

**Identity Construction and
Aspiration - Encouraging sense
of belonging among ethnic
minority students**

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Content

Context & Background

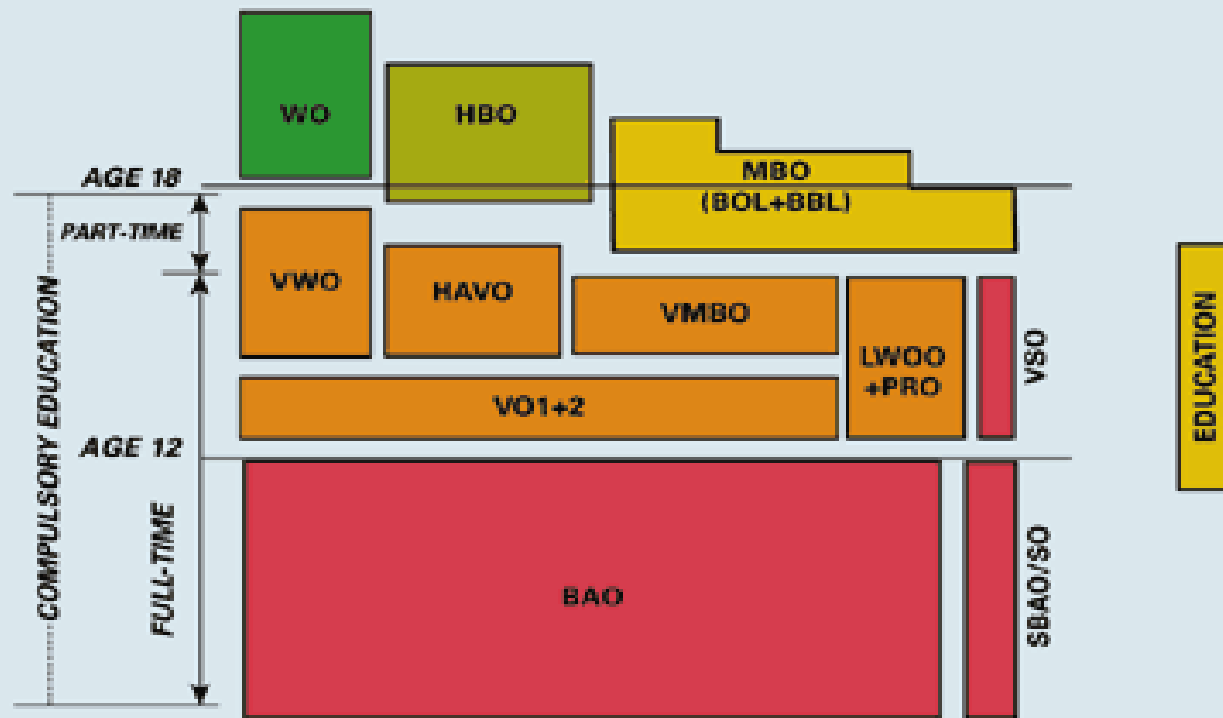
- Dutch context
- Research
- Challenging diversity
- Celebrating success

