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Equal opportunities?

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Summary

School achievement of non-Western ethnic minority students in the Netherlands often lags behind the achievement of their native Dutch peers. Non-Western ethnic minority students also often seem to show relatively more problematic behavior. In this dissertation, two possible explanations for these differences in school adjustment (i.e., academic performance and problem behavior) were examined. Both of these explanations were focused on affect regulation processes in the classroom. The studies took place among first year prevocational students and sixth grade students. In the first part of this dissertation (Chapters 2 and 3), the focus was on examining associations between *negative stereotypes* (i.e., stereotype threat) and the school performance and behavior of ethnic minority students in the Netherlands. An intervention aimed at making students more resilient against stereotype threat was tested (Chapter 3). In the second part of this dissertation, it was examined how *the affective quality of the teacher-child relationship* was associated with the behavioral adjustment of ethnic minority students in the Netherlands (Chapter 4).

In **Chapter 2**, it was evaluated if negative stereotypes (or stereotype threat) could explain part of the differences in academic performance and behavior between native and ethnic minority students in the Netherlands. Previous studies, mainly carried out in the United States, have shown that the academic performance of minorities often decreases when they experience stereotype threat. It was not yet examined if similar effects also occur among ethnic minority students in the Netherlands. Therefore, our first aim was to assess whether students in the Netherlands also experience stereotype threat. Unfortunately, no suitable measure of stereotype threat was available, mainly because stereotype threat was usually induced through a manipulation, and not actually measured in previous studies. The reason for the absence of a measure of stereotype threat is possibly that the level of stereotype *threat* is difficult to assess with an explicit measure. Therefore, it was decided to focus on measuring personal meta-stereotypes, as a prerequisite of stereotype threat. In this dissertation, personal meta-stereotypes were defined as the degree to which students felt that others held negative stereotypes about them personally, because of their ethnic group membership. Personal meta-stereotypes regarding intellectual capabilities and regarding behavior were measured. Participants were 251 first-year prevocational students (i.e., 105 Moroccan-Dutch, 89 Turkish-Dutch, and 57 native Dutch students). Schools provided grades of

English, Mathematics and Dutch for these students. Students reported on their problem behavior, and teachers reported on problem behavior for a random selection of their students. As expected, the results showed that ethnic minority students indeed perceived more often than native Dutch students that others held negative stereotypes about their intellectual capabilities and behavioral adjustment. However, none of these negative meta-stereotypes was associated with school achievement. As was expected, both types of negative meta-stereotypes were associated with more problem behavior, as reported by the student. Furthermore, when students reported to have negative meta-stereotypes about behavior, teachers also reported that these students had more problem behavior. To conclude, we did find the expected connection between negative meta-stereotypes and problem behavior of ethnic minority students, but not between negative meta-stereotypes and academic achievement. To further examine which negative stereotypes ethnic minority students in the Netherlands perceived others to have about their ethnic group, in Chapter 3 two additional pilot studies were performed. In those pilot studies, meta-stereotypes were measured without the personalized component, to simplify the questionnaire items.

In **Chapter 3**, two studies were conducted to examine the effectiveness of a values-affirmation intervention in reducing the effects of stereotype threat on the academic achievement and problem behavior of ethnic minority students. Values-affirmation is a way to strengthen an individual's feelings of self-integrity. During a self-affirmation intervention, this takes place by having students write a short paragraph about values that are personally important to them. The two intervention studies were intended as replication studies of an original study conducted by Cohen et al. (2006; 2009). In the original study, this intervention was very successful in improving the academic performance of negatively stereotyped ethnic minority students in the United States. The intervention consisted of a few short writing assignments that students received during the school year. The first study took place among first-year prevocational students. As mentioned above, each of the two intervention studies was preceded by a pilot study, to verify that ethnic minority students in the Netherlands indeed experienced negative stereotyping. In the first pilot study ($N = 283$; 49.8 percent native Dutch, 50.2 Moroccan-Dutch or Turkish-Dutch), first year prevocational students were asked to indicate if they did or did not perceive others to have certain negative stereotypes about their ethnic group. Results revealed that ethnic minority students, in comparison with native Dutch students, indeed perceived more often that others held negative stereotypes about their group's intellectual abilities as well

as their behavior. Next, the values-affirmation intervention was tested in another group of first-year prevocational students ($N = 342$; 59 native Dutch and 283 non-Western ethnic minority students). Against the expectations, the intervention did not have any effect at all on the academic achievement nor on the level of problem behavior of these ethnic minority students.

