the latter physically abused her. By earning money she has the possibility to escape this abusing. Her vulnerability combined with my helpless anger affected me emotionally.

#### **4: Pamela**

*20 years old / Lives in Santa Rosa – Banda Ariba*

*Employed / Mother passed away / No contact with father / Lives with two brothers*

Pamela is not very talkative, like most of the respondents. She is very calm and has been through difficult things in life. Her mother has passed away and she does not have any contact with her father anymore. She has never lived with him actually, but she had contact with him. Because he did not behave responsible towards her the contact was broken. She lives with two brothers now, who work. She works two days a week as well, and feels comfortable with this.

#### **5: Quincy**

*20 years old / Lives in Montana Rey – Banda Ariba*

*Unemployed / Single-parent family / Contact with father, also for his company*

The first impression of Quincy was totally different than the other first impressions. I felt a certain connection of understanding and he was able to explain his answers and put feelings into words. He was that kind of talkative person who gave me a positive vibe. He was a wise, down to earth adolescent. Quincy is not employed and he receives money from his parents, especially from his father, as his father wants to please him and wants him to work in his company. Quincy lives in a single-parent family, but he has contact with his father. Both of his parents are employed and he thinks that they have diplomas.

#### **19: Shalomi**

*17 years old / Lives in Steenrijk – Middle*

*Employed / Single-parent family / Contact with father*

Shalomi is a very sparkling person who likes to talk. This gave me a positive vibe and because of her openness, she made me feel comfortable to ask more. Shalomi is 17 years old and she sometimes works as a babysitter. Her father and mother are divorced and she spends most of her time at her mother's house, but she has a strong connection with her father as well. Her mother does not have a diploma, whereas her father does. Shalomi showed rebellious pubertal behavior.

She took me into her neighborhood, of which I was so glad. Everything she told me was a reason for her to smile and to keep smiling about her story. She told me that she met friends every

day. Not in the streets, but always at the house of a friend, which was always the same friend. They all went to school and she was the only one of her friends who dropped out of school. When they returned from school they went to the meeting-house. One after another entered and they all were as talkative and spontaneous as Shalomi. Most of the time Papiamentu was the medium of communication so I did not totally understand everything, but what I noticed in particular was that they were laughing all the time.

When walking through the neighborhood Shalomi pointed out a church, a primary school and some playgrounds. In one of those playgrounds adolescents were chilling under a tree. Shalomi said that they often do that, but that it does not bother anyone. These kinds of boys were not going to school according to her and they were smoking weed all day. Meanwhile, some neighbors passed by, and greeting each other was a normal thing: *"I know everyone's face, so greeting each other is a custom"*.

**AJJC3: Gilmarson**

*18 years old / Lives in Buena Vista – Middle*

*Contact with justice / Single-parent family / Marihuana*

Gilmarson is one of the three clients of AJJC, the judicial organization. It is not the first time that he had contact with criminal justice, but the second time. I expected him to be very restrained and not open or talkative. But he was. Only when we discussed the reason why he was in contact with criminal justice he showed restraint. He had had contact with criminal justice twice because of robberies of cars. But he argued that he did not commit the crime, but that he was an accessory to the robberies. Furthermore he told me that he was addicted to marihuana. Especially when it came to his neighborhood Buena Vista he was very talkative. He was also open about his living conditions with only a mother.

### **38: Regine**

*20 years old / Lives in Koraal Specht – Middle*

*Not employed anymore / Father and mother employed / Cousin contact with criminal justice*

Regine is a 20-year-old female from Koraal Specht. When she told that she was from Koraal Specht she immediately started to defend this neighborhood, as the image of Koraal Specht is not that good. Sometimes the police does not come anymore when something has happened in Koraal Specht, just because it is that area. According to Regine this image was overdone. On a normal day Regine used to work, but for a couple of weeks she has been unemployed. Her mother and father are together, and both work. Of her relatives only her cousin had ever been in contact with criminal justice.

### **13: Jeandric**

*20 years old / Lives in Brievengat – Middle*

*Employed / Single-parent family / Father has passed away / Mother lives on social security / Mother is ill*

I have had many appointments with Jeandric where he did not show up, with the exception of the last appointment. When he did show up he came with his girlfriend. Jeandric seemed a little bit nervous to me. He really wanted to show me that he wanted to go back to school. He had had a party-life in the past, but now this period of time was over and he really wanted to take part in the Mandatory Social Training. Therefore, first it seemed like he came to motivate his enrollment instead of having an interview with me. He opened up more when I asked more and he kept on saying that he did not want to talk about his situation at home, but in the end he told that his father passed away in Colombia, where he and his father came from. His mother, who received social security, had cancer at the time. This was very difficult for him.

## **5.4 Patterns**

The eleven portraits above give insight in the lives of rather different persons with relatively unique backgrounds. However some similarities and patterns can also be found, which I will present in the final section of this chapter.

Firstly, from the description of the general characteristics it can be seen that dropping out of school is a process that sometimes begins before secondary school, however most respondents dropped out in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> class of secondary school, generally about 1 or 2 years ago. Their educational level is mainly VSBO, followed by AGO.

Secondly, of the entire group of females 31% is teenage mother. This is a characteristic of this group of people. Other characteristics of these females is that they became victim of physical abuse, that they face poverty or that they are drug addicts. The male respondents mainly come into contact with criminal justice, are addicted to drugs or face poverty. But on a critical note it can be said that 43% of the entire group did not experience any of these troubles.

Thirdly, 55% of the respondents grew up in a single-parent family. Some of them live on social security. Of the group of parents, most of them are employed, mainly the stepfathers. The respondents often do not know if their parents are in the possession of a diploma. Of the respondents, almost half of the entire group is employed (45%).

In order to sketch a general profile of these school dropouts, big differences between them and their background are revealed. The eleven respondents cover a substantial heterogeneity of respondents, whose backgrounds link to a particular set of variables that matter. By portraying them, their specified stories and differences come into view, whereas the general characteristics disregard these specific stories by only depicting patterns and divisions. I will shed some light on the internal and external factors that influenced these specified stories in the next chapter.





*Figure 22: Public bus service*

## 6. Things that matter: internal and external factors influencing school dropouts

*"My uncle pushed me in the right direction. If he was still alive I was still in school"*

-Richendel, March 16, 2015

To gain more in-depth insight in factors influencing the motives for adolescents to drop out of school, this chapter explores both internal and external factors that may influence their motives. The internal factors refer to their real own choices or perceptions about certain issues that they can influence themselves, whereas the external factors cannot be influenced and are more or less given facts and circumstances they live in. There are many factors that can be economic, social, spatial and temporal, that are to a large extent interrelated. Therefore, in this chapter these factors will be discussed and explained in a cohesive story in which the eleven portraits can be seen as starting points. I will refer to the symposiums, observations and other in-depth interviews with respondents and experts as well, if it fits and supports the argument or discussion.

### 6.1 The spatial-relational dimension: why precisely these school dropouts there?

The geographical "why there" question is important to shed light on in this research, to investigate that which influences the motives of adolescents to drop out of school. *Whether* they see themselves as dropout, and what they perceive as dropping out will be discussed in chapter 7. First, in this chapter the specific factors – internally or externally driven – will be discussed and an answer will be given on why precisely these people are school dropouts.

#### 6.1.1 Economic factors

Firstly, it will be discussed if economic factors play a role. The maps shown in chapter 4 already highlighted that the social-economic status of neighborhoods overlaps strongly with the map of the school dropout rate per neighborhood. The same goes for the poverty-rate in the neighborhoods. These maps suggest that there is a strong cohesion between dropout rate, unemployment rate and poverty rate by neighborhood, especially in the case of Banda Abou and Middle Willemstad. This cohesion is found in the cases of Regine, Dianara, Nohaila, Lwidjino, Kendrick and Gilmarson. Yet some respondents came from areas where these generic neighborhood level rates are less high.

For instance, Quincy, Shalomi and Jeandric come from ordinary average families, the parents of Quincy and Shalomi have a job and no troubles or poverty-related problems within the family spheres can be addressed, such as not having food, or being teenage moms, being abused or having contact with criminal justice. Quincy receives money from his father and does not have to contribute

financially, in contradiction with many other respondents. His parents have financial resources. This indicates that the group of school dropouts is a diverse group.

It seems that most of them come from social-economic low families, as many of them live on social security or are unemployed, and their children do not know if they are in the possession of a diploma in most cases. This can cause less accessibility to facilities that are needed for school. For example computers, that are not present at home. Or there is no money to buy uniforms or no money to pay for the bus. This is for example in Pamela's case. According to her, she does not go to school because the public bus service was too expensive and her brothers were not able to bring her to school.

*I cannot pay for the bus, it is too expensive. And my brothers have to work too so they do not have time to bring me to school. We live in Montana Rey and my school was in Salina, so that is quite far away.*

Pamela is also a person to whom a lack of money is a motive to drop out of school. Her mother passed away and she had contact with her father, but she stopped it down because he did not take any responsibilities for her. Now she lives with two brothers.

*I felt a strong connection with my father and we often had contact. But not anymore. He is not taking his responsibilities towards me. He is not giving me anything. No money or nothing. My brothers do help me. And I work as well, in a Laundromat, two days a week.*

So she had to work because in fact she does not have a mother or father anymore. In this quote the direct economic factor can be found, as the public bus service was too expensive for her. This can be seen as a circumstance, since she has to take care of herself with a little help from her brothers. On Curaçao it is a normal thing that relatives bring you to school, and traveling by bus often is seen as too expensive. This can be redirected to a dimension of poverty, as a cause of dropping out of school.

Other respondents have economic factors as well. For example, Kendrick, who started to work because he was in need of money for his necessities. He states the following about his early leaving from school:

*In December two years ago I did not go to school for a few months because I was working in an organization that sells fireworks. In February I wanted to go back to school, but the manager told me that I could not come back because I had been absent too long. I was conscious of the consequences. But I need the money. I think poverty is a problem and a reason for people to drop*

*out of school. Many people of my age need money. Young people then choose to work instead of going to school.*

The clue of his answer is that he needed money, because of poverty and he immediately links this with other dropouts and their situation. His situation at home is a two-parent family, in which his mother is employed and his stepfather lives on social security. This can explain Kendrick's need for money. He also points to the fact that he needed to contribute financially to the family, once he earned money. His family situation also points to social factors and external circumstances on which he does not have influence. Besides, his reason for dropping out includes a temporal factor, because his intention was to go back to school immediately when he lost his job selling of fireworks. A spatial factor is included in his argument too, as the system is not transparent. According to Molenveld, director of the Marnix College, schools cannot deny someone education<sup>15</sup>. This indicates that the school system is not airtight.

Kendrick also said that he had to contribute financially at home. This is another economic factor that caused his decision to go to work instead of school. This issue occurs frequently according to Sparren, which is shown by the following<sup>16</sup>:

*Sometimes the parents, especially the mother when she is a single-parent mother, expect the children to bring home money. For example, the Mandatory Social Training provides a compensation, which is meant for bus services and food, but some of the parents misuse this money and have conflicts with their children about getting the money from them.*

Contributing financially can be misused, which is probably driven by economic and poverty reasons. Lwidjino, Regine and Jeandric have to contribute at home as well, as all of them work.

Also for Mirecy there was a direct economic factor that caused her absence from school. Mirecy was fed up with her stepfather's behavior, who abused her. She wanted to make money to be able to leave her mother's and stepfather's house in order to have her own house.

*I had a lot of troubles with my stepfather. This was the reason to stop with school. I wanted to make money to be able to leave the house. Before, I had run away many times. My mom begged me to come back with the obvious excuse that she had talked with my stepfather. I came back many times. But I really want to go away from that house.*

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<sup>15</sup> Mirian Molenveld, Director Marnix College Cas Cora and Rio Canario vsbo, March 20, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>16</sup> Jacqueline Sparren, Director SIFMA, April 29, 2015, Willemstad

In this case making money is a direct internal economic factor, as she can change the situation by making choices for herself. This factor is especially interrelated with social factors, as the situation at home as a circumstance is debatable. Richendel found himself in a similar situation, as he needed to work for money, caused by the fact of a single-parent family. The mother was hardly able to make both ends meet.

Also for Regine from Koraal Specht economic factors play an important role in her dropping-out process. She had to repeat third class of VSBO, so that she had to leave the school. In search of another school, Feffik passed her way. Feffik is a school on VSBO level, but the school fees are higher than in public VSBO schools. For one reason or another, Feffik was the only option for her, but this school was too expensive. Apparently, if you do not have the opportunities to pay for school, there is a fund from the Ministry of social development, labor and welfare and she requested it.

*I had to repeat third class. At my school they said that I needed to search for another school. I went to Feffik, but I had to pay 450 guilders for registration. I went to the Ministry of Social Development, Employment and Welfare and they said that they would provide me the money. But the moment I wanted to go to Feffik to follow education, the money was not transferred so I was not permitted to start. So the Ministry never paid the money. They promise so many things but they do not keep their word.*

The money issue plays an important role, as described in this quote. In this quote, a spatial factor is included as well. She is sort of blaming the system of the Ministry on Curaçao. So economic factors are interrelated with spatial factors in the case of Regine.

Furthermore, economic factors can also be indirect. This is the case for several respondents. For example for teenage mothers, such as Nohaila, Dianara and Ironaiska. They simply dropped out of school because they became pregnant. But then the question is: why did they become pregnant so young? There can be indirect economic factors for this which are interrelated with living in poverty.

In the case of Nohaila, she is depends on her partner, because he lives on social security. The social security income of her partner is her income as well. In order to please him or to stay with him, it is possible that she stays with him, even though he is abusing her. The pregnancy is not directly related to poverty, but indirectly poverty can make you vulnerable for or dependable of others.

The same applies to Dianara as a teenage mother. Her mother is a single-parent who lives on social security. And Ironaiska lives with her grandmother, who lives on social security. In these cases, poverty can indirectly be a reason for the pregnancy, as it can be a reason for their vulnerability, dependency of others and being less aware of the consequences. Moreover, both Dianara and Ironaiska are still in a relationship with the father of their baby, although they do not live together. At

the same time, both Dianara and Ironaiska live an insecure life with regard to having food or not. This is shown by Dianara:

*I have had a relationship with the father of my baby for 6 years now. Sometimes we do not have food at home. My boyfriend picking up our baby then, so that she has at least something to eat. Sometimes our neighbor shares food as well.*

This proves that food or money makes her dependent of her boyfriend in this case and it points to her own insecure life with regard to food. Also Ironaiska said that her boyfriend brings money for the baby, which points to indirect economic factors. Money can be attractive, and if you earn more money by keeping a good relation with your boyfriend and by means of having a baby, this can be an indirect economic factor for leaving school.

More than that, Molenveld has a name for this kind of girl, namely “*Pan Dushi*” or “*Sate Patata*”. This refers to girls who become dependent of boys, as they get money in return for having sex with them.<sup>17</sup> This kind of practice is similar to lover boy practices. Alders van de Geijn, the director of Bruuder Pius teenage mother boarding school confirms this notion.<sup>18</sup>

*They see too much at home. Sex is not often discussed at home. Sex is a taboo. But at their small homes, children see their parents while they have sex. Still they do not speak about this, but the problem is that they see it. Because of this, their sexual desires are stimulated. Moreover, there is a group of young people who notice that man comes home in the evening with money. And often, there is a conflict between the parents, and 12 months later there is a baby. And more than that, if your mother keeps telling you that you have to ask your boyfriend for new shoes or prepaid for your mobile, or: you have a boyfriend, he has to maintain his girlfriend. Then they find themselves in that living world. This will make it an ordinary thing that your boyfriend maintains you.*

Alders van de Geijn confirmed in this quote that girls become dependent of boys as they indirectly get money in return for having sex with them. This points to indirect economic factors and the pregnancy can be explained by the fact that talking about sex is embedded in an atmosphere of taboo, whereby pregnancy can be seen as a logical consequence of the economically dependency on the boy.

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<sup>17</sup> Mirian Molenveld, Director Marnix College Cas Cora and Rio Canario vsbo, March 20, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>18</sup> Els Alders van de Geijn, Director Broeder Puus Tienermoederinternaat, May 11, 2015, Willemstad

Sparren had many conversation with this Pan Dushi girls, which confirms that the girls are dependent of the boys<sup>19</sup>:

*Everyone tells me the same story. "But this boy is very kind to me madam, and he is not asking me to do weird stuff". Two of them have a relationship with the same boy. One of them is deliberately pregnant, and the other is undeliberately pregnant and is in jail at the same time as she was exporting drugs to Dominican Republic.*

In this quote, poverty is embedded. Poverty often is related to the economic factors that cause the early leaving from school. This is also confirmed by Fransisca:

*Poverty is a factor that strengthens the rate of school dropouts. If you have not eaten at home you are not going to school and you do not even have uniform because you do not have money for it. Then you had better go work, for example at supermarkets, who tolerate you packing in stuff for others. In that way I can at least make money; that is how they think.*

In order to meet the needs of students, some schools offer breakfast or lunch for free, for example AGO Montana and a school in Seru Fortuna. However, these schools can be too far away for some students who cannot pay for the bus service, according to Hernandez and Alders van de Geijn.<sup>20</sup>

### 6.1.2 Social factors

As mentioned before, the different factors are interrelated with each other. In this paragraph the emphasize is on social factors, and if it is worthwhile or clarifies the factor it will be linked to economic, temporal or spatial factors.

Within the social factors, internal and external factors can be distinguished. Again, external factors refer to circumstances as given facts. Often this refers to the family situation. In contradiction, the internal social factors are factors which the adolescents can influence, as they do have the ability to make own choices. The focal points are the choices they made and what they perceive as important in their social life.