Interactive workshop

Dutch Context

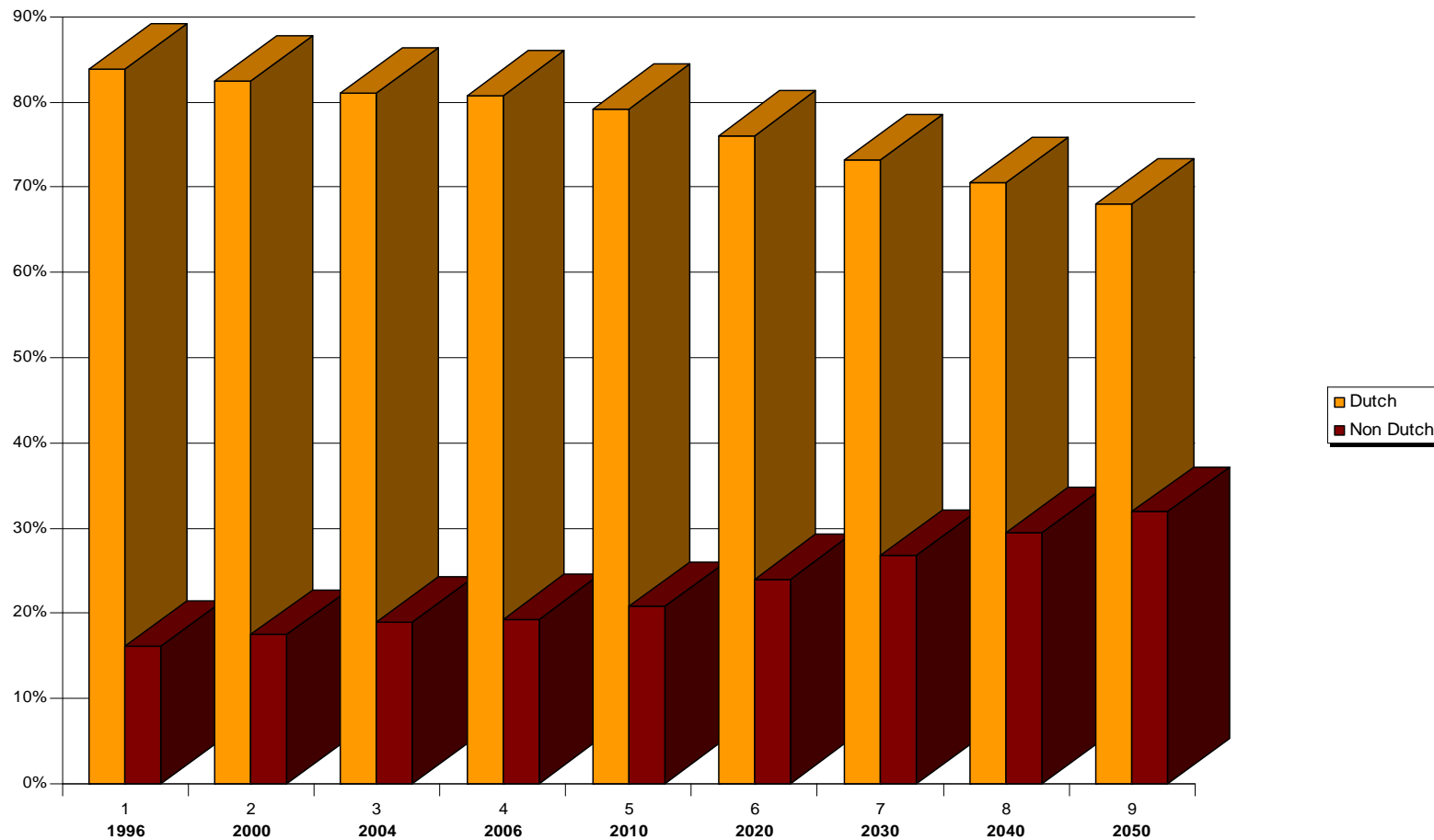
Education in the Netherlands

The Dutch education system



The Netherlands 1996 – 2050

Population in the Netherlands by Dutch and Non Dutch 1996 - 2050

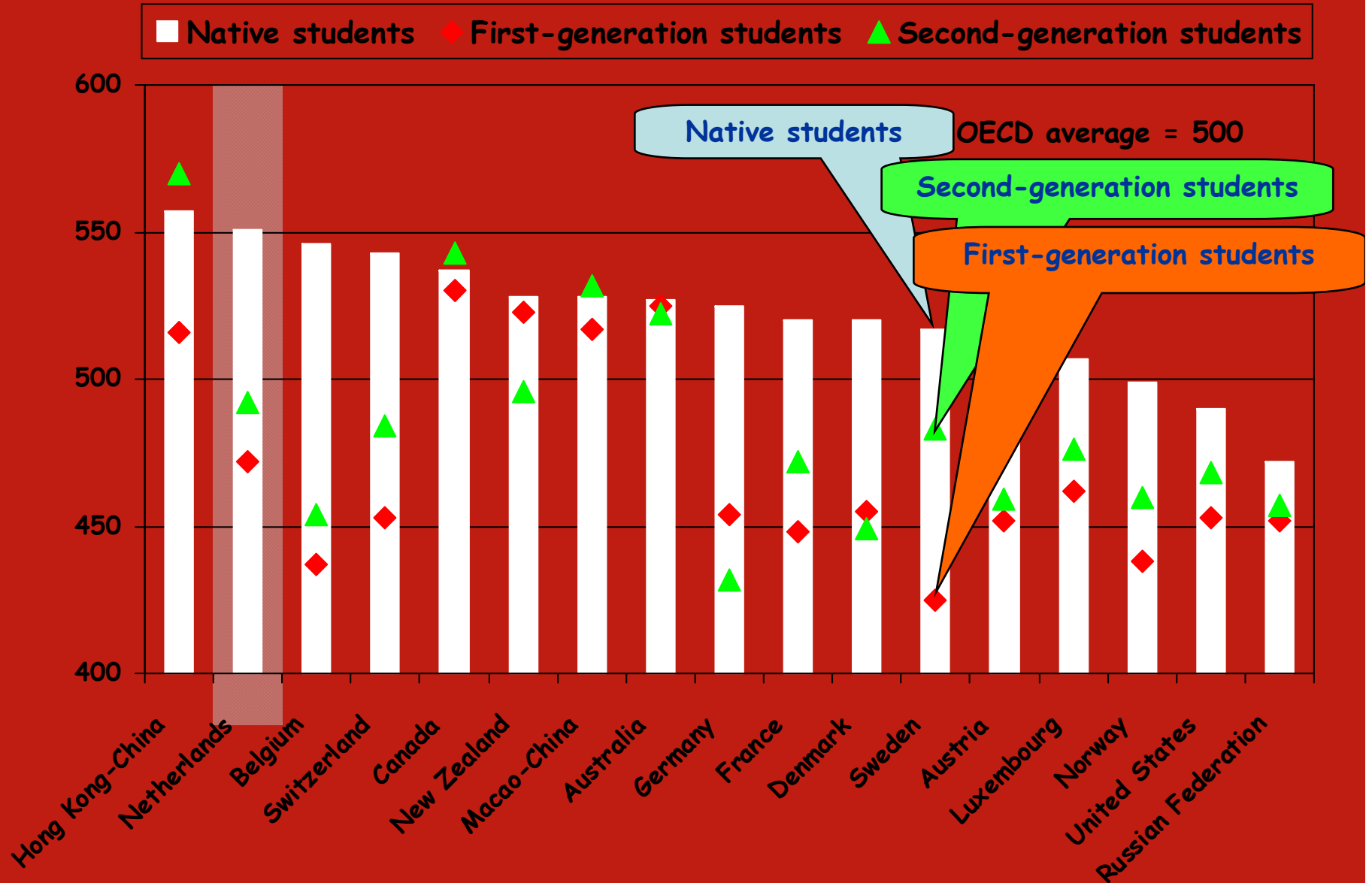


Source: Central Bureau for the Statistics

Share of ethnic minorities in urban education

- Primary education → 70%
- Secondary education → 45%
- Higher education → 30%

Mathematics performance



Where immigrant students succeed - A comparative review of performance and engagement in PISA 2003: Figure 2.2a.

OECD: Thematic review of Dutch tertiary education

For those who have the right preparation, are the right age, and have the right kind of family situation, there are abundant opportunities within the tertiary education system of the Netherlands.

