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Empirical Essays on Education and Health

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Empirical Essays on Education and Health

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor

aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam

op gezag van de Rector Magnificus

Prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom

ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties

ingestelde commissie,

in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel der Universiteit

op dinsdag 20 oktober 2009, te 14.00 uur

door Reyn Joris Gerard van Ewijk

geboren te Nijmegen

PROMOTIECOMMISSIE

Promotor: prof. dr. H. Oosterbeek
Co-promotor: prof. dr. P.J.C. Slegers

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prof. dr. S. Karsten
dr. S. McNally
prof. dr. E.J.S. Plug
dr. T.J. Roseboom

Faculteit der Economie en Bedrijfskunde

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Working on the thesis that lies before you, has enabled me to combine several of my long-standing passions: doing quantitative applied research, blending knowledge and techniques from different fields, and working on socially relevant topics. I started my PhD at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, where my research focused on education, particularly on the effects of school composition on achievement (peer effects). The results of this initial period appear in the last two chapters of this thesis. But at the same time, I also had a supervisor at the Faculty of Economics and Business and I attended courses at the Tinbergen Institute's research master in Economics, which proved to be very valuable and stimulating for me. Reading not only social scientific, but also economic literature, my research interests gradually turned more and more into the direction of economics. When, about halfway during my PhD, Hessel Oosterbeek asked me if I would like to have an office at his Economics of Education group, I did not need to hesitate. A large part of my research here remained focused on educational issues, as Chapter 3 bears witness to. But, like in the previous projects, an interdisciplinary focus remained. Studying whether teachers give ethnic minority students different grades for the same work than they would have given to ethnic majority students, I tried to combine economic research with psychological theories. My last research project (which appears in Chapter 2), went into a somewhat different direction. Initially intending to study a more education-related topic, I stumbled on results that I found too exciting and important to leave them for what they were, but which were not related to education anymore, but only to health. Thanks to the support of my supervisors, I was able to pursue this research on the long-term health effects on the next generation of Ramadan fasting during pregnancy further. This project, finally, brought me into a field of overlap between econometric research methods and medical theories.

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