Subsequently, the intervention was tested anew in sixth grade, the year before the transition to secondary school ($N = 268$ non-Western ethnic minority students). In this study, a third intervention condition, in which students received help with reflecting on their personal important values, was added to the original paradigm. Again, a pilot study was first conducted among another group of sixth grade students ($N = 237$; 47.3% native Dutch, 52.7 percent non-Western ethnic minority). This pilot study confirmed that ethnic minority students indeed perceived more often than native Dutch students that others held negative stereotypes about their group's intelligence and behavior. However, again, the intervention had no effects.

In **Chapter 4**, a longitudinal study on the reciprocal associations between the affective quality of the teacher-child relationship and children's behavioral adjustment was reported. To prevent shared-informant bias, teacher reports and student reports on both relationship quality and behavior were obtained, and only cross-informant models were examined. Three dimensions of relationship quality (closeness, conflict and dependency / negative expectations) and three dimensions of behavioral adjustment (internalizing, externalizing and prosocial behavior) were measured. Participants were sixth grade non-Western ethnic minority students ($N = 226$) and their teachers ($N = 12$). As only two measurement occasions were included in the study, no firm conclusions about causality could be drawn. However, the results suggested that dependency is a predictor of ethnic minority students' behavioral adjustment at the end of primary education, whereas closeness and conflict within the relationship seem to be only outcomes of ethnic minority students' problem behavior.

In **Chapter 5**, the results of the studies described in the preceding chapters were further discussed. Explanations for the absence of intervention effects were considered. Results of several recent replication studies on the effects of a values-affirmation intervention suggest that the effects of earlier studies are generally difficult to replicate, suggesting that the effects are very fragile. Moreover, the results of the values-affirmation studies in this dissertation indicate that the effectiveness of educational interventions should always be tested again in a new context, before they can be implemented on a large scale.

In Chapter 5, some further ideas were proposed for other interventions aiming to create more equal opportunities at school for ethnic minority and majority students in the Netherlands. Based on the cross-lagged study reported in Chapter 4, it was suggested that sixth grade ethnic minority students might benefit from a more autonomy-supportive teaching style, to prevent the students from becoming too dependent on their teacher. A more autonomy-supportive teaching style could prevent students from developing internalizing and externalizing problem behavior during the school year. Furthermore, it was suggested that the teacher can perhaps also play a role in making students more resilient against negative stereotypes. By becoming more aware of their implicit attitudes towards students, teachers could change their reactions to students. In this way, ethnic minority students are empowered against negative stereotypes through the teacher, instead of through a values-affirmation intervention.

Samenvatting

(Summary in Dutch)

Nederlandse titel: Gelijke kansen? De effecten van negatieve stereotypen en de kwaliteit van de leerkracht-leerlingrelatie op de schoolaanpassing van leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond in Nederland.

Leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond presteren in Nederland vaak slechter op school in vergelijking met leerlingen met een Nederlandse achtergrond. Daarnaast hebben deze leerlingen vaak ook meer probleemgedrag dan Nederlandse leerlingen. In dit proefschrift werden twee mogelijke verklaringen voor deze verschillen in schoolprestaties en gedrag onderzocht. Beide verklaringen waren gerelateerd aan affect-regulatieprocessen in de klas. De onderzoeken werden uitgevoerd onder leerlingen uit de brugklas van het vmbo en leerlingen uit groep 8. In het eerste deel van dit proefschrift (Hoofdstuk 2 en 3) lag de focus op het onderzoeken van associaties tussen *negatieve stereotypen* (i.e., stereotype dreiging) enerzijds en schoolprestaties en gedrag van leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond in Nederland anderzijds. Er werd een interventie getest die bedoeld was om leerlingen weerbaarder te maken tegen stereotype dreiging (Hoofdstuk 3). In het tweede deel van dit proefschrift is onderzocht hoe *de affectieve kwaliteit van de leerkracht-leerlingrelatie* gerelateerd is aan het gedrag van leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond in Nederland (Hoofdstuk 4).

In **Hoofdstuk 2** is onderzocht of negatieve stereotypen (of stereotype dreiging) een gedeeltelijke verklaring kunnen geven voor verschillen in schoolprestaties en gedrag tussen leerlingen met een Nederlandse achtergrond en leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond in Nederland. Eerder onderzoek, dat met name is uitgevoerd in de Verenigde Staten, heeft uitgewezen dat de schoolprestaties van minderheden vaak verslechteren wanneer zij stereotype dreiging ervaren. Het was niet eerder onderzocht of vergelijkbare processen ook plaatsvinden onder leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond in Nederland. Daarom was ons eerste doel om te onderzoeken of leerlingen in Nederland ook stereotype dreiging ervaren. Er was echter geen geschikte maat voor stereotype dreiging beschikbaar, vooral doordat stereotype dreiging in eerdere studies meestal uitgelokt werd door een manipulatie, terwijl stereotype dreiging zelf niet gemeten werd. De reden dat er geen geschikte maat voor stereotype dreiging beschikbaar was, zou kunnen zijn dat de mate van stereotype *dreiging* lastig te meten is met een