But potential students from underserved groups who lack necessary language skills, educational preparation, or have no family members to support them, have more difficulty entering the system

OECD

- In most countries there is **little information to assess the extent of inequities** in tertiary education and there is **little emphasis on equity of outcomes**
- There is **strong evidence** that access to and participation in tertiary education is associated with the **socioeconomic background** of students
- Some countries face **challenges** in making tertiary education accessible to **students with an immigrant background**
- The **inclusion of ethnic minorities** poses serious challenges in some countries

Research

Research

- TIES network

TIES policy brief (2009) on '*The Second Generation in Europe. Education and the Transition to the Labour Market*' www.tiesproject.eu

- Severiens, Wolff en Rezai (2007). '*Diversity in learning communities. Stimulating learning environments for ethnic minority students*', Utrecht: Echo.
- Wolff en Crul (2002). '*Stayers and leavers in higher education. Reasons for dropping out of ethnic minority students*'. Utrecht: Echo.

Aim **TIES** The Integration of the European Second generation

To address issues of **structural integration** by comparing the educational and labour market positions of the same **second generation (18 – 35)** groups of **Turkish, Moroccan and ex-Yugoslavian** across 8 countries and 15 cities

Integration into what?

TIES

- Age at which education begins
- Number of face to face contact hours
- Age of selection
- Pre academic tracks vs vocational tracks
- Segregation in education
- School climate
- Support by parents and siblings

Qualitative research initiated by ECHO

Wolff & Crul (2002). 'Stayers and leavers in higher education. Reasons for dropping out of ethnic minority students'. Utrecht: Echo.

- Study motivation
- Social integration
- Academic integration

Qualitative research initiated by ECHO

Severiens, Wolff & Rezai (2007). 'Diversity in learning communities. Stimulating learning environments for ethnic minority students', Utrecht: Echo.

- Stimulating learning environment
- Sense of belonging
- Inclusive school climate → diversity policy and practice

Areas of intervention

- System of education
- Learning environment
- Background individual, support system and network in community and family
- Image

Challenging diversity

Challenging diversity

- By accepting that not all students have the same kind of social and cultural capital
- By acknowledging students identity development and the way they negotiated dominant discourses
- By creating a sustainable culture of excellence through support
- By creating a sustainable culture of transfer
- By creating a culture of dialogue and (ex)change
- By celebrating success

Pedagogy of excellence

- High expectations → building on students strengths instead of deficiencies
- High level of support (peer mentoring, -tutoring, -counseling)
- Creating a culture of transfer in collaboration with higher education institutions
- Creating a school climate where students feel included and involved → create a sense of belonging
- Awareness on students cultural and social identity

Results

- Increase in access of NW migrant students
- Increase of retention in the first two years of higher education
- Closing gap in retention rates of native Dutch and migrant students
- Increasing awareness on the strength of a diverse student population → mainstreaming
- (Inter)national networks of change agents
- Retention strategy based on the pedagogy of excellence being imbedded in institutional policy and national policy

Areas of intervention

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Celebrating excellence and civic
engagement on a student level

ECHO Foundation



ECHO Foundation

- Awarding accomplishments and perseverance of the many successful migrant students → ECHO Award
- Awarding active civic engagement among students
- Creating a process for institutions to present their most successful migrant students and to be able to be proud of them
- Creating a community of ECHO Ambassadors, change agents in their communities, institutions and society
- Connecting new leaders to nowadays leaders in society
- Creating leadership development opportunities

‘Happiness exists to be shared’

by Sharo Mohamed

“The ECHO-award has provided me with the unique experience and vital skill of Leadership. I have learned, by discussing with the many Somali youth and women that I have inspired, *that leadership is not a one-day thing. It is a constant commitment. A commitment to excellence, a habit . . . a daily practice.* Leadership is the ability to get extraordinary achievement from ordinary people, creating a vision, articulating that vision, passionately owning the vision, and relentlessly driving it to completion. I believe it's never too late to be what you might have been.”

Workshop

Interactive workshop to present our model

- Theoretical Framework
- Getting to know each other
- Identity & Identity Construction
- Capitalize identity development
- Identity CV

Objective of Training Program

Develop a better sense of belonging among ethnic minority students, not only at school/ university but in society at large, encourage ambition bases on self awareness & self-esteem

A sense of belonging will be created by including modules in curricula that support students from diverse backgrounds in their process of identity construction.