Firstly, the situation at home is a crucial social factor that causes many school dropouts. Many experts have argued, that dropping out of school starts at home where a stable family situation is often not common or ordinary. If the home does not offer a sense of security or if the parents do not

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<sup>19</sup> Jacqueline Sparren, Director SIFMA SBO school, April 29, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>20</sup> Lucille Hernandez, Director AGO Montana Praktijkschool, April 15, 2015, Willemstad and Els Alders van de Geijn, Director Broeder Puus Tiernmoederinternaat, May 11, 2015, Willemstad

give good examples as a role model, many experts argue that this can be considered as a risky situation. This is shown by the quote by Jacobs, head of social statistics at the CBS<sup>21</sup>:

*I tend to put emphasize on the social environment of the young people. And with social environment I mean the situation at home with the family. At home there needs to be a climate of rest, attention for study and guidance in this by the parents. But especially in poor families this is not the case. And those are the families of so many dropouts. It can be seen as a subculture, on the level of the family. The question is if all adolescents have the same opportunities. Formally they dos. But if one grows up in a family where parents miss certain qualifications that are requested to give guidance at school. If the child faces difficulties at school, they can help you with homework. The educational level of parents is partly determining the ability of helping children with school. And they also need to have pedagogical skills to give guidance. But in the families of dropouts, the conditions for a good perspective with regard to school are not present. So I would really like to emphasize the importance of a stable family situation.*

In this quote, Jacobs interprets the dropout phenomenon as a consequence of the unstable family situation, in which a role model is missing. In addition, the hidden argumentation is: the higher the educational level of parents, the more valuable their role model, the more ability they have to give guidance to their children, with regard to their educational career. This results in different opportunities for adolescents, even though this is formally equal. According to Jacobs, certain subcultures can arise as a consequence.

Most of my respondents clearly miss a role model. In the case of Richendel who lives in a single-parent family, this is clear enough. He does not have contact with his father. He stated that he needed money for his necessities and he started to work for this purpose. This economic factor was one of the reasons that he dropped out of school. But besides, his mother lived for a while with his uncle. This uncle acted as a role model for him, as is shown by the following quote by Richendel:

*If my uncle were still alive, I am pretty sure that I would still be in school. He was like the head of the family in the period that he lived with us. All my brothers felt like we were his sons, and so did I. He gave us guidance and said what we should do or what we should not do. But now he has passed away. If my uncle were still alive, I would be in school. The situation at home clearly influences the choices that people make in life.*

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<sup>21</sup> Mike Jacobs, Head of Social Statistics at Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), March 23, 2015, Willemstad

To Richendel, his uncle was like a father figure who gave him guidance. He passed away and his family was a single-parent family again. One can assume that the chance to drop out of school is higher if one grows up in a single-parent family. Richendel indicates that this social factor or circumstance was a matter of importance in his motives to drop out of school.

Quincy also missed a role model. His grandfather and uncle were really important to him to give him guidance in life, but they had passed away. And according to him this was one of the reasons that he dropped out of school. This can be perceived as a social factor.

But also Nohaila, Dianara and Jeandric miss a role model. Nohaila and Dianara both are teenage mother and Dianara lives in a single-parent family as well. Jeandric has never have had contact with his father so he was not able to get guidance and according to him, this is something he really missed.

The fact that role models are important in a stable situation at home is also confirmed by Pauletta, a social worker in the judicial institution for juveniles. She emphasizes the importance of a sense of security at home and sketches a profile of the parents to maintain this security<sup>22</sup>:

*The question is always whether or not there is a good system at home with good guidance that functions as a social safety net. The dropouts are often slightly mentally disabled. This kind of people need guidance their whole life. But the family does not have the ability to offer this in most cases. The dropouts have unstable parents who do not have authority. They often have many financial problems and relational problems. Moreover, they are often families with only a mother, who lives on social security. The ones that work have a part-time job. We try to intensively supervise the parents because the problem is not only the young adult. If you do not have authority, you have to learn how to get it and show this. And why do they not have authority? Maybe they are afraid of their child or they are slightly mentally disabled too. In this case they are really in need of psychological guidance. And if they do not have work, maybe we can help them find a job, as they often have financial problems. Or if they are addicted, we can offer them help to stop. So we try to help parents in different ways. It is reeducating dropouts and their parents. And every situation is a different situation, so every dropout and family need a different plan.*

The fact that the dropouts are depicted as slightly mentally disabled, can be confirmed by the interviews with the respondents. Most of them obviously showed these symptoms in different ways. Many were not talkative, such as Kendrick, Pamela and Nohaila. They seemed very shy, but sometimes they could not really give an answer or they did not understand the question well. And often the

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<sup>22</sup> Judeska Pauletta, Social worker at GOG/JJIC (Justitiële Jeugd Inrichting Curaçao), April 24, 2015, Willemstad

answer was: "*I do not know*". When they answered the answer was as short as possible in most cases, and I had to put effort into it to let them be more talkative. Their social skills were obviously not developed. The only exceptions were Quincy, Shalomi and Jeandric. Quincy and Shalomi were very talkative and spontaneous, and Jeandric was a more socially skilled and intelligent person.

Pauletta's quote shows the importance of the situation at home and the safety net that needs to exist, although this is not always the case. Therefore, the judicial institution offers this in plans to reeducate the parents and the dropouts themselves. She also links it to economic factors, as she states that families of school dropouts often have financial problems. This can also be seen in the parents' behavior towards dropouts at the moment that their child have become a dropout. Many of the parents try to help their child, but not actively. However, their intentions are really good. This is shown by the following quote by Kendrick:

*My mother said that I had to go back to school. She motivated me to go.*

By probing her further it then became clear what the situation was:

*What did she do to stimulate you? She motivated me to go. How did she do that? By saying it to me all the time. Did she guide you in this? No. Did she go to school with you? No. She did not contact the school. And what did your stepfather say? Nothing.*

So to a certain extent the parents stimulate their children, but only passively; not actively. And it frequently occurs that only the mother stimulates them, whereas the stepfather does not say anything about it.

The reaction of Dianara's mother gave evidence of a similar reaction as Kendrick's parents:

*My mother felt sad because she wanted me to stay in school. But I was looking for other schools myself. I listen to my mother. She gives me a good feeling. My mother is sometimes a woman of foresight and when she feels something bad is going to happen I listen to her. If my mother had talked more to me about the value of school, I would have stayed in school. But it is my own responsibility that I dropped out.*

Dianara's mother trusted her daughter look for a school on her own. Even so, it is five years ago that Dianara dropped out of school. Dianara's mother did not react directly for a long time. At the same time Dianara attached value to her mother's reaction and opinion and wished that her mother talked with her more, because this could have guided her. The same applies to Alicia, who dropped out

mainly because she was bullied. The reaction of her parents was important: *“If my parents had pushed more, I would still be attending school. My parents should have done that”*. But it seemed that her parents were not able to do so.

According to Fransisca, parents are often powerless with regard to the choice of their children to drop out of school<sup>23</sup>. This is shown by the following quote:

*The child is the parent in the house. The child often is pampered and maybe the mother is afraid of her own child. The parents acknowledge the importance of going to school, but they are taken completely off guard by their demanding children. We have experienced that a father was very desperate. We had an appointment with the child, and who is showing up? The father and not the child. So sometimes the parents are just powerless.*

It seems that the parents are not unwilling to help their children, but they are powerless. It is possible that their parents are slightly mentally disabled too. And moreover, not able to give guidance. Mildred adds that her organization, the judicial organization AJJC, sometimes takes over the role of the parents.

Moreover, according to Sparren, parents often act on the basis of unconsciousness about the consequences of their acts<sup>24</sup>:

*The parents are not conscious of the fact that if I help my daughter I will get better myself too. This often is the case for teenage mothers who need babysitters. They ask their mother to babysit, but sometimes the mother does not want to do that. The parents need information and motivation for it.*

Lucille adds that the situation at home influences the children a lot. The parents do not feel responsible for their children. This is shown by the following quote<sup>25</sup>:

*Once I called a mother because I wanted to send her boy home. The mother said: do not call me anymore about that stupid boy. So she called her son a stupid boy. The boy himself noticed this as well. The mother did not motivate him by this. I said that I would bring him back home.*

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<sup>23</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao, March 31, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>24</sup> Jacqueline Sparren, Director SIFMA SBO school, April 29, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>25</sup> Lucille Hernandes, Director AGO Montana Praktijkschool, April 15, 2015, Willemstad

Ebecilio<sup>26</sup>, a social worker in a clinic for drug addicts, calls them dysfunctional families. Most of the families are dysfunctional in which the father was not in the picture, and the child was often neglected by the mother. By neglecting he meant: *“extremely permissive raising, in which permissive refers to no control, no guidance and no structure which causes children to do whatever they want”*. According to him this permissive component is the biggest problem.

*The child is uncontrollable at some point. The parents often keep on letting children do whatever they want. That is the biggest problem: permissive raising. But it is their life. They are used to it. One big characteristic of a dysfunctional family is, that once you live in it, you do not realize that it is dysfunctional. For them it is an ordinary thing. But it is important for us to realize that this dysfunctionality often is embedded in their system from generation to generation. It is the best of their knowledge, or all they know. So often, when a boy or girl does something wrong their legitimacy is: my mom or dad did it too.*

The core of this argumentation is that permissive raising is an ordinary thing in families of dropouts. They do not realize that they are dysfunctional themselves, and therefore it repeats itself from generation to generation. This refers to the existence of a vicious circle of a culture of poverty. Welvaart confirms the existence of this vicious circle<sup>27</sup>:

*Problems start at home. School dropouts do not grow up in a socially healthy family. Life without father is ordinary. In many cases, the daughter becomes a teenage mother, just like her mother. And this is just an example. In this way, problems are repeated in the next generation. So these children grow up without father as well. Then it is alleged that this baby is becoming a problem child or school dropout as well. And this system keeps on repeating itself. These adolescents know that what their parents do is bad. But they do the same and they do not know how to stop or escape the repetitive system. Their parents are their role model, their only role model. This makes it difficult, because they have never had another role model.*

According to Welvaart the repetition of problems is usual and it maintains itself. Sparren adds to this argumentation that young girls who do not have a father will look for a father figure by dating a boy friend: *“They do not know the father figure, so they are going to search this in an older boy friend”*<sup>28</sup>. This can be seen in the case of Nohaila, who has a 42-year-old boyfriend, while she is 19 years old. She

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen Ebecilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>27</sup> Rochandell Welvaart, Head of Teachers Mediaschool, March 16, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>28</sup> Jacqueline Sparren, Director SIFMA SBO school, April 29, 2015, Willemstad

was raped by her stepfather, and she never lived with her real father, so she confirms that she was looking for a father figure.

This repetition of a dysfunctional family has different consequences that often differ per gender.<sup>29</sup> For females it often manifests in debauchery, they have sexual relationships with older men or they become victims of raping or abusing that often occurs within the family sphere. In contradiction, for males it often manifests in a different way; boys are more physical and aggressive and express this in robberies or vandalism. Boys can often be found in the criminal circuit, which is shown by the following quote by Fransisca<sup>30</sup>: *If the problems in the criminal circuit are viewed, most people here are boys. Moreover, most robbers are school dropouts.*

For females, these types of abusing and raping are circumstances and social factors that can lead to leaving schools earlier. Nohaila is not the only respondent who was abused; also Mirecy is such a victim. In both cases the stepfather is the evil-doer. Mirecy was abused by her stepfather, where Nohaila is raped by her stepfather. Moreover, Nohaila is also abused by her partner. For Nohaila the direct factor to drop out of school was her pregnancy, but for Mirecy the direct factor was the abusing by her stepfather. These circumstances can be seen as a part of a non-stable dysfunctional family, as the family is not a place where they feel secure.

For females, social factors often concern teenage pregnancies. This is shown by Nohaila, Ironaiska and Dianara. They both were in search of a father figure who pays attention to them. In the chapter on the economic factors to drop out of school the teenage pregnancies are also seen as a factor, because the girls indirectly get money from their partners. This was confirmed by the stories of these three girls. The economic factors and social factors of the pregnancies are interrelated. Moreover, most of the mothers of the teenage mothers have been teenage mother in the past too. This is their role model that they perceive as ordinary and the vicious circle is repeating itself again.

Also debauchery can be a social factor for females, for instance for Dianara and Shalomi. Shalomi was very rude, which is one of the reasons that she dropped out of school:

*I went to school, but because of my bad behavior they rejected me. Often, I was too late. And that in combination with my rudeness made that they punished me. I had to work in the garden. But I did not do that, so the school rejected me. The school called me. But they kept on saying that I had to work in the garden, and that is what I refused to do. So I could not go back to school.*

So Shalomi was not able to go back to school and had to search for another school because she was behaving badly and did not do as she was told. This happened two years ago.

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<sup>29</sup> Stephen Ebecilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>30</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao, March 31, 2015, Willemstad

Dianara also dropped out of school because there was no room for practical lessons and she demonstrated rude behavior by walking away from school and the lessons and throwing stones. Though, this cannot be seen as the only factor that she dropped out. As mentioned before her family situation was a factor of importance as well.

For males, the circumstances that can be seen as external social factors are different and mostly concern aggressive behavior, robberies and vandalism. For Lwidjino and Gilmarson this is definitely the case, because they are in a judicial organization. According to an employee of the Antillean Newspaper there are many school dropouts who find oneself in the criminal circuit<sup>31</sup>. The problem according to the anonymous person is the following:

*The biggest group of school dropouts who find themselves in the criminal circuit is not included in the statistics, while it is the biggest problem group. Besides, not all the criminal activities are known by the police.*

So not every dropout who finds himself in the criminal circuit can be registered by the police or another organization, but can be seen as a risk sector for males. According to every respondent there are many school dropouts in their neighborhood, especially boys. They know that they are a school dropout because they are hanging around in the streets all day. According to the respondents places where it is likely to find these boys are under trees or in front of a Chinese restaurant. This is shown by the following quote by Dianara:

*There are several meeting places. Only boys gather there. They are groups of people and they do weird things, such as fighting and robberies. By coincidence, I have contact with one of them, and he told me that he wants to go to school, but he must be motivated more by people around him, especially by his parents I think.*

According to Stephen, these boys glamorize street life<sup>32</sup>. They want to be in the streets and do not see the use of going to school. Stephen states that they want to make money in the streets by doing violent robberies: *"that is their life that is what they are searching for"*, as Stephen concludes his argument.

What these boys do can be seen as a lifestyle. This is the case for Gilmarson. In his opinion dropping out of school is a conscious decision and a direct social factor, with regard to lifestyle. It is perceived as an ordinary thing and it is believed that there are other ways to success in life than only

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<sup>31</sup> Anonymous, Employee Antilliaans Dagblad, April 23, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Ebecilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

school. Gilmarson himself did robberies because he needed money. So for him it was a combination of lifestyle and being in need of money. Fransisca confirms this by the following: *"they can do it because it is a sort of lifestyle, but most of them do it for the money"*<sup>33</sup>. Most of them perceive other things as more important than school. This can be seen in the choices Kendrick and Jeandric made for example. Kendrick started to work and was in the supposition that this could not be combined with going to school. Jeandric stopped with school because he went partying with many friends, and according to him this could not be combined with school. So there seems to be the idea among the respondents that work or recreation cannot be combined with going to school; you cannot have it both ways.

An important factor in this lifestyle can be the social network. The influence that this network can have on people can be seen as internal and external social factors. People can choose who they want to have around them in their social network, so that embodies the internal factor, as they do have influence on that. But family often belongs to social networks of people as well, and family cannot be chosen, so this can be seen as an external social factor. According to Ebicilio the choices that school dropouts make themselves are influenced by their friends. He calls this *"the peer group pressure"*<sup>34</sup>. This means that people of the same age influence each other negatively because they are in a group. Lwidjino mentioned that there is an old captain in every group who is the leading man that influences the most. According to Ebicilio, they stimulate each other to do robberies instead of going to school. This applies especially to males, according to Fransisca, as is shown by the following quote:

*Boys are living the street life more. Their life is happening in the streets and there they are highly impressive to others; their friends outside. I think that this is the reason for having more boys than girls in the streets. Last year the total amount of boys was 108, whereas we had only 2 girls. That is almost nothing. Boys are influenced negatively in the sense of: why would you go to school? There is nothing to learn and you earn no money there. They do not say it, but I notice that it is like this.*

Male respondents indeed showed that they are highly impressive to others in their age group. Especially Gilmarson and Lwidjino. They are in the judicial organization AJJC and both did robberies. Gilmarson did robberies in a group twice. Now, he is not seeing these people anymore. He said that he refused to take part in the robbery, so he was sitting apart. But the fact that he was there, made him accessory. *"But I did nothing and it was not my idea"*, Gilmarson argued. In relation to this, one of the female respondents, Cecilia, argued that she smoked marihuana because of her friend: *"If I did not see*

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<sup>33</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao, March 31, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Ebicilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

*her anymore, maybe I would not smoke or I would have stayed in school. She is having influences on me".* Therefore, one can argue that especially in the criminal circuit the social network is an important social factor to drop out of school. Welvaart argues the following<sup>35</sup>:

*Once you are in the criminal circuit, it is very difficult to go out of it. It is their own decision. It is difficult to come out but it is possible. I know some of them. They are married and employed nowadays.*

So if they are strong enough, they can skip their social network and the criminal circuit. With regard to this, Ebicilio argued that *"the biggest problem is going back to the problematic environment once somebody is done with an institution for addiction or judicial organization"*<sup>36</sup>. That their environment and social network has not changed in the meantime is a risk factor. This environment can have bad influences on this people again.

Friends are more often important to my respondents in the making of their choices, but all of them considered their mother as most important person in their life. Even if she is not alive anymore, in the case of Pamela, she is considered as the most important person. Her opinion is important when the dropouts have to make choices, and their friends seem to have less influences on their choices. Though, it seems that the parents do not support their children to go to school enough, as mentioned before in this chapter.

