

Gender Inequality in Dutch Secondary Education

Aim

To investigate the role of gender-culture among peers as a substantive explanation for gender inequalities in Dutch secondary schools and explore variations according to students' family background and composition and organization of the school.

Theoretical background

This PhD project is part of a project entitled 'Gender inequality in Dutch secondary education: how the peer and school context influence students' anti-academic attitudes, behaviour and grades' funded by the Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO) within the framework of the Netherlands Cohort Study on Education (NCO).

Why boys perform less well in education than girls in most Western countries is a hotly contested question among scientists, policymakers and educational professionals. Boys, for example, repeat grades, get suspended and drop out of school more often than girls (De Onderwijsraad, 2020). Achievement differences between girls and boys typically arise in secondary education where boys develop more anti-academic attitudes and behaviours and eventually receive lower grades than girls (Buchmann et al., 2008; De Onderwijsraad, 2020; Heyder et al., 2021). Explaining what causes this inequality in attitudes, behaviour and achievement in secondary education is therefore a pressing issue.

Prior studies established that during adolescence, peers in school significantly affect students' attitudes, behavior and achievement. The extent to which this is gendered predominantly is investigated in qualitative studies (e.g. Jackson & Dempster, 2009). Overall, these show that boys are not performing as well because norms about gender-appropriate attitudes and behaviors restrict boys' opportunities to achieve their scholastic potential.

In the PhD project 'An intersectional and contextual perspective on gendered peer influence in secondary school' you will specifically zoom in on variations in gendered peer influence among students from different socioeconomic and migration backgrounds and between schools. You will answer questions such as: Do gender gaps in attitudes, behaviour and achievement vary according to student background and school composition and quality? To what extent can variations be explained by gendered peer cultures? Are some students more susceptible to the gendered peer culture in school than others?

Research design

You will answer these questions by analysing newly collected survey data, which you will link to CBS register data, using advanced statistical methods (multilevel regression models, structural equation models). We will gather new survey-data to add unique information to the Netherlands Cohort Study on Education. Field work agency KBA Nijmegen will collect data among 16 year old students in VMBO, HAVO and VWO tracks in Dutch secondary schools.

Proficiency in Dutch is required for this project.

Literature

Buchmann, C., DiPrete, T.A., & McDaniel, A. (2008). Gender inequalities in education. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, 319-337.

De Onderwijsraad. (2020). Een verkenning van sekseverschillen in het onderwijs (Nr. 20200161/1175). Den Haag: De Onderwijsraad.

Heyder, A., van Hek, M., & Van Houtte, M. (2021). When gender stereotypes get male adolescents into trouble: A longitudinal study on gender conformity pressure as a predictor of school misconduct. *Sex Roles*, 84(1), 61-75.

Jackson, C., & Dempster, S. (2009). 'I sat back on my computer... with a bottle of whisky next to me': constructing 'cool' masculinity through 'effortless' achievement in secondary and higher education. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 18(4), 341-356.

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