We approach diversity by creating a culture of excellence, recognizing the added value of difference in our teachings and supporting students to revalidate their 'social capital'

Target group:

- Ethnic minority students in higher education (as part of their curriculum)
- But adaptable and applicable to different sections in the education pipeline (including primary and secondary students)

The training program:

The theoretical framework of the training program is derived from

1. Social Identity Theory
2. Migration History
3. Stereotype Threat Theory

All participants receive a reader with articles on the theoretical framework and examples of 'life histories' written by students during prior trainings.

Social Identity Theory

- Students generally don't know there is research on identity development of minorities in majority surrounding.
- Students are not aware of the influence on their own Identity Construction

Migration History

- Students are generally unaware of the Migration History of The Netherlands
- Students are unaware of their own migration history
- Students are unaware of political and policy developments around migration in the last 50 years

Stereotype Threat Theory

- Stereotypes are constantly being confirmed: groups of Moroccan males hanging out on the street making lot of noise are criminals.
- People confirm stereotypical behaviour when they feel stereotypes are being adressed. Moroccan males start provoking.

Provide a theoretical framework
for experiences of students.

Validate their experiences
academically in a positive way.

Learning outcomes are
ingredients for further self
development

Getting to know each other

Who do you think I am?

Why do you think so?

By law we are all equal (ratio) but
our (subconscious) internal
beliefs are not always equal
(emotion)

Images always matter:
Susan Boyle (filmfragment)

Who are you?



Relation between Susan Boyle & our minority Students

Our National context

The Netherlands is a multicultural society

One of every five Dutch citizens
has an ethnic minority background
(2006)

Ethnic minorities Netherlands

- Caribbean
- Morocco
- Surinam
- Turkey
- Newcomers and refugees (Africa, Asia, Middle East, Balkan)

Ethnic Minorities are

- More likely to start secondary school at vocational focused tracks
- Underrepresented in the advanced secondary tracks that lead to Higher Education
- More likely to have difficulties transferring from a vocational track towards Higher Education

What is the cause?

- Expectations matter
- Believing in potential of students matters
- Academic & Social Support matters
- Opportunities matter

The best intentions are there but not always executed in the right way

Summarizing:

Ethnic minority students in The Netherlands encounter more/different barriers in (higher) education and on the labour market compared to native Dutch students

Some Student Characteristics

- First generation
- Low-income groups
- Migration History
- Lack of confidence in potential
- *Unaware of talent/ social capital*

Factors that Influence self-image of minority students

1. Exclusive curricula, early tracking
2. Lack of good support & transfer system
3. Few role models in university staff & society
4. (Perceived) discrimination
5. Few fellow students with similar background
6. Negative discourse on ethnic minorities

Negative discourse on ethnic Minorities

Autochtony - Allochtony
Insider - Outsider
Native - Migrant

Effect:

Students lack sense of belonging
Students lack academic confidence

What is expected of me?

How can you capitalize
social and cultural capital of ethnic
minority students
to create a sense of belonging
among students and for students to
become more effective and
motivated in study and career?

**Include identity development in
curriculum**

What are your thoughts about
identity?

Identity

- Identity is about who you are and what you stand for;
- Identity is continuously in development;
- Identity development is personal growth;
- You can capitalize personal growth.



Yasmin



Identity

- Not static but context bound and has multiple aspects
- Identity is influenced by different things like environment (context) and (family) history
- You can use aspects of identity strategically

Who define your context?