Also the social network of the parents is important in the making of choices, because sometimes the status of the parents is really important. For instance, some children have to do a certain education level in order to maintain the status of the parents for the external world. This happens, whilst at the same time children in general are estimated at a too high educational level. Many of the dropouts are slightly mentally disabled and still are in vsbo. The pressure of the parents can be too much for children, for which this can be a social factor to drop out of school.

Besides, the neighborhood is also an important element within the social network. For example, especially in areas with low incomes, there is a lot of social control according to Ebicilio. Also Welvaart argues that people in neighborhoods with low incomes support each other through social control<sup>37</sup>:

*I do not say that everybody in these kinds of neighborhoods is like that. But people know each other and defend each other. They compare each other with others as well. And they always*

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<sup>35</sup> Rochandell Welvaart, Head of Teachers Mediaschool, March 16, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Ebicilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>37</sup> Rochandell Welvaart, Head of Teachers Mediaschool, March 16, 2015, Willemstad

*want confirmation of others because they feel responsible for others in their neighborhood. They are really close.*

Many of my respondents confirm that they are really close with neighbors and that they know everybody by sight. Dianara mentioned that her mother was told immediately when Dianara did something wrong. Social control in her neighborhood Seru Fortuna is the order of the day. Also Shalomi mentioned that she often experiences that her neighbor is telling things about her to her mother, that she did not tell to her mother herself. This points to social control as well. This social control can have a straight-jacket effect on dropouts that maybe makes them strengthen their choice to drop out of school. Also Ebicilio points to social control: *"It is a small community on Curaçao so the social safety net is stronger. And because of the social control this is maintained"*<sup>38</sup>.

Others point to the fact that there is not social control anymore, for instance Pauletta<sup>39</sup>. She argues that social control was there in the past, but not anymore. Also Mildred argues that parents do not talk with others in the neighborhood about anything out of shame. For example about their son who is condemned. This is more a taboo.

### 6.1.3 Spatial factors

The spatially factors refer to the systems on Curaçao, such as the school system, the Leerplicht, the police and collaboration between different organizations.

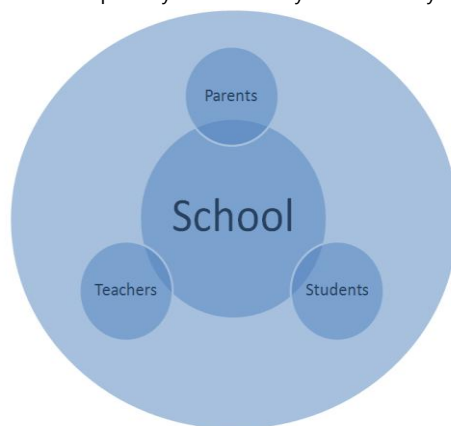
According to Gubbels and Sambo-Velder there needs to be an interaction between different players in society with regard to the minimizing of school dropouts<sup>40</sup>. This is displayed in Figure 23 (next page).

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<sup>38</sup> Stephen Ebicilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>39</sup> Judeska Pauletta, Social worker at GOG/JJIC (Justitiële Jeugd Inrichting Curaçao), April 24, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>40</sup> Lizette Sambo-Velder, Sector Director Ministry of OWCS, March 12, 2015, Willemstad and Jan Gubbels, Advisor Education, March 11, 2015, Willemstad



*Figure 23: The school and different players embedded in society*

The biggest circle in this figure portrays society. According to the maker of this model, Sambo-Velder, school needs to be a starting and middle point, where interaction between parents, students and teachers is necessary to obtain a good learning process for the student and to let society benefit of this. Though, the school system does not always work very well according to respondents and experts. There are several reasons for that.

Firstly, the school system on Curaçao itself can be seen as a factor to leave school for different respondents. According to Gubbels and Sambo-Velder, schools are too theoretical and the curriculums do not meet the expectations or the learning objectives of the students<sup>41</sup>. This in combination with inadequate teachers can cause the phenomenon “pushouts”, as mentioned before in the introduction of this thesis and which was a discussion point in the symposium about youth development on Curaçao<sup>42</sup>. Pushouts, in contradiction to dropouts, are pushed out of schools because of the bad school system. According to Gubbels and Hernandez, school should offer a pedagogical climate in which there is a sense of security, since many of the students do not feel this at home<sup>43</sup>. Teachers, in their opinion, do have the task to watch all students and they have to pedagogically perform teaching methods. But there are many doubts about the functioning of the schools and the school system, which causes the discussion about “dropouts or pushouts”, which can be perceived as a hot topic on Curaçao.

This pushing out is caused by different factors, that are also mentioned by respondents. Starting off by the lack of facilities. This was one of the direct factors for Dianara to drop out. Dianara was showing rude behavior, which includes one of the reasons that she dropped out. But she blamed the school as well, because they did not offer a room for practical lessons. That was the direct reason for her to drop out of school that can be seen as a spatial factor.

<sup>41</sup> Lizette Sambo-Velder, Sector Director Ministry of OWCS, March 12, 2015, Willemstad and Jan Gubbels, Advisor Education, March 11, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>42</sup> Expert session on school dropouts and youth development, March 12, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>43</sup> Jan Gubbels, Advisor Education, March 11, 2015, Willemstad and Lucille Hernandez, Director AGO Montana Praktijkschool, April 15, 2015, Willemstad

Pushouts can also be found when there is a lack of information about the school system and rules in schools. In the case of Kendrick the fact that he wanted to work was one of the reasons that he dropped out of school, which is an economic factor, but he could not come back after three months not attending in school. He thought that he would be automatically unsubscribed after three months.

This opinion is shared by many of my respondents. But in fact this is not true. If it happens, the school acts illegally. A school can only refuse students if they had contact with criminal justice. This points to a lack of information about the school system. In the case of Cecilia something similar happened, as she moved from Colombia to Curaçao, and after three months she was also assumed that she was unsubscribed automatically.

Fransisca states that there is not only a lack of information about the school system itself, but also the following issues are also causing the phenomenon of pushouts<sup>44</sup>:

*There is a lack of information about the value and purpose of school. They miss the conviction of; the more education, the more chances in society. And above that, the school makes it more difficult. The groups at school are very big. There is no attention and care for children because there are too few social workers per school. Children who have problems at home will express themselves at school. Teachers are not able to handle these problems and cannot act adequately. It is therefore that teachers are setting limits and the question rises if we are concerned with dropouts or pushouts.*

Fransisca points here at the lack of information about the purpose of school in society. This was also one of the factors why Richendel left school: *‘If I had more information, chances were there that I would have stayed in school’*. He did not know why he needed school to make it in life. The moment that he needed money, the choice to drop out of school was very easy. This can be seen as a spatial factor and a pushout, because a lack of information provision that can be seen as lacks in systems.

The fact that Dutch is the official language in schools can be a spatial factor to drop out of school as well. It can also be seen as a factor to be pushed out of school. Many students do not have the knowledge of the Dutch language and only know Papiamentu, while knowledge of the Dutch language is important to do Central Exams in Dutch. According to Welvaart the lack of knowledge of the Dutch language can lead to drop- or pushouts<sup>45</sup>.

*A school can be the wrong direction for someone. And cognitively they are not the best and fastest persons. If they do not understand the curriculum, which is often the case because of*

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<sup>44</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao, March 31, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>45</sup> Rochandell Welvaart, Head of Teachers Mediaschool, March 16, 2015, Willemstad

*language problems, students do not dare to ask questions and out of shame they drop out. They just think: hey, this is too difficult for me, I cannot handle this.*

Gubbels confirms this way of thinking. He states that the Dutch education model was applied to Curaçao once, but it does not fit<sup>46</sup>, mainly because of the language.

Besides, Fransisca points to a lack of enough social workers that cause pushouts. This is confirmed by Molenveld<sup>47</sup>. This was also a discussion point at the Round Table<sup>48</sup>. Public schools only have one social worker per ten schools, whereas Christian schools have two social workers per ten schools. Both numbers are way too small, following the opinion that was shared by the majority of those present at the Round Table symposium. It is also confirmed by Sparren that there are too few social workers per school<sup>49</sup>:

*There are many children per school. There are many children per school who have social problems. They cannot be helped since there are too few social workers. The threshold for asking for help for these children should be low. They are vulnerable enough.*

Because there is a shared opinion with regard to the lack of social workers, Gubbels and Hernandez argue that school needs to offer an environment where students feel secure<sup>50</sup>. According to them, teachers do have a key role in this as they have to take over the role of a social worker. But they point to the dysfunctionality of teachers. Gubbels, Hernandez and Yaniek state that teachers have to be pedagogically skilled, next to their own profession as a teacher. But this is not the case nowadays. They state the following in the focus group discussion<sup>51</sup>:

*Gubbels: They are teachers. That is all they are. Other tasks that are not in their discipline will have to be taken care of by others.*

*Yaniek: It is difficult to describe. But because teachers have not learnt how to help others, they remain, very short-sighted, they only teach.*

*Gubbels: Yes, the passion to do something to help others with own initiative is missing. In fact, it is very simple: know your students and help them. My first question about a girl who was bullied was: has she ever been bullied before? The teacher did not know this. How is this possible? As a*

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<sup>46</sup> Jan Gubbels, Advisor Education, March 11, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>47</sup> Mirian Molenveld, Director Marnix College Cas Cora and Rio Canario vsbo, March 20, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>48</sup> Round Table Youth of Curaçao, March 27, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>49</sup> Jacqueline Sparren, Director SIFMA, April 29, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>50</sup> Lucille Hernandez, Director AGO Montana Praktijkschool, April 15, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>51</sup> Focusgroup Jan, Lucille and Yaniek, Advisor Education; Director and remedial educationalist, April 15, 2015, Willemstad

*teacher, it is your task to help this kind of students. Teachers have to leave their comfort zone. That which they learnt during their studies is not enough.*

*Hernandes: Not every teacher is open enough to learn something new. But in my school I try to take them with me in the process of making them a capable teacher. If they want to work at my school, the first question, when a student faces trouble, is: what did you wrong as a teacher so that the student does not feel safe here in school? And that is obligatory. The teachers should know how to help a student.*

So, they argue that the teachers should ensure that the student feels safe. In the case of Anoushka, who was bullied, this was definitely not the case; she did not feel safe at school. This was a spatial factor for her to drop out of school.

Beside the fact that there are too few social workers and the fact that teachers in real life do not take over this role, teachers are negligent in more tasks of their profession. For instance, teachers were, in the case of Jeandric, not able to motivate him. They were not skilled enough in the opinion of Jeandric. And he perceived education as too theoretical and classical. This is confirmed by Jan, and he added to this notion that education on Curaçao does not meet the desires and needs of students because curriculums are too theoretical<sup>52</sup>. Therefore, they are pushed out of the school system.

Moreover, the school system itself is perceived as not completely working well considering several ways of negligence at schools. For example, school's negligence to keep their students. This is the case for Anoushka, Shalomi and Dianara. They left school for problems with their behavior in school. Schools did not try long enough to keep them, and they neglected to contact the Leerplicht. Besides, their administration is not sufficient, according to Fransisca and Molenveld<sup>53</sup>. This is causing lacks in knowledge about absences of students.

The negligence of schools does have a connection with the negligence of de Leerplicht. This law was adapted in 2007 by making the school age 4 until 18 years (Ministerie van Onderwijs en Cultuur, 2007). The current 'Leerplichtunit' exists of two brigades, one school attendance officer and one coordinator. There is discussion in society about the function of the unit, as the coordination is not that good and there is only one attendance officer. Therefore many people call the Leerplicht an "empty law".<sup>54</sup> Also Alders van de Geijn, Fransisca, Gubbels and Ebicilio don not think that the Leerplicht is working sufficiently. This is confirmed with the following quote by Alders van de Geijn<sup>55</sup>:

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<sup>52</sup> Jan Gubbels, Advisor Education, March 11, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>53</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao, March 31, 2015, Willemstad and Mirian Molenveld, Director Marnix College Cas Cora and Rio Canario vsbo, March 20, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>54</sup> A day with the Leerplicht, March 29, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>55</sup> Els Alders van de Geijn, Director Broeder Puus Tienermoederinternaat, May 11, 2015, Willemstad

*The Leerplicht is not functioning sufficiently, but that is of course not possible if there are only two people working there. The Leerplicht in itself is good, but if it is implemented while there is no control on it, it can be seen as an empty law. It is nothing. Money should be invested in it. They have to find school dropouts. That can be very easy by driving around and bringing them back to school. You can recognize every dropout by their uniform.*

The fact that the Leerplicht is not working sufficiently is also noticed by the respondents: of all my twenty respondents, only five of them have heard of the Leerplicht. This empty law makes it really easy to drop out of school. The first one was Alicia, who noticed the Leerplicht car that honked in front of the house. She did not open the door because she was sleeping and the car never returned. The second one was Shalomi, who states:

*If I were the government, I would improve the Leerplichtbrigade. I am not 18 yet, so I am leerplichtig. But the Leerplichtbrigade never has been at my home. They have never called either. The Leerplicht should have called me first and should have visited my home after that. The Leerplicht should function sufficiently.*

The third person is Mirecy. The Leerplicht was in the math lesson where they were checking a list of names. Her name was on the list, so they said that she had to go to school. After this, she never heard anything of the Leerplicht.

In the case of Dianara the Leerplicht visited her at home. They told her to go to school, according to Dianara. Remarkable is that she has not been to school for 5 years now, while she is 18 years old now. This means that all this time she was Leerplichtig.

All the others had never heard of the Leerplicht. Taken into account the fact that some of my respondents are older than 18 and not Leerplichtig anymore. For example, Gilmarson told that he had never heard of the Leerplicht. He had not heard anything from others around him as well. He is of the opinion that the Leerplicht is not functioning sufficiently. Moreover, this makes it easier to drop out of school.

Another factor that can cause school dropouts is the lack of collaboration between different organizations. This became clear in the symposium on youth development.<sup>56</sup> Several stakeholders of different organizations were presented: stakeholders of the Ministry of OWCS, representatives of organization in the field and directors of schools. The purpose was to obtain more collaboration through these kinds of symposiums, with regard to the dropout problem. Students can become the

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<sup>56</sup> Expert session on school dropouts and youth development, March 12, 2015, Willemstad

dupe of the lack of collaboration between different organizations, wherefore this strengthen the chance to drop out or to get pushed out.

For instance, these organizations are only philosophizing, but they should focus on the making of concrete plans according to Fransisca and Yaniek<sup>57</sup>. According to Sambo-Velder, cross-pollination is very important. Organizations and boards of schools should make use of this more. Nowadays, there is too much hierarchy according to Sambo-Velder, Gubbels and Yaniek<sup>58</sup>. Sambo-Velder add to this that Curaçaos' culture is egoistic, which strengthen the hierarchy even more. The sentence: *'this is none of your business'* is a matter of importance on Curaçao, according to Sambo-Velder. Molenveld confirms this notion: *'there is no culture of calling someone to account; everything that is said is immediately perceived as a personal assault. It ceases to amaze me'*<sup>59</sup>.

According to Jan and Welvaart the biggest problem in this lack of collaboration between different organizations is the Ministry itself<sup>60</sup>. The expert session on youth development and the describing of a part of this symposium in the first chapter of this thesis, proved that the Ministry has another approach towards the problem of school dropouts<sup>61</sup>. Their key word was hope, whereas organizations in the field were more skeptic. The reaction of people in the field on the quote about hope of the sector director was irritation and astonishment. This explains the way society thinks about the policy of the Ministry. *"Nothing happens"* is commonly used by representatives, consisting of teachers of schools and organizations in the field. Welvaart poses:

*The government is not tackling this problem. That is a pity, because the tackling of this problem is very important for the development of Curaçao. In fact, they have to break through the vicious circle. It can really be seen as fundamental problem. So if nothing happens, the amount of dropouts will be on the rise.*

Furthermore, the Ministry needs to achieve a quota: 20% of all the students have to achieve the educational level HAVO. If students are estimated in a too high education level, the chance to drop out or get pushed out is rising. According to Van Oorspronk and Molenveld, the Ministry and boards of

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<sup>57</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao, March 31, 2015, Willemstad and Focus group Jan, Lucille and Yaniek, Advisor Education; Director and remedial educationalist, April 15, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>58</sup> Lizette Sambo-Velder, Sector Director Ministry of OWCS, March 12, 2015, Willemstad and Focus group Jan, Lucille and Yaniek, Advisor Education; Director and remedial educationalist, April 15, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>59</sup> Mirian Molenveld, Director Marnix College Cas Cora and Rio Canario vsbo, March 20, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>60</sup> Rochandell Welvaart, Head of Teachers Mediaschool, March 16, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>61</sup> Expert session on school dropouts and youth development, March 12, 2015, Willemstad

schools are responsible for this<sup>62</sup>. For example, school boards can conduct a selection procedure before students start in high school.

The last system on Curaçao that can be a factor in the raising of dropouts, is the police corps. According to Fransisca there are too few policemen<sup>63</sup>:

*At this moment the police appointed five youth policemen. This means that their focus is on the youth. Five is too few, even more because it is their side task. More real youth policemen should be appointed. They can prevent the rise of school dropouts. They should function more as communicator. And in fact we should arrange a sort of threesome that consists of the Leerplichtbrigade, youth policemen and we, the AJJC. Just pick them up from the streets! What do you do in the streets during school hours? Do you have an hour off? I will call your school. You have to be in school now. THIS is the way we should go.*

Van Oorspronk, Molenveld and Ebicilio confirm that the police corps is not working sufficiently. Ebicilio says the following about this<sup>64</sup>:

*The police corps is doing nothing now. This results in more criminality. The police do not react when something is happening. They do not do their work. You do not even see them in the streets.*

This is noticed by my respondents as well. In many neighborhoods, especially in Seru Fortuna, Buena Vista and Koraal Specht many boys are hanging around all day, while they are Leerplichtig. According to Regine, Gilmarson and Dianara these boys are not attending school and they never see police over there to pick them up to bring them to school. Moreover, Regine of Koraal Specht states that police do not come every time someone from her neighborhood is calling, since this neighborhood has a bad image. This points to dysfunctionality of the police corps as well.