expliciete maat. Daarom is besloten om in plaats van stereotype dreiging persoonlijke meta-stereotypen te meten, als voorwaarde voor het kunnen ervaren van stereotype dreiging. Persoonlijke meta-stereotypen werden in dit proefschrift gedefinieerd als de mate waarin de leerlingen het gevoel hebben dat anderen negatieve stereotypen over hen als individu hebben, doordat zij bij een bepaalde etnische groep horen. Er werden persoonlijke meta-stereotypen op het gebied van intellectuele capaciteiten en op het gebied van gedrag gemeten. Aan het onderzoek namen 251 vmbo brugklasleerlingen deel (i.e., 105 Marokkaans-Nederlands, 89 Turks-Nederlands en 57 Nederlands). Bij de scholen werden de cijfers voor de vakken Engels, wiskunde en Nederlands opgevraagd voor deze leerlingen. De leerlingen rapporteerden over hun eigen gedrag. Daarnaast rapporteerden de leerkrachten over het probleemgedrag van een willekeurige selectie van hun leerlingen. Zoals verwacht bleek uit de resultaten dat leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond, in vergelijking met leerlingen met een Nederlandse achtergrond, inderdaad vaker dachten dat anderen negatieve stereotypen over hun intellectuele capaciteiten en gedrag hadden. Echter, er was geen associatie tussen het ervaren van negatieve meta-stereotypen en schoolprestaties. Conform de verwachting was ervaring van beide typen negatieve meta-stereotypen wel gerelateerd aan meer probleemgedrag, zoals gerapporteerd door de leerling. Daarnaast bleek dat wanneer leerlingen aangaven dat zij negatieve meta-stereotypen over gedrag hadden, leerkrachten meer probleemgedrag voor deze leerlingen rapporteerden. Samengevat werd dus wel de verwachte connectie tussen negatieve meta-stereotypen en probleemgedrag van niet-Westerse leerlingen gevonden, maar niet tussen negatieve meta-stereotypen en schoolprestaties. Om verder te onderzoeken welke negatieve stereotypen leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond in Nederland denken dat anderen over hun groep hebben, zijn er in Hoofdstuk 3 twee aanvullende pilot studies uitgevoerd. In deze pilot studies werden meta-stereotypen zonder de persoonlijke component gemeten, om de vragenlijst eenvoudiger te begrijpen te maken.

In **Hoofdstuk 3** zijn twee studies uitgevoerd die de effectiviteit hebben getest van een zelfaffirmatie interventie met betrekking tot het verminderen van de effecten van stereotype dreiging op de schoolprestaties en het probleemgedrag van leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond. Zelfaffirmatie houdt in dat het gevoel van persoonlijke integriteit van een individu wordt versterkt. Bij een zelfaffirmatie interventie vindt dit plaats door leerlingen een korte schrijfo opdracht te laten maken over waarden die voor hen persoonlijk belangrijk zijn. De twee studies waren bedoeld als replicatiestudies van de originele interventiestudie van

Cohen et al. (2006; 2009). In de studie van Cohen was deze interventie zeer succesvol in het verbeteren van de schoolprestaties van minderheidsleerlingen in de Verenigde Staten. De interventie bestond uit een aantal korte schrijfoopdrachten die leerlingen gedurende het schooljaar ontvingen. De eerste studie werd uitgevoerd onder vmbo brugklasleerlingen. Zoals eerder omschreven werd elk van de twee interventie studies voorafgegaan door een pilot studie, om te verifiëren dat leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond inderdaad negatieve stereotypering ervaren. In de eerste pilot studie ($N = 283$; 49.8 procent Nederlandse achtergrond, 50.2 procent Marokkaans-Nederlands of Turks-Nederlands) werd aan vmbo brugklasleerlingen gevraagd om aan te geven of ze wel of niet dachten dat anderen bepaalde negatieve stereotypen over hun etnische groep hadden. Uit de resultaten bleek dat leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond, in vergelijking met leerlingen met een Nederlandse achtergrond, inderdaad vaker dachten dat anderen negatieve stereotypen over de intellectuele capaciteiten en het gedrag van hun groep hadden. Vervolgens werd de interventie getest in een andere groep vmbo brugklasleerlingen ($N = 342$; 59 met een Nederlandse achtergrond en 283 met een niet-Westerse achtergrond). Tegen de verwachting in had de interventie geen enkel effect op de schoolprestaties of het gedrag van leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond.