#### **6.1.4 Temporal dimension**

The temporal dimension is interrelated with the previous factors. Most of my respondents do not perceive themselves as being a school dropout, because it is just temporally; they want to go back to school. This temporality is caused by different factors.

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<sup>62</sup> Henk van Oorspronk, Teacher Dr. Albert Schweitzer College have/vwo, March 17, 2015, Willemstad and Mirian Molenveld, Director Marnix College Cas Cora and Rio Canario vsbo, March 20, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>63</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao, March 31, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>64</sup> Stephen Ebicilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

Firstly, pregnancy of the teenagers can be seen as a temporal factor to drop out of school. This often is a direct social factor, so it is interlinked with that, but it is just for a short period of time. At least, this is what girls answered. But for instance, Dianara dropped out of school 5 years ago and that was also the moment that her baby was born. In reality, teenage mothers face difficulties to go back to school once they dropped out.

Another temporal factor is the employment for a short time. For example Kendrick who started to work for three months. This is interlinked with the economic factor. At first this was only temporally, but in the meantime he has not been to school for two years.

Also the social network can be a temporal factor to drop out of school under certain circumstances. Friendships can be temporal, and so are social networks as a consequence. For example, for Gilmarson his social network is temporal. Friends in this social network caused him to be in contact with criminal justice. Gilmarson therefore argues that he is not with this friends anymore. This points to the temporal choice to commit robberies with this friends.

Furthermore, six respondents argued that they will be going back to school. They do not perceive themselves as being a dropout. This points clearly to a temporal factor.

Moreover, these temporal factors all point to short-sighted thinking of the dropouts, as they assume that their dropping out is temporal. Planning seems to be very difficult for them, which fits in with the short-sighted way of thinking. With regard to temporal factors, it is not unwillingness to go to school, but the temporal factors are more driven out of ignorance.

## **6.2 Factors in a nutshell**

The geographical “why there” question is important to shed light on in this research, to investigate that which influences the motives of adolescents to drop out of school. There are different internal and external factors that can cause dropping out of school: economic, social, spatial and temporal factors that are interrelated to each other to a large extent.

With regard to economic factors, many external economic factors are addressed like economically bad situations at home. The internal economic factors are driven by the circumstances – or external economic factors – at home. There are many single-parent families and many of them live on social security. Often the respondents were in need of money, which was an important factor to drop out of school.

This economically bad situation at home is a crucial external social factor at the same time. If the situation at home is economically bad, there is often an unstable family situation that is causing dropouts. The key in this external social factor is the missing of a role model in house; sometimes physically, sometimes symbolically if the parents do not have the ability to give guidance. The dysfunctional families themselves do not realize that they are dysfunctional and therefore it repeats

itself from generation to generation. This refers to the existence of a vicious circle of a culture of poverty.

Another social factor is the lifestyle not to attend school. In the opinion of some dropouts, it is not possible to combine school with work or school with partying. Going to school is not an institutionalized pattern. These lifestyle-factors can be considered as internal social factors that are used as motives to drop out of school.

Also the social network can be seen as a social factor under certain circumstances. When it comes to the family of dropouts, this is an internal social factor. Dysfunctionality of families is important in this. But when it comes to friends in the social network, external social factors can be addressed. Peer group pressure frequently occurs in social networks that consists of friends in their own age category. Especially in the criminal or drugs circuit peer group pressure is a social factor.

For girls pregnancy is a social factor that is of frequent occurrence. This is a direct social factor. But indirectly it can be seen as an economic factor or moreover an internal social factor, in the sense that their families are dysfunctional, without a role model or a father figure.

With regard to spatial factors, different flaws in systems can be addressed: flaws in the school systems, in the collaboration between different organizations and the insufficient functioning of the police corps and the *Leerplicht*. These are all spatial factors that ease the motive to drop out. The flaw of these systems pushes students away. Therefore these dropouts can be called pushouts as well.

By looking at temporal factors, often working for a few months is a temporal factor. For females, pregnancy is a temporal factor. Also the social networks with peer group pressure can be a temporal factor to drop out of school that especially is the case for males. This is interlinked with especially economic and social factors. Remarkable is that all respondents who drop out at first temporal, in the meantime do not go to school for several years. This points to short-sighted thinking of the dropouts. It is not unwillingness to go to school, but the temporal factors are more driven out of ignorance.



*Figure 24: Playing football in the street*

## 7. Revealing self-perceived and society-perceived future perspectives concerning school dropouts

*"A school dropout is someone who feels better than the school system".*

-Shalomi, April 17, 2015

In this chapter light will be shed on self-perceived and society-perceived perception of school dropouts. A *"self-perceived"* section will be followed up by a *"society-perceived"* section. The first section addresses the question what they perceive as a school dropout in general and whether they perceive themselves as a dropout, after which their view on their life and future will be highlighted. In the second section I will elaborate on how school dropouts are viewed and depicted by society, after which society-perceived future perspectives of dropouts will be discussed.

### 7.1 Self-perceived perception of school dropouts

It is the question whether school dropouts – what they are according to the definition of school dropouts – identify themselves as being a school dropout or not. To figure this out, it is important to know what characteristics of a typical school dropout they acknowledge.

The first remarkable notion in this, is that many of my respondents have no idea how to describe a school dropout. Sometimes they answer with: *"I do not know"*, what was the case for Dianara and Mirecy. But in the case of Anoushka no answer was given; there was a silence when that question was asked. And also after helping her to answer the question by asking more questions, she did not give an answer.

In contradiction to this, some others did mention some characteristics of a school dropout. According to Shalomi *"a school dropout is someone who feels better than the school system"*. She added to this that they also feel better than others.

According to Pamela a school dropout can also be described as: *"someone who is registered in a school and is hanging out in the streets. Sometimes they act like if they are going to school, but they do not do that"*. This is in line with the perception of Lwidjino about a school dropout. He perceives them as: *"people who make wrong decisions all the time. For example they choose to commit robberies. They are not stupid, but they make wrong choices"*. He draws on himself with this description of a school dropout. Shahainy describes signs such as pregnancies for females and hanging in the streets for males which is typical according to her.

Then the question if they identify or label themselves as a school dropout and if they perceive this as a failure will be discussed. Because of the fact that my respondents unrolled themselves from the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training, it is to be expected that all the respondents do want

to go back to school. Therefore, it is to be expected that they all perceive their act to drop out of school as a failure. This means that all respondents identify themselves as being a dropout, but by taking a deeper look into that, something different appears. They perceive their act as a failure, but six respondents *do* perceive themselves as a school dropout and six respondents *do not* perceive themselves as a school dropout. One respondent states that she is not sure about identifying herself as a school dropout. There is a non-response of 7 people.

Respondents who *do* identify themselves as a dropout mainly had the same arguments. A few will be highlighted. For example Lwidjino, who also perceives his act as a failure. The following quote describes his way of thinking:

*I think I failed so hard. In fact, I really like school. Now people think that I am stupid and a bad boy and that I do not go to school for those reasons. But I am not stupid. But I know that I failed so hard.*

In the case of Shalomi, people in her social network push her all the time to go back to school. She perceives her act as a failure, and this is strengthened by the people around her. This perception is in line with the Pamela's perception. She failed, according to herself, and these feelings are strengthened by her friends, because they all attend school.

Hernandes told about a school dropout who *"was fed up because of the word school dropout. That word made him feel like a fool"*<sup>65</sup>. In general, Lucille thinks it is good when school dropouts themselves know that they are a school dropout and that they failed. But this school dropout proves that the word *"school dropout"* can cause the feelings that they have failed.

Respondents who *do not* identify themselves as a dropout, used a similar argument. It all comes to the fact that they want to go back to school and that they have not finished studying. This is for example shown by the following quote by Regine:

*I do not think that I failed, because I will continue studying. Dropping out is something that can happen. In my case it happened because of a lack of money. But now I have worked to continue school and to pay school fees.*

This argument is in line with the arguments of Kendrick and Ironaiska, who both argue *"I do not identify myself as a dropout, because my plan is to start studying again"*<sup>66</sup>. Ironaiska adds to this that she really thinks it is a pity that she does not attend school nowadays.

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<sup>65</sup> Lucille Hernandes, Director AGO Montana Praktijkschool, April 15, 2015, Willemstad

Quincy is different than the respondents before. He does not identify himself as a school dropout, because he wants to establish his own company. Besides, he argues that he has friends around them who have a high education level. He argues: *"I learn from them. Some things in life cannot be learnt in school, but only from others. It just comes along your way"*. So by having the intention to establish his own company and by learning life skills, he explained his perception of not identifying himself as a school dropout.

One respondent, Shahainy, doubted about identifying herself as a dropout or not. If she were able to do so, she would go back to Jamaica to continue her school there. She has the intention to finish school. But she was not sure about finishing school on Curaçao.

## 7.2 Self-perceived future perspectives of school dropouts

Before describing the future perspectives perceived by the school dropouts themselves, it is assumed as important to get insight in how they feel about their life nowadays. Therefore all the respondents gave a mark to their life, in which zero is 'I feel very bad about my life now' and 10 is the opposite. Figure 25 below shows an overview of the marks given.

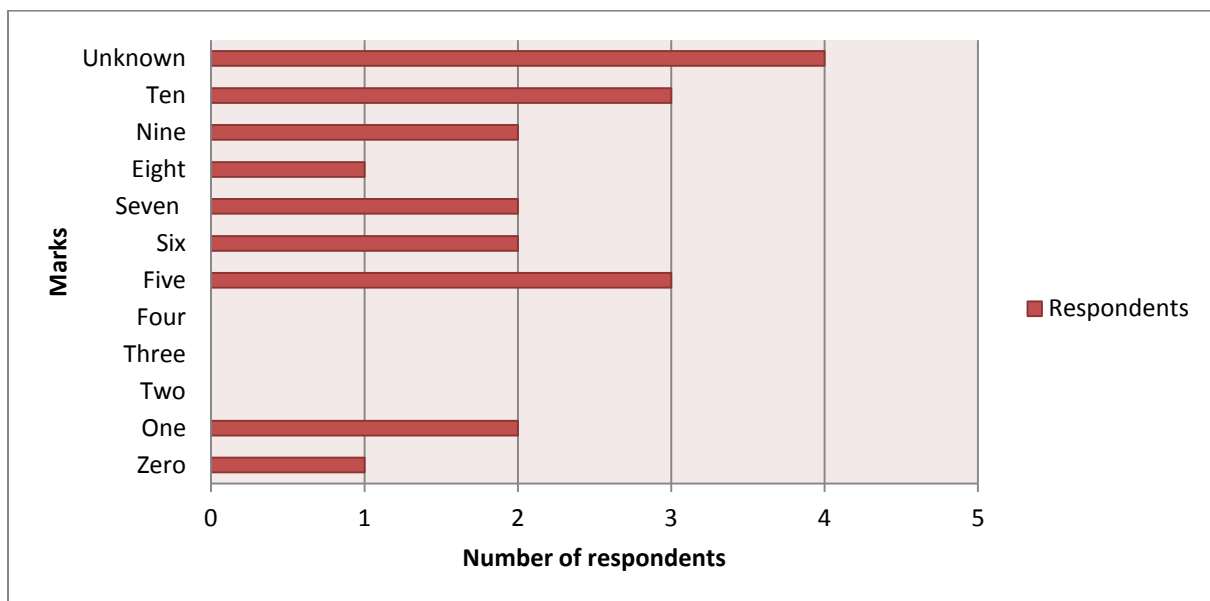


Figure 25: Marks with which respondents value their life

As can be seen in the figure, three respondents mark their life with a ten. This goes for Pamela, Kendrick and Lwidjino. The latter states: *"My life is good, I would not change anything"*. Pamela and Kendrick are in line with this. Pamela states: *"everything goes as I had wished for, I have everything I want"*. And Kendrick poses: *"I miss nothing"*. These persons seems to be happy and bright.

Shalomi is the one who gave the mark one for her life: "because I do not go to school now and everybody keeps on saying that I should go and get a diploma. And now I am NOT going to school". The same reason applies to Alicia, but she gave the mark zero for it. Both respondents argued that if they went to school now, they would have valued their life with a ten.

Respondents who gave a mark in between zero and ten were for example Gilmarson and Jeandric. Gilmarson gave a seven with the argument: *"there is hope and light at the end of the tunnel"*.

Respondents who had no idea what to answer were Nohaila and Anoushka. Nohaila did not answer the question at all. She did not know what she was satisfied with, she was not sure if her situation at home could be changed, she tried to commit suicide and she had contact with aid organizations, but nothing changed. Anoushka did also not know whether she was satisfied or not, and it was difficult to give a mark for her.

Thus, the marks given by the respondents are discussed, but does this say anything about their future perspectives? In analyzing their future perspectives, one clear pattern can be found. Most of them want to receive their own money to be independent of others. With their money they want to buy a house and a car for themselves and their family. Some say on their own initiative that they need money for this, so they need a job, so they need a diploma, so they need school. But most of the respondents did not say that they first need school to obtain this. If I asked them if they thought they needed school to reach their goals, the answer mostly was *"yes, to have better chances in future"*. But it was remarkable that most of them did NOT say on their own initiative that they need school for better chances. A reason for this can be that they are all enrolled on the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training, and that is sort of a school, so it is quite logical for them. Another reason can be that they are not aware of the fact that they can only obtain these goals if they make money.

A few examples will follow. Firstly, Nohaila *"wants her own house so that her baby can live with her"*. This is a very basic necessity for her and can be seen as a primary future perspective. The same applies to Pamela, who wants her own house, family and a car. Lwidjino wants to take care of himself and he wants to stop borrowing money from others. For him this is the reason that he *"is foreseeing a bright future for himself"*, as he states. Juleisy perceives school as a chance that you cannot let go, although she did not say it on her own initiative:

*I want to be a good person. I want to have everything for myself, without being dependent of others. I do not like working, but it is necessary. I like being in contact with other people and I like to help people with something, so this is what I want to do in my job. I would like to seize the opportunity to go back to school for these reasons!*

Dianara also wants to seize the opportunity to go back to school: *"In fact I think that you cannot get a job if you do not have a diploma"*. But she adds to this that some people just drop out of school, because they are in need of money NOW. And then they start working without diploma, at first temporally, but later on it gets more difficult to go back to school.

Quincy also wants to finish school, but he also believes that some life skills cannot be learnt in school. Though, in the end he thinks he needs a diploma. Also Regine thinks that some things cannot be learnt in school. She thinks one should be able to have success in life without school, but this is not possible on Curaçao.

In contradiction to the others, Kendrick has no idea about his future, according to himself. He could not talk about it. Gilmarson is also different from the other ones, because he is the only one who does not want to go back to school. He wants to work. The reason for the fact that he is the only one in my group of respondents who does not want to back to school could be that he is of AJJC and not on the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training. Besides, Shahainy sees her future *"as an open book"*, which can also be perceived as a different perspective than the other perspectives. She wants to leave Curaçao after finishing school to work in a bigger country. According to her the following rule applies: *"the bigger the country, the more opportunities"*. But she has the following in common with the other respondents:

*If you do not have education it does not make sense in this society. Some people get rich by doing other things. But it does not make sense either. They live in a fantasy world. Oh, tomorrow I am going to get rich. No, no, you still need school. To be honest, I came to this interview because I want to go to school.*

In this quote there is a hidden argument, that many people live day by day and want to get rich in the future, but they do not have the skills to do so. This can be the case for the respondents as well. It can be seen as an unrealistic view of the future and being improvident.

Besides their own future perspectives, they were asked about the future perspectives for Curaçao and *"if I were the government then I would....."* to trigger their ideas more. All of them thought that the future of Curaçao will be bad, in terms of more unemployment, more school dropouts, more poverty and less chances to find a job. For example, Pamela thinks that the poverty-rate will rise. But she hopes this will be minimized by the government. She wants everybody to go to school, to obtain less poverty in the end. There seems to be a hidden argumentation in this that she is facing poverty, from which she wants to escape in her future: if there is no poverty, my future will look bright. Also Kendrick and Ironaiska use the same arguments. They think school dropouts start to work because they live in poverty and need money. Ironaiska poses that she sometimes she thinks: *"School*

*is not going to help me forward. But I am aware of the fact that I need school for a diploma",* which points to: if I have a diploma, my future will be ok.

Regine, Mirecy and Dianara perceive the future of Curaçao in a similar way, with regard to high rate of unemployment and the fact that you have to be in the possession of a diploma, while school and necessities for school are perceived as very expensive. Regine states:

*If I were be in the government of Curaçao I would lower the school fees. I would also try to help people without diploma, because they can have skills too. And people with a diploma should be able to work. Now there are not enough jobs. So I would create more jobs.*

This quote implicitly states what Regine misses on Curaçao nowadays, and what she wants to have in her future. The hidden argumentation is: if there were no school fees, I would have more opportunities, but now that there are school fees, I do not have many opportunities in future. And if you cannot obtain a diploma because of the high school fees, your skills need to be acknowledged as well and they should be helped in finding a job. Shahainy adds to this:

*Pay more attention to children. Some parents cannot pay for school, but a lot of people do not really know this. Sometimes there is not even bread for the children. Then they have to ask a neighbor for bread. The government should do more about this. You have to pay for electricity and water and no money is left for children, as a consequence of the minimum wage of eight guilders (4 Euros) an hour. Every month it is the same.*

This is what Shahainy would do if she were in government. What she says points to poverty circumstances, in which children become the victim of their parents' situation. It is assumed that if the government gives more money or increases the minimum wage, there will be less people in poverty. But now that this is not the case, the Shahainy's future will be not that rosy.

Shalomi points to the Leerplichtbrigade. If the Leerplichtbrigade functioned better, she would be in school, which should lead her to a better future. But now that the Leerplicht does not function well, her future is not that rosy. So if she were in government, this would be her first task to do.

Juleisy states that education is boring and teachers are strict. If this changes, school will be more attractive. The hidden argumentation is that she would think about going to school again if this changed, because she is thinks that education is obliged to give more opportunities in future. Lwidjino is in line with this argument, because he perceives school as being boring as well, with too much theory. If he were the government, he would establish more work-based learning routes. Then students already start working, sometimes combined with school. The hidden argumentation for his

own future is: if I were in a work-based learning route, the chance would be that I would stay in school and this would give me more opportunities regarding a job. Moreover, he states that the government should provide more information for students about routes in school, because he thinks that it is not easy for everybody to make good choices: *"sometimes students do not know which way to turn and then they need help"*. This implicitly points to himself, as he finds himself in a situation with a lack of information, without knowing which way to go or which school route to choose, with consequences regarding his future.

Another example is shown by Ironaiska:

*There need to be more employment possibilities for young people. Everybody must have the chance to go to school. Maybe more schools should be built. Because if more people do not go to school, the criminal circuit will grow as a consequence.*

She assumes that many school dropouts find oneself in the criminal circuit. And there is a hidden argumentation that she hopes to find a job in future, while she is noticing the fact that this will be difficult because there is not enough employment. Cecilia argues in line with this, as she states that there should be more help for addicted people. Implicitly, this argument points to herself, as she is addicted to marihuana and was in a clinic for this. The hidden argument for her future is: if I were not addicted anymore, my future would look bright. Quincy argues in line as well, because he thinks that the criminal circuit will grow too. To prevent this, the government should be reorganized and re-manned, according to him. It is today's and the future's problem that things go bad on Curaçao. The hidden argumentation is: If the government will be reorganized and re-manned, my future will look bright and the future of Curaçao will look bright too.

In contradiction to these bad views of the future of Curaçao, Shalomi and Mirecy perceive the future of Curaçao more positively. According to Shalomi they try to develop new things on Curaçao, which can cause more employment possibilities. And according to Mirecy there are many examples of people who graduate from school, so it must be possible to do the same for others.

It is remarkable that these future perspectives of Curaçao are much more thought out and less unrealistic as opposed their own future perspectives. Their own future perspectives were primitive, mostly obvious and somehow general, but their future perspectives of Curaçao revealed more or less their own future perspectives, because they entailed hidden assumptions that they implicitly apply to themselves.

### 7.3 Society-perceived perception of school dropouts

The previous two chapters were focused on self-perceived perceptions of school dropouts, whereas in the next two chapters light will be shed on society-perceived perceptions.

School dropouts, on one hand, are labeled as a fixed group with similar characteristics by society. But on the other hand, differences in the group of school dropouts can be addressed, although the similarities have the upper hand. There are several reasons for these similarities and differences.

With regard to the similarities, the first evidence is the definition of school dropouts. The definition is not made by the school dropouts themselves, but it is made by people in society. In the case of Curaçao the definition is made by the CBS. By following their definition, the percentage of dropouts is the part of the population that does not have a graduation at an age between 15 and 24 years old (CBS, 2015). This the most commonly used definition. It was also the starting point in the Symposium on youth development<sup>67</sup>.

By looking at the word dropout literally, there is the prevailing view that school dropouts are a failure to the national economy. By randomly looking on the internet it appeared that dropout refers to *"being a complete failure", "a person who backs out of his obligations in society and who does not have contact with others"* or *"someone who ducks out of a society because of his lifestyle"*<sup>68</sup>. Therefore, a commonly used idea in society is that school dropouts have failed per definition.

A phenomenon in society will always be defined, in order to understand it and in order to have a grip on it. Therefore, the group of school dropouts and the phenomenon of dropping out of school can be seen as a given fact. The danger of this is that school dropouts get labeled, which leads to generalizing them as a whole group. Labeling and generalizing imply that the entire group has the same characteristics. According to Kuridama this leads to unfair preferential treatment of school dropouts<sup>69</sup>.

A few characteristics of school dropouts can be looked at through the eyes of people in society. One of these prevailing views in society is that all school dropouts are slightly mentally disabled. This causes their incapacity to make their own choices or to foresee consequences of them. For instance, Ebicilio states<sup>70</sup>:

*In general school dropouts on our island are adolescents who have a low education level. This is typical for a slightly mentally disabled person. Moreover, another sign of being slightly mentally disabled is, that they do not realize that they are a school dropout. They do not have the capacity to view themselves that way.*

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<sup>67</sup> Expert session on school dropouts and youth development, March 12, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>68</sup> Webdefinitions encyclo.nl

<sup>69</sup> Humphrey Kuridama, Teacher Mandatory Social Training, March 12, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Ebicilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

All of this points to the given fact, according to Ebicilio, that school dropouts are slightly mentally disabled. This gives them a disabled and failed label in society. Also Pauletta confirms that school dropouts are slightly mentally disabled: *"60 - 70 per cent of the youth is slightly mentally disabled"*<sup>71</sup>. Also Sparren confirms this notion<sup>72</sup>.

Besides, there is an actual discussion in society in which the *"dropout versus pushout"* question is central. With regard to pushouts, the school system is blamed and seen as cause as society perceives. As it were, the school dropout is not to blame for or the cause of dropping out of school, but the school system is to blame. It can be seen as a sort of protection of school dropouts.

Furthermore, a prevailing view in society is that school dropouts do have problems with their behavior in general. They are perceived by society as unmotivated, rude and rebellious. For example, Fransisca confirmed that they are unmotivated and rude<sup>73</sup>:

*They are all unmotivated. They have no discipline. And the school strengthens this, because teachers do not motivate them to stay in school and they do not make school attractive with that attitude. Besides, they are rude. The child is the parent at home and overrules the parents. The child is pampered and the mother may be afraid of the child.*

Other behavioral problems are that they are easily influenced by others. According to Judeska this is because school dropouts have a bad self-image. Judeska states: *"School dropouts are easily influenced by others, which is very bad because they have a bad self-image. Therefore, they have to gain more assertiveness with the help of organizations, but that is very difficult"*. This characteristic of school dropouts is confirmed by Els, who also states that their self-image is very bad<sup>74</sup>. Therefore, she states that you have to teach school dropouts very basic tasks, such as planning.

This bad self-image is often derived from a bad situation in a dysfunctional family at home. Therefore, the following characteristics are typical for school dropouts as well, according to Judeska.

*I can enumerate. School dropouts are physically or mentally abused, heavily neglected, they have adhesion problems, use drugs, feel a lot of anger, have unprocessed traumas, have lost a parent and with this all they have not received support.*

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<sup>71</sup> Judeska Pauletta, Social worker at GOG/JJIC (Justitiële Jeugd Inrichting Curaçao), April 24, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>72</sup> Jacqueline Sparren, Director SIFMA SBO school, April 29, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>73</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao), March 31, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>74</sup> Els Alders van de Geijn, Director Broeder Puus Tienermoederinternaat, May 11, 2015, Willemstad

Therefore, people in society perceive school dropouts as silly. Jacqueline refers to the typical characteristics of the family of a dropout, which is often single-parent or living on social security and indirectly typical for a school dropout as perceived by society.

This family situation of a school dropout refers to the social maps that are made by the CBS about the poverty-rate and unemployment rate per neighborhood. These maps suggest the following: the lower the social-economic status of families or neighborhoods, the higher the rate of school dropouts. This is a causality relation, and therefore school dropouts are often depicted by society as being silly and poor. And as people that do not have chances because they do not have the good network to get a job or to get a diploma because of their ignorance of the Dutch language. This points to the fact that in advance, conclusions are made about the whole group of school dropouts and they all are depicted as being disabled, without looking at them as an individual.

Though, in some cases society-perceived perception about school dropouts as a group is more nuanced. Alders van de Geijn and Pauletta argue that there is a large spatial divergence of neighborhoods of school dropouts<sup>75</sup>. They do not confirm the maps of the CBS, in which high school dropout-rates, high unemployment-rates and high poverty-rates overlap. They state that school dropouts come from all areas and they do not generalize about their neighborhood.

#### 7.4 Society-perceived future perspectives of school dropouts

Society-perceived future perspectives of school dropouts entail different things, of which some were already embedded in the previous chapter on society-perceived perception of school dropouts.

At first, the prevailing view in society is that you do not have chances in future without a diploma. The word diploma is an emotionally charged word in society because it is alleged that you do not have chances in future without a diploma. Therefore, a commonly used idea is that school dropouts have failed by definition. If they cannot find a job because they have no diploma, they cannot contribute to society. It is often alleged that school dropouts do not have chances in society. In this regard, Fransisca states: *"School dropouts do not have the current conviction and the knowledge to be aware of the fact: the more education, the more chances in society"*<sup>76</sup>. In contraction, the common society-perceived perspective is that more education leads to more chances. Therefore, in society-perceived perspectives school dropouts do not have chances in society. In the Round Table it was also assumed that a diploma is necessary to have a chance to find a job<sup>77</sup>. The Round Table sheds light on the unemployment of the youth of Curaçao. These are mainly school dropouts and active people in the criminal circuit. Besides, in the Round Table it was discussed that Curaçao offers too few facilities to

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<sup>75</sup> Els Alders van de Geijn, Director Broeder Puus Tiernmoederinternaat, May 11, 2015, Willemstad, Judeska Pauletta, Social worker at GOG/JJIC (Justitiële Jeugd Inrichting Curaçao), April 24, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>76</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao), March 31, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>77</sup> Round Table Youth of Curaçao, March 27, 2015, Willemstad

find a job, so that the youth is forced into a subculture. A reaction in society to this is the establishing of the Mandatory Social Training. As mentioned before, this program provides school dropouts a second chance in obtaining a diploma.

Prejudices can have bad influences on future perspectives for school dropouts, according to Kuridama<sup>78</sup>. The labeling of being a school dropout and the generalizing of this entire group of school dropouts can cause that an employer will not employ school dropouts. Often, they label them as not motivated, according to Kuridama and Fransisca<sup>79</sup>. Also their neighborhood of origin and prevailing ideas about their dysfunctional families can work against future perspectives for school dropouts. Their appearance and performance thereby strengthen in some case this society-perceived idea about school dropouts. Sometimes, they have many tattoos for example, and Welvaart argues that this causes fewer future perspectives for them<sup>80</sup>. With regard to performance, a lack of social skills in the perception of society can be addressed.

Furthermore, with regard to society-perceived future perspectives on school dropouts, school dropouts have few opportunities in future because they live day-by-day and do not have the ability to foresee things or to plan things. This is confirmed by Sparren<sup>81</sup>:

*School dropouts just see day-by-day what the day offers them. They do not have a job permanently and they sit at home. If they earn money for the day, it is ok. If not, no problem. Most of them live on social security in the end. From experience I can say that they live day-by-day. That is typical for slightly mentally disabled people. That is how they live.*

So Sparren assumes that school dropouts live day-by-day and do not foresee things or look into the future in the sense of planning things. This is confirmed by Alders van de Geijn and Ebicilio<sup>82</sup>. Ebicilio always asks about the dreams school dropouts have: *"they give a socially desirable answer or they have never thought about their future."* This also confirms the limited future perspectives for school dropouts with regard to very short-term thinking and planning, as perceived by society.

Besides, it is alleged that school dropouts have a bad self-image. This is why experts expect that they do not have many future perspectives. Welvaart exemplifies this with the following<sup>83</sup>:

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<sup>78</sup> Humphrey Kuridama, Teacher Mandatory Social Training, March 12, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>79</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao, March 31, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>80</sup> Rochandell Welvaart, Head of Teachers Mediaschool, March 16, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>81</sup> Jacqueline Sparren, Director SIFMA, April 29, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>82</sup> Els Alders van de Geijn, Director Broeder Puus Tiernmoederinternaat, May 11, 2015, Willemstad and Stephen Ebicilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>83</sup> Rochandell Welvaart, Head of Teachers Mediaschool, March 16, 2015, Willemstad

*We had a school dropout once. He wanted to get a job, so he applied. He never got the job, because he was not able to present himself. He was not able to sell himself to the organization. He was really insecure and could not give any positive characteristic or skill of himself.*

So this insecurity or uncertainty and bad self-image of many dropouts cause that they have less possibilities in future by definition, according to Welvaart. In addition, Fransisca argues that school dropouts are not often lucky: *"they are often sad, frustrated and powerless. And deep down neglected by the parents and society"*<sup>84</sup>. Sparren has the same view<sup>85</sup>:

*They have many internal problems. Their soul needs to be saved. Until they reach the moment that they are what they are, with a positive self-image. If their soul is not saved, their future perspectives will be bad, because their self-image is zero and nothing now.*

So, in order to have better possibilities for the future, school dropouts will have to obtain more assertiveness and knowledge about their skills to create a better self-image first.

Furthermore, school dropouts are characterized as easily influenced. This can have negative repercussions for their future perspective, as perceived by society. If their social network is entailed with peer group pressure this *could* be negative. If it is not an ordinary thing to be employed in the social network, the chance that a school dropout is going to search for work is minimal. Also if parents in their social network live on social security or if parents do not have a diploma, this is perceived by society as negative, because it can have negative influences on their future perspectives, since they have no or no 'good' role model. So, the social network of school dropouts can be a danger in the limitation of good future perspectives.

Besides, it is perceived by society as a good thing that several organizations offer help for school dropouts, such as clinics for addictions, teenage mom boarding schools and judicial organizations. According to society these organizations can help school dropouts to get better future perspectives. These organizations offer personalized treatment plans and clients learn basic tasks with the purpose to obtain better future perspectives. Though, according to Pauletta, the amount of school dropouts that are helped by organizations, is just a tip of the iceberg<sup>86</sup>. This points to the fact that organizations can offer better future perspectives to just a few school dropouts. Moreover, Ebicilio

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<sup>84</sup> Mildred Fransisca, Director AJJC (Stichting Ambulante Justitiële Jeugdzorg Curaçao, March 31, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>85</sup> Jacqueline Sparren, Director SIFMA, April 29, 2015, Willemstad

<sup>86</sup> Judeska Pauletta, Social worker at GOG/JJIC (Justitiële Jeugd Inrichting Curaçao), April 24, 2015, Willemstad

argues that once clients are discharged and are ready to go back to their home and society, it is likely that they relapse into old habits<sup>87</sup>. A consequence of this can be that their future perspectives decline.

Moreover, many experts view the school system on Curaçao as functioning insufficiently, as discussed before. Discussions about pushouts or dropouts are important in this regard. This points to bad future perspectives for the youth on Curaçao in general, if they do not obtain enough knowledge or other important skills that they need as employers in future.

### 7.5 Summarizing perceived perceptions

With regard to self-perceived descriptions of characteristics of school dropouts, it can be said that many of them do not know how to describe a school dropout. Others give concrete examples that are embodied by themselves. Only two of the respondents know how to give a description of a school dropout. Remarkable with regard to this is, that six of them perceive or identify themselves as being a school dropout, whereas six of them do not identify themselves as school dropouts, mainly because they have the intention to finish school. Thereby, most of the respondents perceive themselves as a failure. This can be seen in the mark that they give for their life nowadays, as many do not know the answer because they feel unlucky or they give a one or zero. Though, some value their life with a high mark, mainly because they have the intention to finish school and because they feel satisfied. The average mark they give to their current life is a 6.2.

In finding patterns concerning self-perceived future perspective, it is remarkable that school dropouts all have primitive wishes for the future. This implies that they originated from the dregs of society. They do not look further than the desire of owning a house, a family and a car. When asking more questions, they point to the need of education to reach their goals in future, but most of them did not mention the need of education on their own initiative. A reason for this can be that they have idealistic ideas instead of realistic ideas about their future. Another reason can be that they are on the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training and give socially desirable answers. But most of all, they do not know how to have more chances in future, if they already think about their own future. Moreover, they are not aware of the need to plan their future. It seems to be easier for them to say something about the future of Curaçao or what they should do if they were in the government, then of saying anything about their own future. In the future perspectives about Curaçao, insecurities about the future of Curaçao are of frequent occurrence. Implicitly, this says something about their own future perspectives. Several assumptions are embedded in the future perspectives for Curaçao which could lead to better future perspectives for themselves. This seems to be unrealistic, and therefore they implicitly say that they are not sure if they will have good opportunities in the future themselves.

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<sup>87</sup> Stephen Ebecilio, Psychologist at Brasami Verslavingskliniek, May 5, 2015, Willemstad

In contrast to this self-perceived perception, society does know very well what a dropout is, including the characteristics of a school dropout. According to the definition school dropouts are labeled as a group, which can lead to generalizing. Society-perceived characteristics of a school dropout contain that they are slightly mentally disabled, they have problems with their behavior, they are unmotivated, rude, easily influenced by others, they have a bad self-image and they are short-term thinkers, they are not able to plan or foresee things, they do not speak Dutch and they come from poor, dysfunctional families. This points to the fact that in advance, conclusions are taken about the whole group of school dropouts and they all are depicted as being disabled, without looking at them as an individual, although some in society do view them as an individual.