Vervolgens is de interventie opnieuw getest in groep 8, het laatste jaar van de basisschool ($N = 268$ leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond). Tijdens deze studie is er een derde conditie aan het originele paradigma toegevoegd, waarin leerlingen geholpen werden om te reflecteren op waarden die voor hen persoonlijk belangrijk waren. Opnieuw is er eerst een pilot studie uitgevoerd met een andere groep leerlingen uit groep 8 ($N = 237$; 47.3 procent Nederlandse achtergrond, 52.7 procent niet-Westerse achtergrond). Deze pilot studie bevestigde dat leerlingen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond inderdaad vaker dan leerlingen met een Nederlandse achtergrond dachten dat anderen negatieve stereotypen hadden over de intelligentie en het gedrag van hun etnische groep. De interventie had echter opnieuw geen effect.

In **Hoofdstuk 4** is een longitudinale studie uitgevoerd, waarin wederkerige associaties tussen de affectieve kwaliteit van de leerkracht-leerlingrelatie en het gedrag van de leerlingen werden onderzocht. Om *shared-informant bias* te voorkomen werden zowel leerkracht- als leerlingrapportages van zowel relatiekwaliteit als gedrag verzameld en werden er alleen *cross-informant* modellen geschat. Er werden drie dimensies van relatiekwaliteit (nabijheid, conflict en afhankelijkheid / negatieve verwachtingen) en drie gedragsdimensies

(internaliserend, externaliserend en prosociaal gedrag) gemeten. De deelnemers aan dit onderzoek waren leerlingen uit groep 8 met een niet-Westerse achtergrond ($N = 226$) en hun leerkrachten ($N = 12$). Omdat er maar twee meetmomenten waren is het niet mogelijk om met zekerheid vast te kunnen stellen dat de ene variabele de andere voorspelt. De resultaten suggereren echter dat afhankelijkheid van de leerkracht een voorspeller is van het gedrag van niet-Westerse leerlingen aan het einde van de basisschool, terwijl nabijheid en conflict binnen de relatie alleen uitkomsten lijken te zijn van het probleemgedrag van niet-Westerse leerlingen.

In **Hoofdstuk 5** zijn de resultaten van alle voorgaande hoofdstukken verder bediscussieerd. Verklaringen voor de afwezigheid van interventie-effecten zijn besproken. Resultaten van andere recente replicatiestudies lijken te bevestigen dat de effecten van de zelfaffirmatie interventie in het algemeen lastig te repliceren zijn, wat suggereert dat de effecten zeer fragiel zijn. De resultaten van de zelfaffirmatie studies in dit proefschrift laten bovendien zien dat het belangrijk is om de effectiviteit van onderwijsinterventies te testen in een nieuwe context, voordat deze op grote schaal kunnen worden ingevoerd.

Daarnaast werden in Hoofdstuk 5 nog een aantal andere ideeën besproken voor interventies die gelijkere kansen op school voor leerlingen met verschillende achtergronden beogen te creëren in Nederland. Op basis van de *cross-lagged* studie uit Hoofdstuk 4 werd gesteld dat leerlingen uit groep 8 met een niet-Westerse achtergrond zouden kunnen profiteren van een meer autonomie-ondersteunende stijl van lesgeven, om te voorkomen dat deze leerlingen te afhankelijk van hun leerkracht worden. Een meer autonomie-ondersteunende stijl van lesgeven zou kunnen voorkomen dat leerlingen internaliserend en externaliserend probleemgedrag ontwikkelen gedurende het schooljaar. Daarnaast werd gesteld dat leerkrachten wellicht ook een rol zouden kunnen spelen in het weerbaar maken van leerlingen tegen negatieve stereotypen. Door zich meer bewust te worden van hun impliciete attitudes ten opzichte van leerlingen kunnen leerkrachten hun reacties ten opzichte van leerlingen aanpassen. Dit zou ervoor kunnen zorgen dat leerlingen weerbaarder worden tegen negatieve stereotypen door hun leerkracht, in plaats van door een zelfaffirmatie interventie.

About the Author

Bettina de Jong was born on May 12, 1983. In 2001, she completed secondary education at Keizer Karel College in Amstelveen. In 2002, she started her bachelor of psychology at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, which she finished in 2005. She completed the two-year international Research Master of Social Psychology at the Vrije Universiteit in 2007. During this master, she worked as a research assistant at the department of Social Psychology at the Vrije Universiteit. Her master thesis, supervised by Martijn van Someren, was about intergroup helping. After the research master, she also completed the Master of Organisational Psychology in 2010. During this master, she did an internship at an educational consultancy company, for which she also wrote her second master thesis. The main goal of this master thesis was to develop a model of factors that contribute to the choice of study path of lower vocational students in the Netherlands. During her studies, Bettina was a member of the Navigators Amsterdam, and she participated in different committees. After working for Reed Elsevier for a few months, she started as a PhD candidate at the department of Child Development and Education at the University of Amsterdam. She finished her PhD thesis in 2017. Currently, Bettina is working at the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Utrecht.