Though, these society-perceived perceptions about what a school dropout is do influence society-perceived future perspectives for the school dropouts. By definition, school dropouts are depicted as disabled and a failure in society. This can lead to fewer future perspectives for them, because there is a chance that they cannot find a job without diploma. Moreover, generalizing can cause an employer not to employ a school dropout. This can be strengthened by their appearance and performance, as there is a lack of social skills. Also the fact that they have a bad self-image limits their future perspectives. Furthermore, according to society school dropouts have less opportunities in future because they live day-by-day and do not plan. The fact that school dropouts are easily influenced is also causing less opportunities in future, as the peer group pressure or the lack of a good role model can lead to this. Society – in the sense of aid organizations – provides better future perspectives, but once they are discharged by that organization it is likely that they relapse into old habits, if they are not strong enough to give short shrift to the vicious circle of poverty.





*Figure 26: Teenage mother with her baby*

## 8. Discussion

*"Problems start at home. School dropouts do not grow up in a socially-healthy family. No father is customary. In many cases, the daughter becomes a teenage mother, like her mother. And this is just an example. In this way, problems are repeated in the next generation. So these children grow up without a father as well. Then it is alleged that this baby becomes a problem child or school dropout as well. And this system keeps on repeating itself. These adolescents know that what their parents do is bad. But they do the same and they do not know how to stop or escape the repetitive system. Their parents are their model, their only model. This makes it difficult, because they have never had another model".*

-Rochandell Welvaart, March 16, 2015

This chapter highlights the question to what extent theoretical concepts overlap the empirical findings emanating from this research. The geographical "why there" questions is important: why is it precisely these school dropouts over there, viewed from a spatial-relational perspective. This question is embedded in a broader debate of relative poverty versus absolute poverty. The causality processes of poverty and education within this debate provide the umbrella of this thesis.

### 8.1 Absolute poverty

Absolute poverty measurement is based on a comparison of resources to needs (Foster, 1998). According to Foster (1998) a person or family is identified as poor if its resources fall short of the poverty threshold. As there are basically two standards for the determination for the same 'consumption norms' and the 'poverty line', the point of contradiction which has to be resolved is whether a person should be considered poor who falls short of the norms of prescribed standards of consumption or one whose income lies below the poverty line. The poverty line is a standard that is used by governments and other authorities to map the poverty phenomenon and to compare it with other areas or other parts of the world.

Balfanz and Letgers (2004) found a strong relationship between absolute poverty and the dropout rate: the higher the more students live in absolute poverty, the higher the dropout rate. From a governmental point of view, this high amount of school dropouts indicates that there is something fundamentally wrong in society (e.g. CBS, 2014; Reda Sosial, 2004; Antilliaans Dagblad, 2014; UNICEF, 2013). For years and years there have been high amounts of school dropouts. This causal relation between absolute poverty and school dropouts had already been shown by the maps of the CBS, which indicate the higher the unemployment-rate and the higher the poverty-rate, the higher the school dropout rate per neighborhood. This refers to spatial patterns of socio-spatial segregation, which are variously organized around lines of class disparity. Moreover, this spatial division can also be

related to processes of inclusion and exclusion of neighborhoods in the city. These have become central issues in globalizing cities. Scholars such as Tonkiss (2014) claim that “*poverty creates inequality and richness creates inequality*”<sup>88</sup> to describe the division of neighborhoods. This economic inequality and social distinction can be equalized with skilled and non-skilled people. All these inequalities between neighborhoods or within neighborhoods cause the exclusion of a certain group of people: in this case unemployed families, of which school dropouts often are a part. As the results have shown, many of the parents of school dropouts do not have a diploma or this is unknown. As a reaction to this, school dropouts and their families feel as a failure to society, in which welfare is the norm. In their position, they are not in the possibility to contribute to this welfare model. Therefore, it is likely that they will isolate themselves, while they are already excluded by society. The neighborhoods with a certain low socio-economic status is becoming a sort of island for them, which reinforces the spatial and social inequalities between neighborhoods. This causes the persistency of patterns of division in cities, not only spatially but also socially.

According to Du Toit (2005), people can hardly escape poverty if the ways in which they are positioned in society, such as their access to resources, have not been changed. Also the Human Development Report (2014) argues that if people remain at risk of slipping back into poverty because of structural factors and persistent vulnerabilities, development progress will remain precarious. In other words this can be called the phenomena of *persistence of poverty*. In order to investigate what influences the motives for adolescents to drop out of school, some structural factors can be addressed.

The access to money can be seen as a structural factor. It seems that most school dropouts come from social-economic low families. Moreover, many of them come from single-parent families. The low economic position can cause less accessibility to facilities that are needed for school. For example computers, which are lacking in the house. But moreover, a lack of money can cause the impossibility to pay school fees, uniforms or the bus fare. This leads to school dropouts.

Also many pupils drop out of school because they want to work. This can be seen as a temporal dimension, because it is just for a while since they have the intention to finish school later. Though, in the end the access to money is very low: because school dropouts are not in the possession of a diploma, they have very bad future perspectives with no prospect of a job on Curaçao as perceived by society.

Access to and the command of key languages can also be seen as a structural factor. According to Fanon, who wrote an analysis of negroes in the Antilles that are confronted by using native language, it is assumed that mastering the language of the former colonizer, the civilizing nation, can open doors to success that were previously closed. Conversely, not mastering the language of the former colonizer, can close doors to success. There are fewer possibilities and prospects on jobs

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<sup>88</sup> Prof. Fran Tonkiss, “Divided cities: inequality and urban injustice”, Alexander von Humboldt Lecture, November 10, 2014

if the key language is not mastered. The most widely spoken language is Papiamentu, spoken in all levels of society. According to the statistics (CBS, 2014, Census 2001), Papiamentu is the first language of 81.22% of Curaçao's population; Dutch is the first language of 8% of the population. In some schools, the main language is Dutch, while this is not the first language of the students. This can make school more difficult for students, so it can cause a higher rate of dropouts. The language in school therefore can be seen as a reason to drop out of school. On the other hand, not mastering the Dutch language can cause fewer future perspectives for people. In some schools the main language is Papiamentu, while students have to do their Central Exams in Dutch. Moreover, Dutch is the sole language for all administration and legal matters (De Vries & Menckeberg, 2009). This implies that students do not foresee and acknowledge the importance of the Dutch language, to open doors for the future. Moreover, if parents of school dropouts do not master the Dutch language, it is very difficult for school dropouts to master the language, especially if they will not learn it in school on a certain level. So school dropouts who do not master the postcolonial Dutch language, have fewer chances by definition. The gap between rich and poor is widening as a consequence, assuming that richer people in general will master the Dutch language.

## 8.2 Relative poverty

Relative poverty takes into account a self-perceived position of 'the poor' and goes beyond the absolute statistics. It sheds light on the standards of living in relation to other standards of living. In this case, the perceptions of school dropouts are central, with special regards to their socio-economic environment. It will be discussed if there are signs of a culture of poverty on Curaçao following Lewis's model (1966), in which a cycle of poverty and a vicious circle can be revealed. Concepts that fit in the working of a social network will be applied to the case of school dropouts on Curaçao, in which the perceptions and choices of school dropouts themselves will be central.

As can be seen in the maps of CBS on neighborhoods of school dropouts, neighborhoods with high rates of unemployment overlap with neighborhoods with high rates of poverty. The characteristics of families of dropouts partly overlap with these maps. Many school dropouts live in single-parents families, whose parents are unemployed or live on social security. Moreover - and this cannot be seen in the maps - many school dropouts are abused or neglected. These are all signs of dysfunctional families, and it is proved that many school dropouts live in these kinds of families. Often this repeats itself from generation to generation, because there is no role model that provides good examples. For example, there are many teenage mothers or boys with a criminal record, just like their parents. This points to a vicious circle and a culture of poverty, in which living in a dysfunctional and poor family can almost be seen as an ordinary thing. This persistency of the culture of poverty can be recognized in different characteristics of school dropouts themselves as well. It is in line with Lewis's

(1966) model in which a set of cultural attitudes, beliefs, values and practices tend to perpetuate themselves over time.

The social network has a key role in the persistency of the culture of poverty with its vicious circle. Social networks can be defined as *"The people – especially kin, friends and neighbors – to whom an individual is tied socially, usually by shared interests and, in many cases, values, attitudes and aspirations"* (Gregory et al., 2012, p.696). These networks form the place where most social interaction takes place. Michael Merry suggests that people tend to *"voluntarily"* separate themselves from *"the other"*, which arises from the tendency to stay in your comfort zone among people like yourself. Freedom of association, freedom of choice and principle of homophile are important in this sense. This can be applied to the situation of school dropouts, as they mainly come from neighborhoods where families have the same socio-economic status. People choose to live among these people in this neighborhoods and most of my respondents do not want to move to another neighborhood. It is likely that these are people who have Papiamentu as their first - and presumable only - language, it is likely that they live on social security or that they do not possess a diploma. Mostly this happens from generation to generation.

Many people have good connections in their social network and therefore social capital can play an important role. People can benefit from social capital: *"The idea that access to and participation in groups can benefit individuals and communities"* (Gregory et al., 2012, p.689). But Blokland and Savage (2008) pose the limitations of social capital, as social capital can only be created through social interactions. Some school dropouts have many social interactions, especially boys who hang around in the streets. Others isolate themselves, for example when they become a teenage mom. The social interactions of the families of school dropouts are important for them as well. Many of them have a lot of time, as they often live on social security. Therefore, it is possible to reproduce social capital when they put effort and time in it. Blokland and Saverage (2008) also considered this an important element in social capital. This social capital is a basic capital within the social network, which can be used to obtain economic or human capital, which refers to people's knowledge, skills and energy (Pacione, 2009). This way, the time and energy in social capital is - economically - not a waste, but can be seen as an investment in human capital. By applying this in the situation of school dropouts, it can be concluded that they do have social capital in which they invest time and energy. But the people in their social network, including themselves, often do not have human capital because there can be a lack in recognized skills: they often do not have a diploma, and their first and only language is Papiamentu. This means that school dropouts in this sense cannot use their social capital and human capital to have access to a job. As Blokland and Savage (2008) already mentioned, having connections does not automatically mean having access to resources. If people in their social network were employed and well up in the Dutch language, under the condition that they would have recognized skills, the social

network could help them in finding a job. In this sense, school dropouts could have benefits from their social network. But in the case of Curaçao the opposite is true. The social network of school dropouts maintains the socio-economic status of themselves and their network. They cannot help each other getting a job, because most of them do not have a job. This repeats from generation to generation.

### 8.3 Culture of poverty?

In the discussion on absolute and relative poverty, absolute poverty points more to access to financial sources and the isolation of school dropouts, whereas relative poverty points more to environment and social networks of school dropouts that causes persistency of poverty. The low access to money goes from generation to generation, which causes the persistency of the structural poverty and the poverty of an enduring type, which is in line with Du Toit's (2005) and Lewis's (1966) argumentation. The social networks strengthen the disabled position of some school dropouts with regard to future perspectives, as they have social capital but they and people in their social network have a lack of human capital: no diploma and no knowledge of the Dutch language. This leads to the fact that their social network is not very valuable in obtaining a job. This means that people in the social network of a school dropout remain unemployed. To that end, dropouts find oneself in a culture of poverty, in which the maintaining of the established order is the order of the day. This kind of school dropouts mainly concerns poor people.

However, despite the suggestion that a strong cohesion between dropout rate and poverty rate is found, not in all cases of this research this cohesion can be found. Yet some respondents are not driven by poverty-related factors, since they do have economic resources or key language skills. Other reasons than poverty-related reasons count for these dropouts. It is possible that they do not acknowledge the importance or relevance of attending school. It is also possible that they see changes in the global economy which they cannot reach because of a glass ceiling in systems of society that keeps them from changing. So in conclusion, dropping out of education does not per se arise from poverty.

In addition, the global economy in combination with the glass ceiling in systems of society for school dropouts causes a widening gap between poor and rich in society. No financial resources and no knowledge of the key language will widen this gap even more, but this is not the case for all respondents. As Castells (2010) argued, irrelevant people are not part of any system in the global economy and form the Fourth World; school dropouts often cannot reach any system. In this case it can be argued that the position and future perspectives of school dropouts will worsen. While the interconnectedness of the world grows, it is likely that dropouts will isolate themselves, while they were already excluded by others in society, as they cannot reach any system in the global economy. The neighborhoods with a certain low socio-economic status are becoming a sort of islands to them,

which reinforces the spatial and social inequalities between neighborhoods. This causes the persistency of patterns of division in cities in a culture of poverty, not only spatially but also socially.

In order to change this situation, the social network of school dropouts must change. This is possible according to Schapendonk (2014). But people have the tendency to interact with people of the same status and language, which does justice to what Michael Merry (2013) calls voluntary segregation with freedom of conscience, freedom of association and the principle of homophily, which is the case here. In line with this argumentation, it is not per se unjust that there is a gap between rich and poor in society, as people choose to live among others like themselves. In this case the gap between rich and poor can be seen as a natural consequence of voluntary segregation, in which a culture of poverty does not have to be a problem of social injustice in society. This is also in relation to the argumentation of Sen (1981), who emphasizes the relative component of some discussions on poverty that lead to the opinion that the prevalence of poverty in the country is not only a form of the suffering of the poor but a relative luxuriousness of the nation as a whole. Moreover, not all respondents live in poverty-related circumstances that makes it too simplistic to blame poverty-related problems for the existence of the phenomenon of dropping out of education.





*Figure 27: Male adolescents playing games*

## 9. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to gain insight in possible factors influencing the motives of adolescents to drop out of secondary or tertiary education on Curaçao. To get insight in this, the umbrella of the situation of school dropouts in society of Curaçao, is the causality between poverty and education, in which education as a phenomenon can be seen as a part of broader processes of the welfare model, globalization and social justice. Education is often perceived as the model for development by society, as well as the norm in society. To that end, this thesis will go beyond this society-perceived perception by taking self-perceived perception of school dropouts and their situation in society as an empirical starting point. The main question of this research was the following:

*What influences the motives of adolescent to drop out of secondary and tertiary school on Curaçao?*

Mainly school dropouts enrolled in the waiting list of the Mandatory Social Training - my internship - of the Ministry of OWCS have been the target group. In order to sketch a general profile of these school dropouts, big differences between them and their background were revealed. The respondents cover a substantial heterogeneity of respondents, whose backgrounds link to a particular set of variables that matter. Apparently, the group of school dropouts concerns a diverse group of people who not always find themselves in poverty-related circumstances. For some school dropouts poverty-related economic and social factors play an important role to drop out of school. But some blame other factors for their dropping out, such as a lack of acknowledgement for the relevance of school for their development, in which school dropouts distinguish themselves from society by having a different norm. This points to more factors than only poverty that causes the phenomenon of dropping out of education. To that end, there are distinguished different internal, external, direct and indirect factors which can be economic, social, spatial and temporal factors that are interrelated to each other to a large extent.

It can be concluded that the economic factor is an external underlying factor. In many cases the parents or single mothers live on social security, causing the respondents to be in need of money. This economically bad situation at home is a crucial external social factor at the same time. If the situation at home is economically bad, there is often no stable family situation which - in the end - causes dropouts. The key in this external social factor is missing a role model at home; sometimes physically, sometimes symbolically if the parents do not have the ability to give guidance. The dysfunctional families themselves do not realize that they are dysfunctional and therefore it repeats from generation to generation. This refers to the existence of a vicious circle of a culture of poverty.

Another social factor that could be considered as a motive to drop out of school, refers to having a certain lifestyle, in which it is an ordinary thing to not attend school. For instance, it is more ordinary to hang around, work or party instead of going to school according to some respondents, which points to 'lifestyle'. Moreover, it implies that attending in school is not an institutionalized pattern.

Under certain circumstances the social network can also be seen as a social factor. When it comes to the family of dropouts, this is an internal social factor. Dysfunctionality of families is important in this case. But when it comes to friends in the social network, external social factors can be addressed. Peer group pressure is of frequent occurrence within social networks that consist of friends in their own age category. Especially in the criminal or drugs circuit peer group pressure is a social factor. Besides, for girls pregnancy is a social factor that occurs frequently. This is a direct social factor. But indirectly it can be seen as an economic factor or moreover an internal social factor, in the sense that their families are dysfunctional, without a role model or a father figure.

With regard to spatial factors, different flaws in systems were addressed: flaws in the school systems, in the collaboration between different organizations and the insufficient functioning of the police corps and the *Leerplicht*. These are all spatial factors that ease the motive to drop out. Moreover, the flaw of these systems pushes students away. Therefore these dropouts can be called pushouts as well.

By looking at the temporal dimension, several factors can be addressed. Working for a few months is often a temporal factor. For females, pregnancy is a temporal factor. Also the social networks with peer group pressure can be seen as a temporal factor to drop out of school, especially in the case of males. This is especially interlinked with economic and social factors. Remarkable is that all respondents who drop out at first temporal, do not go to school for several years in the meantime. This points to short-sighted thinking of the dropouts. It is not unwillingness to go to school, but the temporal factors are more driven out of ignorance.

Another thing that motivates adolescents to drop out of school, is the fact that they do not recognize themselves as being a dropout. Moreover, they are not able to describe characteristics of a school dropout. Thereby, most of the respondents perceive themselves as a failure. One can conclude that this self-perceived perception is fostered by society. Society-perceived perceptions of school dropouts contain that school dropouts have problems with their behavior, are unmotivated, brutal, influenced by others easily, have a bad self-image, are short-term thinkers, are not able to plan or foresee things, do not speak Dutch and they come from poor, dysfunctional families. This points to the fact that most people in society make conclusions about the whole disabled group of school dropouts in advance, without viewing them as individuals. Moreover, society-perceived future perspectives for school dropouts mainly focus on the depicting of school dropouts as a failure in society. Following

society-perceived future perspectives, it can be concluded that the characteristics of school dropouts worsen their future perspectives.

In contradiction, self-perceived perception of the future of school dropouts is not that clear as society-perceived perception. It can be concluded that they all have primitive wishes for future and they mainly do not know how to take chances in the future, if they already think about their own future. Moreover, they are not aware of the need to plan their future. It is easier for them to say something about the future of Curaçao than to say anything about their own future.

It can be concluded that dropping out of school on Curaçao is a broad phenomenon that derives from many factors. Generalizing about the factors will overlook the diversity of factors and the diversity of people that are labeled as dropouts. The phenomenon of dropping out of school partly derives from poverty, but also from a suffocating system in society, which causes that school not being seen as relevant by many school dropouts. By all means, it is not only poverty that causes the phenomenon.

*"The system"* can be suffocating for all school dropouts around the world and can be seen as an opposing factor. The relevance of education is not acknowledged by all citizens, while the system obliges them to go to school. Education is seen as the norm in society – which can be seen as western-biased - which relates to western concepts of the welfare model and globalization, which is development-oriented. School in the western world is an institutionalized phenomena and the model to development. It is likely that not all citizens can find themselves functioning in this system. If orientation in society is on development, this often goes at the expense of certain groups of society, for whom structural social injustice can be addressed. In contradiction to this norm of education in society, some people in society foresee other ways to success by acknowledging their human capital, without school or diploma. In the non-western world this is a more common phenomena, and it can be viewed as a lifestyle. This can cause a certain underdog position in society of a group of people, to legitimate their own society-perceived fail. On the other hand, this can also offer agency, in the sense that they find new options for future for themselves, such as the criminal circuit or living on social security, if this is enough to live on. But the underdog culture of a group in society often is depicted as a failure by society, while in fact the system itself has failed.

This underdog position or culture points to the culture of poverty of Lewis (1966) in which it is likely that school dropouts find themselves in. Several structural factors and persistent vulnerabilities can be addressed that point to the phenomena of persistency of poverty. This phenomena points to relative poverty, whereas absolute poverty points more to access to financial sources. The low access to money goes from generation to generation, which causes the persistency of the structural poverty and the poverty of an enduring type, as Du Toit (2005) argued. The social networks strengthen the disabled position of school dropouts with regard to future perspectives, as they have social capital but

they and people in their social network have a lack of human capital: no diploma and no knowledge of the Dutch post-colonial language. This leads to the fact that they cannot use their social network to obtain a job. The maintaining of the established order refers to a culture of poverty.

In places where the culture of poverty mainly concerns poor people, not all school dropouts are poor. Some see changes in the global economy, which they cannot reach because of a glass ceiling in systems of society that keeps them from changing. Though, this is widening the gap between poor and rich in society. Not having any financial resources and no knowledge of the key language will widen this gap even more. While the interconnectedness of different parts of the world grows, the position and future perspectives of school dropouts will worsen. Therefore, it is likely that they are going to isolate themselves, while they were already excluded by others in society. But it can be argued reversely as well: it is not per se unjust that there is a gap between rich and poor in society, as people choose to live among others like themselves, as Michael Merry (2013) also argued. The gap between rich and poor in this case can be seen as a natural consequence of voluntary segregation, in which a culture of poverty does not have to be a problem of social injustice in society. According to Sen (1981) poverty can even be seen as a relative luxuriousness of the nation as a whole instead of suffering of the poor.

People that live in a culture of poverty become a problem for society if this causes the existence of two different cultures in two different circuits that are square to each other: informal and formal circuits. It is likely that the informal economy is important for people – such as school dropouts - in the lower circles of society. With regard to this informal economy, Castells (2010) goes one step further with his systematic inequality. According to Castells the future of irrelevant people - such as school dropouts - is already determined and in advance they do not have chances or prospects in future anymore. This includes school dropouts in the informal economy. These people form a new world: the Fourth World. Are school dropouts irrelevant or do they have human capital? Is a connection between the informal and formal economy in this case possible to create new opportunities for these irrelevant people? Is that desirable?

Also the reverse of a culture of poverty comes into view: poverty of culture. If culture is depicted as a set of attitudes, beliefs, values and practices, the conclusion can be drawn that some cultures are poor in the sense that they miss some values and attitudes, with regard to their lifestyle. But it is important to take into account that this is a western-biased statement. Moreover, to understand the geography of education, often education does not gear to the pupils' perception of their environment. Is that poverty of culture as well? What are core values that education should have? Does the educational system work? And moreover, does education have the duty or key role to impart social responsibility on the pupils of a society?

In conclusion, a culture of poverty does not have to be a problem of social injustice in society. The gap between poor and rich can be seen as a natural consequence of voluntary segregation and it might be a relative luxuriousness of the nation. Moreover, it is alleged that school dropouts themselves are not aware of their bad future perspectives. Not all of them live in poverty-related circumstances, which makes it too simplistic to blame poverty-related problems for the existence of the phenomenon of dropping out of education. Moreover, generalizing about all school dropouts is not an aim and it is not possible since there is conducted research in a specific group of school dropouts on Curaçao. Although, all adolescents are intelligent in their own way and it is up to them to continue building on the perception of society on development and education, or to revolutionary decide that it is not their system for their own development. Some of them might have a more revolutionary vision than society knows.



*Figure 28: The group that attended in the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Youth Dialogue*

## 10. Recommendations

*"You do not become teacher by coincidence. It is a worthy occupation, but it is a complex occupation at the same time. It is not teaching on itself, you are a nation builder: you participate in building the future of the country, by providing sufficient education to new generation students. Teachers should act more consciously with regard to their job as carrier of values, maker of the future and role model."*<sup>89</sup>

-Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, #leraarwordjenietzomaar, LinkedIn

In order to prevent or limit the amount of school dropouts on Curaçao different recommendations will be given in this chapter to different parties, such as society, school boards, the government and recommendations for further scientific research.

With regard to school boards, several points are worthwhile to pay more attention to, in order to have education embedded more in systems of society. First, it is important that education fits the expectations of adolescents. For example, education can be more practical, Gubbels and Sambo-Velder point this out too. Also education should fit the needs of society better; e.g. nowadays more can be learnt about the tourism sector and the global economy. Secondly, it is important to create a pedagogical climate in school, as already is the case in Lucille Hernandez's school. Teachers are important players in the raising of children and can be seen as pedagogical staff too. Especially when students do not have a stable situation at home, it is important that there is a pedagogical climate to keep the students there. In line with this, it is also worthwhile to have more social workers in schools, to have more attention for displaying risk factors of students. Besides, it is important for school boards to pay more attention to contacts with parents, keep the student registration up to date and collaborate smoothly with other stakeholders.

With regard to the government, the Ministry of OWCS and the Mandatory Social Training, several recommendations can be done as well. These recommendations mainly point to the role of the government to trigger intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of school dropouts or school dropouts in the making, to make them part of system society in the end. Intrinsic motivation to go to school can be triggered by providing sufficient information about the goal of school and the different types of schools. This can be brought to the attention by television shows or informing them in - for instance - community centers. Social media are also a good way to inform young people. School boards, the government and society can advertise more on social media, such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook about education and the relevance, but also to give more insights in sex, as there is not much sexual education. Herewith, the perspective of adolescents is important to break through the glass ceiling of

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<sup>89</sup> Leraar word je niet zomaar. Het is een prachtig vak, maar ook een complex vak. Je geeft niet alleen les, je bent een nation builder: je bouwt mee aan de toekomst van het land, door goed onderwijs te geven aan steeds nieuwe generaties leerlingen. Leraren moeten meer bewust handelen naar hun maatschappelijke taak als waardendragers, toekomstmaker en voorbeeldfiguur.

what people know and what they cannot reach or do not know. Besides, the extrinsic motivation to go to school can be triggered by making the *Leerplicht* and police corps appropriate working systems, that keep them in school. Then it is up to school dropouts (in the making) to explore education and to grasp that chance, although it will take a lot of time. Furthermore, the government should position itself more as a leading actor, which ensures good collaboration of different stakeholders in the field of school dropouts. Common agendas and meetings with representatives of organizations in the field will be good to create one platform where sufficient collaboration can unfold.

With regard to opportunities for further research, different lacks can be explored. For instance, more attention can be paid to the social network of the school dropout, in order to verify and explore this network and the nature of this network more. Besides, options for later retraining can be explored. Retraining later in life can be good to meet the desires of a society, and moreover, it can have an added value to embed education in society.



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*The pictures that were not taken by me:*

Front-page: <http://www.werkaandemuur.nl/nl/werk/Straatbeeld-Nieuw-Nederland-Willemstad-Curacao/108154>

Figure 2: <http://www.off-the-beaten-track.net/travelogues/an01c02.html>

Figure 4: <http://www.kkCuraçao.net/?paged=3&tag=onderwijs&print=pdf-page>

Figure 9: <http://caribischnetwork.ntr.nl/files/2014/10/photo-1-3-640x4691.jpg>

Figure 26: <http://www.vic.cw/eid/2012>

Figure 27: <http://caribischnetwork.ntr.nl/files/2013/04/Kinderoorden-Brakkeput-domino.jpg>

## Appendix I: List of school dropouts by neighborhood

Code	Name	Dropout youth 15-24 yo
1	Westpunt	51.4%
2	Lagun	
3	Christoffel	
4	Flip	45.9%
5	Tera Pretu	
6	Lelienberg	41.0%
7	Soto	39.0%
8	Pannekoek	
9	Wacao	
10	Barber	34.2%
11	St. Willibrordus	35.0%
12	Tera Cora	28.9%
14	Souax	35.5%
15	St. Michiel	26.0%
16	Piscadera Baai	22.0%
17	Hato	
18	Fortuna	46.3%
19	Rancho	24.0%
20	Ronde Klip	41.9%
21	Brievengat	28.4%
22	Maria Maai	35.8%
23	Muizenberg	34.3%
24	Stenen Koraal	31.0%
25	Mahuma	34.4%
26	Groot Piscadera	26.9%
27	Paradijs	24.5%
28	Wanapa	34.1%
29	Buena Vista	30.5%
30	Kanga/Dein	43.3%
31	Suffisant	31.4%
32	Mon Repos	19.3%
33	Bonam	30.3%
34	Rosendaal	35.4%
36	Groot Kwartier	29.0%
37	Mahaai	12.8%
38	Sta. Rosa	26.2%
39	Kwarchi	22.2%
40	Montaña Abou	29.1%
41	Labadera	20.8%
42	Seru Lora	29.9%
43	Zeelandia	

47	Wishi	38.8%
48	Habaai	44.7%
49	Mundo Nobo	34.5%
50	Domi	36.2%
51	Otrobanda	58.7%
52	Punda	
53	Scharloo	45.5%
54	Parera	
55	Berg Altena	39.7%
56	Saliña	17.6%
57	Dominguito	16.9%
58	Rooi Santu	39.0%
59	Koraal Specht	48.9%
60	Steenrijk	29.1%
61	Koraal Partier	30.8%
62	Montaña Rey	28.0%
63	Seru Grandi	34.2%
64	Spaanse Water	22.0%
65	Oostpunt	36.4%

## Appendix II: Translation lyrics Circles

Cirkels, circles

Sirkulo, Sirkulooo circles, circles

Dunami bo man i djis konfiami give me your hand and just trust me

Dunami bo man, kere den mi give me your hand and believe in me

Kibra e sirkulo visioso life is a vicious circle

Sa ku bo mes por disidi know that you can decide

Ta bo ta doño di bo bida you are the owner of your life

Dunami bo man i djis konfiami i pone bo fe den mi give me your hand , trust me, put your faith in me

Pone bo fe den mi put your faith in me

Pain is there to strengthen you

The world is turning around, that is why we inherit diseases and we bear the pain of our mothers

And of our fathers and their forefathers

Through customs and stories

Mayra is having a crush on him

And Mayra is pregnant

She almost does not know the father of her baby, but she is keeping it, 13 years old and look a like with her older sister

Juraisa is wearing short skirts, everything she tells her little sis is confidential

Always busy, two different fathers, they pick up their kids in two different cars

They treat her with respect but are gone after having sex to the next willing lady

Now her sister wants to have babies too

We inherit what we see, watch how we make this circles

Dunami bo man i djis konfiami give me your hand and just trust me

Dunami bo man, kere den mi give me your hand and believe in me

Kibra e sirkulo visioso life is a vicious circle

Sa ku bo mes por disidi know that you can decide

Ta bo ta doño di bo bida you are the owner of your life

Dunami bo man i djis konfiami i pone bo fe den mi give me your hand , trust me, put your faith in me

Pone bo fe den mi put your faith in me

In school he was bullied by dark kids, simply because he is even more dark than them  
Mom says, focus, but not on them  
Proud is his mother, Robin is his name  
Ga'i chiki bo ta is what boys say to him if they want to be cool, but none of them is insulting him  
Out of respect for his bigger brother they are calm  
If Junny talks about his brother, his mother is groaning  
Because little Junny's brother is in prison, and they had a difficult relationship  
Everytime his brother bothered him  
So now he is looking for candies in his brothers closet  
He found his candies and a weapon as well, and tomorrow he is having troubles  
Mom says to him; go to school or I will beat you  
But clearly he inherited his brothers traits

#### Circles

Whatever I do, I can not break through the circles  
Whatever I do, you have to do it by yourself  
I do not know how, I have to heal all your wounds  
But ggive me your heart and trust me, put your faith in me  
I will be there

Dunami bo man i djis konfiami **give me your hand and just trust me**  
Dunami bo man, kere den mi **give me your hand and believe in me**  
Kibra e sirkulo visioso **life is a vicious circle**  
Sa ku bo mes por disidi **know that you can decide**  
Ta bo ta doño di bo bida **you are the owner of your life**

But give me your hand, Trust me, Put your faith in me

Dunami bo man i djis konfiami **give me your hand and just trust me**  
Dunami bo man, kere den mi **give me your hand and believe in me**  
Kibra e sirkulo visioso **life is a vicious circle**  
Sa ku bo mes por disidi **know that you can decide**  
Ta bo ta doño di bo bida **you are the owner of your life**  
Dunami bo man i djis konfiami i pone bo fe den mi **give me your hand , trust me, put your faith in me**  
Pone bo fe den mi **put your faith in me**

## Appendix III: Interview guides

### Interview guide school dropouts

#### *Algemene vragen*

Naam, leeftijd, aantal residentiele jaren in wijk, voertaal

#### *Topic 1: Dagelijks leven*

- Kun je beschrijven wat je op een dag doet? (onderwijs niet noemen)
- Wat zijn je hobby's?
- Doe je aan sport? Bij een vereniging? Kerk?
- Waar op Curaçao kom je vaak?

#### *Topic 2: Woonsituatie*

- Met wie woon je?
- Hoe ervaar je dat? Heb je het thuis naar je zin? Voel je je thuis? Hoe is de sfeer?
- Klachten over woonomstandigheid?
- Wat doen je huisgenoten in het dagelijks leven?
- Wat voor beroep doen je ouders? Broers/zussen?
- En wat voor opleiding hebben ze gedaan?
- Door wie ben je opgevoed?
- Naar wie ga je als je problemen hebt?
- Wie is er hoofdverantwoordelijk in het huishouden?
- Wie is er hoofdverantwoordelijk voor het inkomen? Moet je financieel bijdragen?
- Is er sprake van geen inkomen? Armoede? Schulden? Bijstandsuitkering? Gokproblemen?
- Hoe kom jij aan geld?
- Waarover zijn ze thuis tevreden? Hoe ervaar je dat?
- Waarover zijn ze thuis minder tevreden? Hoe ervaar je dat?
- Wat hebben jullie als gezin meegemaakt?
- Wordt er wel eens geweld gebruikt thuis? Wat vind je daarvan?
- Ben jij thuis wel eens misbruikt of mishandeld? Iemand anders thuis? Hoe ervaar je dat?
- Gebruik jij of een ander gezinslid drugs of alcohol? Hoe vaak? Wat vind je daarvan?

### *Topic 3: Leefomgeving*

- In welke wijk woon je?
- Hoelang al?
- Kun je de wijk beschrijven waarin je woont?
- Wat voor nationaliteit hebben de mensen die er wonen?
- Hoe gedragen mensen zich in jouw wijk?
- Welke plekken zijn belangrijk in de buurt?
- Is de wijk veranderd door de jaren heen? En die belangrijke plekken?
- Hoe vind je het om in deze buurt te wonen? Voel je je er thuis?
- Als je moest verhuizen, zou je dan in deze buurt willen blijven wonen?
- Heb je veel contact met mensen uit jouw wijk? Hoe is dit contact?
- Op wat voor manier krijg je wel eens hulp van je burens? Of bied je hulp?
- Maak je wel eens gebruik van de connecties met je burens? Heb je ze wel eens nodig?
- Wat doen zij in het dagelijks leven?
- Beïnvloeden zij jouw keuzes? Voorbeeld?
- Wijzen ze keuzes af?
- Hoe ervaar je dat? (Vind je dat vervelend? Zou je eigenlijk iets anders willen doen?)
- Heeft iemand in je wijk wel eens iets gedaan dat niet mocht of contact gehad met justitie?
- Wat vind je daarvan?
- Beïnvloed dat jouw gedrag?
- Heeft iemand in van je familie wel eens iets gedaan dat niet mocht of contact gehad met justitie? Wat vind je daarvan? Beïnvloed dat jouw gedrag?
- Heb je zelf wel eens iets gedaan dat niet mocht?
- Kom je zelf wel eens in gevaarlijke situaties terecht?
- Wordt er wel eens geweld gebruikt in de wijk?
- Wat vind je daarvan?
- Is er sprake van veel drugs of alcohol gebruik in de wijk?
- En jij zelf?
- Hoe groot is jouw vriendenkring? Wonen deze in jouw wijk?
- Beïnvloeden jouw vrienden jouw keuzes?
- Wat doen je vrienden op een dag? Hoe ziet hun leven eruit?
- Welke mensen spelen de belangrijkste rol in jouw leven? (familie/wijk?) Waarom?
- Beïnvloeden deze belangrijke mensen jouw keuzes? Voorbeeld?
- Hoe ervaar je dat? (Vind je dat vervelend? Zou je eigenlijk iets anders willen doen?)

- Heb je problemen met iemand? Politie? Ouders? Hoe ervaar je dat?
  - ➔ stel je ziet een portemonnee uit een tas steken, zou je die pakken?
  - ➔ Als een vriend jou bijvoorbeeld marihuana zou aanbieden, zou je dat aannemen?
  - ➔ Als je vriend zegt dat je iets wel moet doen, maar je moeder of vader zegt van niet, wat doe je dan?

#### *Topic 4: Eigen beleving*

- Als je je eigen leven nu een cijfer moest geven, wat gaf je het dan? Waarom?
- Heb je een levensmotto? ➔ tegeltjeswijsheden!
- Welk gevoel overheerst het meest bij jou? Positieve of negatieve gevoelens? (slecht concentreren, bang, somber, hyper, agressief, rouw, verdriet, eenzaam, gevoel van uitzichtloosheid, slecht luisteren, ongehoorzaam, eetstoornis, angstig, verlegen, laag zelfbeeld, impulsief)
- Wat is het ergste dat je in je leven hebt meegemaakt?
- Waarover ben jij zelf tevreden?
- Waarover ben jij zelf niet tevreden?
- Waar heb je plezier in of kun je enthousiast voor worden?
- Wanneer ben jij in je leven het meest gelukkig geweest?
- Heb je wel eens contact gehad met andere (hulp)organisaties?

#### *Topic 5: Eigen toekomst*

- Hoe zie je je eigen toekomst? Hoe wens je het?
- Wat is je doel in het leven? Wat wil je bereiken? (Past onderwijs hierin?)
- Wat heb je nodig om dat doel te bereiken? (Onderwijs? Welke mensen?)
- Voel je binding met het onderwijs? Voelde je je daar thuis?
- In welke klas ben je afgehaakt?
- Wat waren je redenen daarvoor?
- Wat vonden je ouders hiervan? Waarom? Verschil vader en moeder?
- Ben je bang voor reacties van hen of van vrienden?
- Vond je school moeilijk? Als je een andere richting had gekozen was het dan beter gegaan?
- Wat helpt je vooruit in je leven?
- Wat houdt je tegen?
- Wat is kenmerkend voor een vroegtijdig schoolverlater? Wat is het profiel van zo iemand?
- Identificeer je jezelf als dropout?
- Is het een lifestyle?

- Mogen je kinderen later zeggen: ik ga niet naar school?
- Wat is jouw positie in de maatschappij? (Ziet zichzelf als succescase? Gefaald?)
  - ➔ Andere weg naar succes dan dmv onderwijs? Mits onderwijs niet genoemd is aan het einde vragen
- Als jij de overheid was of een andere instantie, hoe zou je de problematiek rondom vroegtijdig schoolverlaten dan oplossen? Wat zou de eerste stap zijn?
- Wat heb JIJ nodig om weer naar school te gaan?
- Hoe weet je van SVP? Waren er nog andere opties?
- Waarom wil je graag SVP?
- Denk je dat een startkwalificatie net zoveel mogelijkheden biedt als een diploma?

#### *Topic 6: Toekomst omgeving en Curaçao*

- Hoe wens jij Curaçao over 20 jaar?
- Hoe verwacht je Curaçao over 20 jaar?
- Wat zou je willen veranderen?
- Wat is er nodig om de situatie te verbeteren? (Onderwijs?)

#### *Stellingen:*

- *In mijn wijk gaan bewoners heel goed met elkaar om en delen ze algemene normen en waarden.*
- *In mijn wijk voel ik mij op alle plekken op elk moment van de dag prettig om te doen en laten wat ik wil.*
- *Ik hecht veel waarde aan de meningen van andere mensen in mijn wijk of familie.*
- *Als ik een portemonnee ziet of iets anders, dan pak ik dat.*
- *Als mijn vrienden mij vragen om iets te doen, bijvoorbeeld marihuana roken, dan doe ik dat, ook al sta ik daar zelf niet achter.*
- *Als een vriend van mij zegt iets wel te doen, maar mijn moeder zegt van niet, luister ik naar mijn vriend.*
- *Mijn vader geeft me andere adviezen dan mijn moeder.*

#### *Tegeltjeswijsheden:*

- Anders is ook goed.
- Het leven is als de bergen: zonder dalen geen toppen. Het is de kunst op iedere hoogte van het uitzicht te genieten.
- Het is beter een kaars aan te steken dan te blijven klagen over de duisternis.
- Het leven is als zeilen. Ook met tegenwind kun je vooruit gaan.

- If nothing goes right, go left!
- Morgen weer een nieuwe zon.
- Angst is maar voor even, spijt is voor altijd.
- Als je naar het verleden kijkt, sta je met je rug naar de toekomst.
- Geniet nooit met mate.
- Je zult zelden spijt hebben van dingen die je doet. Je zult vooral spijt hebben van dingen die je niet doet.
- Kun je het niet veranderen? Laat het dan los.
- Leer te waarderen wat je hebt voordat de tijd je leert wat je had.
- Als het niet gaat zoals het moet, dan moet het maar zoals het gaat.
- Een nee is ook oké.
- Het leven is het meervoud van lef.
- Vrienden zijn familie die we zelf uitzoeken.
- Succes begint waar de meesten al zijn opgehouden.
- Als je blijft doen wat je altijd deed, krijg je wat je altijd kreeg.
- Als er nooit iets mislukt, probeer je te weinig.
- Als je wil scoren, moet je weten waar het doel staat.
- Samen kun je meer dan in je eentje.

## Interview guide informants

### *Algemene vragen*

Naam, leeftijd, functie binnen organisatie

### *Topic 1: Organisatie*

- Kunt u wat vertellen over uw organisatie?
- Wat is de doelgroep? En leeftijd en geslacht?
- Wat voor gevallen zien jullie dagelijks?
- Hoe gaan jullie te werk?

### *Topic 2: Profiel vroegtijdig schoolverlater*

- Zien jullie veel vroegtijdig schoolverlaters?
- Wat is het profiel of wat zijn typische kenmerken van een vroegtijdig schoolverlater?
- Is dat in uw organisatie zo?
- Hoe is dat in het algemeen?
- Wat zijn de belangrijkste redenen waarom zij school verlaten?
- In welke klas zijn zij meestal afgehaakt (en verschil in gender)?
- Identificeren zij zich als vroegtijdig schoolverlater?
- Denkt u dat zij ongelukkig zijn?
- Zien de vroegtijdig schoolverlaters zichzelf als faalfactoren?
- Denken zij dat zij een andere weg kunnen bewandelen tot succes? Zien ze zichzelf als succescase?
- Zien ze onderwijs als norm? Onderwijs nodig om doel te bereiken?
- Ziet u onderwijs als norm? Vindt u dat onderwijs nodig is in de maatschappij?
- Hoe zien zij hun toekomst? Denken ze daarover na? Arbeidsmarkt oriëntatie?

### *Topic 3: Achtergrond vroegtijdig schoolverlater*

- Hoe zou u de gemiddelde thuissituatie beschrijven van uw cliënten? Twee-ouder gezin? Armoedig?
- Wat is het profiel van de ouders? Beroep/opleiding?
- Stimuleren ouders hun kinderen? Verschil in gender? (mening ouders over school)
- Heeft de thuissituatie veel invloed op hun keuzes?
- Is er een patroon te ontdekken in hun gebieden van afkomst?

- Invloed van beeldvorming in hun wijk?
- Veel sociale cohesie in de wijk?
- Belang van sociaal kapitaal?
- Is dit veranderd door de jaren heen?
- Hun sociale netwerk? Waarde hechten aan meningen van anderen? Thuis en in wijk/vriendkring? Hebben ze bijvoorbeeld veel contact met andere schoolverlaters?

#### *Topic 4: Toekomst*

- Wat is volgens u het grootste probleem?
- Wat wordt er tegen gedaan? Door uw organisatie? En door andere organisaties?
- Vindt u dat er genoeg tegen wordt gedaan om het in te perken?
- Vindt u dat er genoeg tegen wordt gedaan om het te voorkomen?
- Bijvoorbeeld Leerplichtbrigade, overheid, politie, organisaties in het veld.
- Hoe verwacht u dat het zal gaan met het aantal vroegtijdig schoolverlaters in 2020? Meer of minder?
- Wat zou er tegen gedaan moeten worden? Wat moet er veranderen?

## Appendix IV: Article for the newspaper

### AMIGOE - Curaçao



Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

# PERSBERICHT

## Vroegtijdig schoolverlaten Curaçao: is er een oplossing?

*Ik heb nieuws. Er zijn vroegtijdig schoolverlaters op Curaçao. Ik heb nog meer nieuws. Er zijn heel erg veel vroegtijdig schoolverlaters op Curaçao. Ik heb goed nieuws. Het kan worden opgelost.*

Drie maanden lang heb ik me als Masterstudente Sociale Geografie gebogen over de problematiek rondom vroegtijdig schoolverlaters op Curaçao. Gewapend met de vraag waarom onderwijs als de norm in een maatschappij eigenlijk het model tot ontwikkeling is en hoe vroegtijdig schoolverlaters naar hun eigen positie kijken, ging ik op pad. Maar nog belangrijker was het zoeken naar de oplossing van het hoge percentage vroegtijdig schoolverlaters.

Ik heb gesproken met tientallen vroegtijdig schoolverlaters, waarmee ik in contact kwam via mijn onderzoeksstage bij het ministerie van Onderwijs, Wetenschap, Cultuur en Sport. Ook heb ik diepte-interviews afgenomen met schoolverlaters van het AJJC. Daarnaast heb ik gesproken met 14 experts van verschillende instituten, zoals verslavingskliniek Brasami, tienermoederinternaat Bruuder Pius, het CBS, SIFMA, verschillende AGO's, het AJJC en het GOG. Daarnaast heb ik expert-sessies bijgewoond met het specifieke thema vroegtijdig schoolverlaters, waarbij afgevaardigden van het ministerie aanwezig waren, maar zeker ook vertegenwoordigers van organisaties in het veld en scholen. Ook werd de jeugd van Curaçao erbij betrokken in Nationale Jeugddialogen. Andere informatiebronnen waren Round Tables of symposiums onderwijsbeleid en jeugdontwikkeling.



Maar hoeveel vroegtijdig schoolverlaters zijn er eigenlijk? Hier bestaat vaak nogal verwarring over. Volgens de Census 2011 van het CBS was het totale percentage vroegtijdig schoolverlaters 36,2%, of in absolute aantallen 2466 personen. Ter vergelijking ligt het percentage vroegtijdig schoolverlaters in de Europese Unie op 12% en in Nederland bedraagt het maar 2,1% in 2011.

Om nog meer inzicht te krijgen in het aantal vroegtijdig schoolverlaters, is er een onderscheid gemaakt tussen mannen en vrouwen. Van alle inwoners van 10 jaar en ouder die niet meer schoolgaand zijn, is 42,4% van de mannen en 29,1% van de vrouwen vroegtijdig schoolverlater. Dit is weergegeven in figuur 1.

Census 2011	Percentage	Absoluut	Bevolking*
<b>Man 15-24 jaar</b>	42,4%	1536	3619
<b>Vrouw 15-24 jaar</b>	29,1%	930	3192
<b>Totaal 15-24 jaar</b>	36,2%	2466	6811

*\*Bevolking 10jr+ en niet meer schoolgaand*

*Figuur 1: Aantal vroegtijdig schoolverlaters naar geslacht (Bron: CBS, 2015)*

De wijken waar deze jongeren vandaan komen zijn vooral Koraal Specht, Seru Fortuna, Buena Vista, Souax en Lelienberg. Dit zijn ook de wijken die hoge werkloosheidscijfers en armoedecijfers kennen, wat impliceert dat de vroegtijdig schoolverlaters voornamelijk uit sociaal-economisch lage milieu's afkomstig zijn. Echter, ook waren de jongeren die ik interviewde afkomstig uit Montana Rey, Santa Rosa of Brievengat: wijken waarover de beeldvorming iets beter is. Wat geldt voor bijna alle wijken waaruit mijn respondenten afkomstig waren, is dat de sociale netwerken sterk ontwikkeld zijn, waarin er veel sociale controle is, sociale cohesie en waarin hulp van naasten belangrijk is. Men is tegelijkertijd vaak bang voor de reactie van andere bekenden.

Het grootste probleem van het vroegtijdig schoolverlaten, is misschien wel dat het een veelzijdig probleem is dat nog meer verschillende oorzaken kent. Economische factoren, sociale factoren, ruimtelijke factoren en temporale factoren die interne of externe oorzaken kunnen hebben, kunnen ervoor zorgen dat een jongere van school gaat. Zo is er soms sprake van armoede binnen een gezin waarin de ouder of ouders onderstand ontvangt of ontvangen. Niet gek, want een kwart van de bevolking leeft onder de armoedegrens. Hierdoor is er soms geen geld voor eten, laat staan voor de bus of voor een uniform. Ook is er thuis niet altijd een stabiele situatie, en is er wel eens sprake van mishandeling (fysiek of psychisch) of incest. Dit soort probleemgezinnen blijven vaak onder de radar, waardoor hulp te laat komt, als het komt. Ook bestaan veel gezinnen uit een alleenstaande moeder, die heel veel kinderen heeft. Bovendien worden de leerlingen vaak te hoog ingeschat, waardoor ze op hun tenen moeten lopen en hun motivatie afneemt. Vooral bij jongens is dit het geval. Zij gaan soms ook de criminele sector in. Meisjes worden zelf vaak tienermoeder. Ze weten vaak niet wat een 'normale' relatie met een jongen inhoudt omdat ze dat thuis niet als voorbeeld hebben gehad. Daarnaast zijn ze vaak te bang om voor de pil naar de huisarts of apotheek te gaan – als ze het belang daarvan al inzien – want het is waarschijnlijk dat deze huisarts of mensen in de apotheek connecties hebben met bekenden, en wat moeten die bekenden dan wel niet denken...

Het kernprobleem is dat de jongeren geen rolmodel hebben. Er is sprake van vicieuze cirkels die niet doorbroken lijken te kunnen worden. De geschiedenis herhaalt zich keer op keer en de heersende cultuur binnen een wijk, sociaal netwerk of gezin wordt in stand gehouden. De druk van sociale contacten dragen hieraan bij. Dit zorgt er des te meer voor dat bestaande vicieuze cirkels blijven bestaan.

Daarnaast is er een aantal 'gaps' in het systeem. Ten eerste missen er informatiestromen. Jongeren zijn vaak niet goed op de hoogte van de mogelijkheden die het onderwijs ze biedt, wat betreft vervolgstudie. Ook denken ze vaak dat ze na drie maanden automatisch uitgeschreven worden op school als ze niet zijn komen opdagen, maar dit mogen de scholen niet doen, behalve wanneer de

jongeren met justitie in aanraking zijn gekomen. Ten tweede bestaat de Leerplicht op Curaçao, maar dit lijkt een lege wet te zijn aangezien de meeste vroegtijdig schoolverlaters nog nooit last hebben gehad van de Leerplicht. Als ze in aanraking zijn gekomen met de Leerplicht, wordt er alleen een waarschuwing gegeven en gedreigd met een boete. Een soort regel lijkt steeds terug te komen in veel systemen op Curaçao: er moet iets gebeuren, niemand doet iets, dus er verandert niets of men komt ermee weg. In het geval van de Leerplicht: er worden boetes uitgedeeld, niemand betaalt deze boetes en dit wordt niet gecontroleerd, dus er verandert niets en iedereen komt ermee weg. Alles lijkt te draaien om netwerken van mensen die in stand gehouden moeten worden en moeilijke zaken worden in de doofpot gestopt of met de mantel der liefde bedekt. Dit alles versterkt het in stand houden van vicieuze cirkels.

Maar deze cirkels kunnen doorbroken worden! Hiervoor moet ten eerste de Leerplicht gehandhaafd worden. De Leerplichtbrigade moet worden uitgebreid en op hun taken moet meer controle komen. Ook zouden zij meer moeten controleren op het betalen van boetes en anders uitkerings- of loonbeslag moeten leggen. Ten tweede moeten er gratis schoolbussen komen zodat geld geen kwestie meer is (en gelijk alle files opgelost). Ten derde kan een televisieprogramma tegemoet komen aan het informatietekort dat bestaat over (vervolg)onderwijs en het nut van onderwijs. Welke jongeren kijken er nou niet dagelijks tv? Ook zou een ander tv programma kunnen bijdragen aan meer gebruik van anticonceptie en het belang daarvan. Misschien zou het hierdoor minder een taboe kunnen worden om anticonceptie te gebruiken. Vooral bij deze punten, ligt een taak voor de overheid. Als deze punten meer prioriteit krijgen, moeten het uitvoerbare punten zijn! Hiervoor is het van groot belang om goed samen te werken met organisaties in het veld, waarbij de overheid als goede coördinator fungeert.

Daarnaast kunnen ook maatschappelijk werkers een verschil maken. De jongeren moeten sterk gemaakt worden en zelf uit de cirkel kunnen stappen. Op school moet er een pedagogisch klimaat worden gecreëerd, als het thuisfront dit niet biedt. De docenten kunnen hierin een actieve rol spelen. En door meer maatschappelijk werkers op scholen aan te stellen, kunnen risicjongeren eerder geholpen worden!

Natuurlijk is er geen one-size-fits-all solution, maar voor de toekomst van Curaçao zouden bovengenoemde punten investeringen kunnen zijn van ongekennde waarde, en onderwijs als model voor ontwikkeling zou er weer toe gaan doen.

*Meer weten? Stuur een mailtje naar [m.revenberg@hotmail.com](mailto:m.revenberg@hotmail.com)*