- Family

- Political debat



- General opinion

- Media

- Others



- You

- You

- You

- You

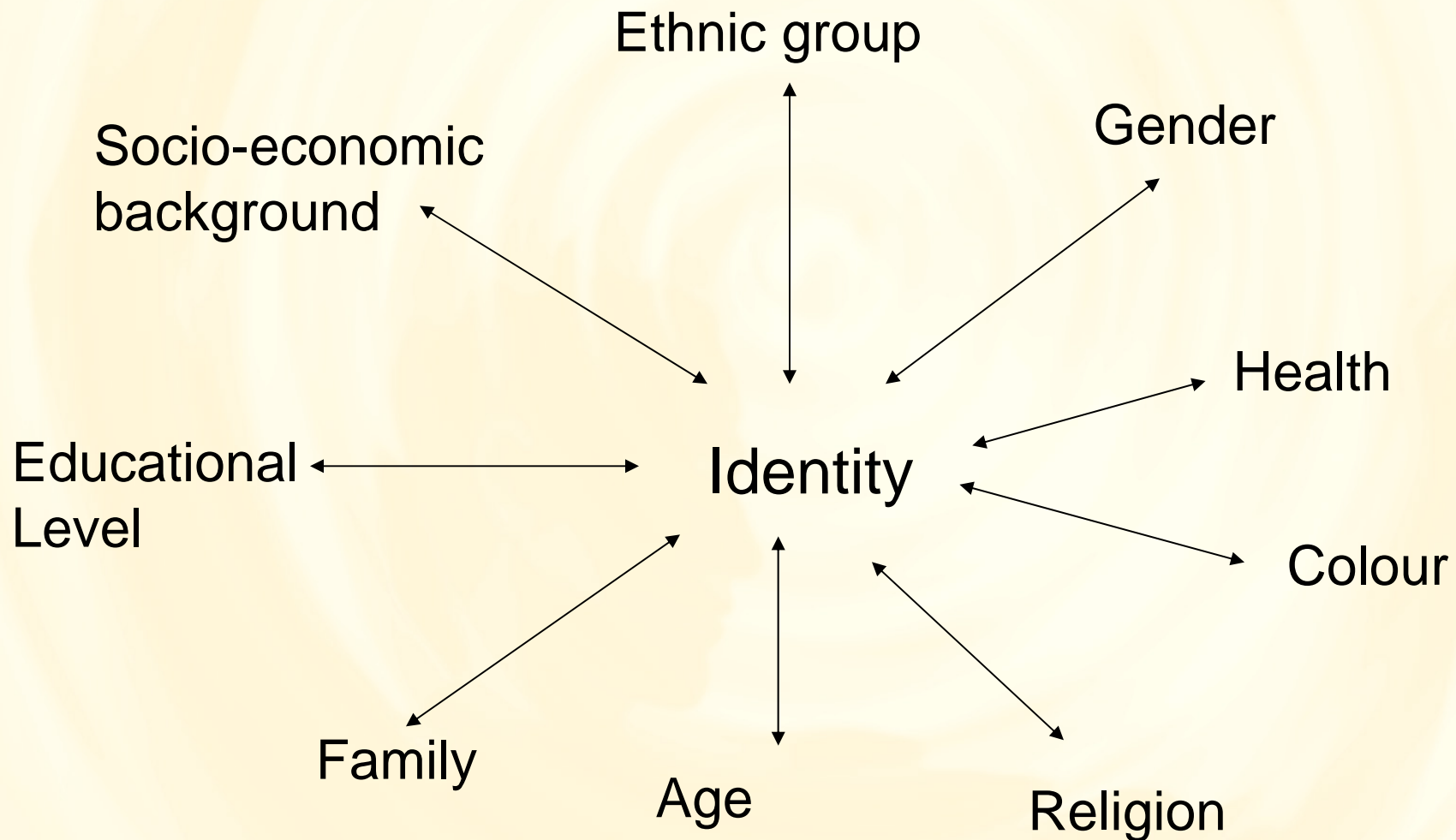
- You

How do you feel about the political
debate?

What effect does it have on you?

Do you feel included when the
prime-minister says 'we'?

Aspects Identity CV



Only addressing one aspect of
someone's identity
is minimalizing someone's
personality

Freedom writers:

Do you recognize this?

- All students recognize this experience in this way

also the other way around:

- We are the same, I am colourblind
- You are not an ethnic minority

Context decides what is important

- You are different at home
- You are different at school/university/work
- You are different among your friends
- You are different when you are in love
- You are different when you have lost

Importance of analyzing identity

- For everyone
- Revalue who you are
- Use strategically / capitalize

How do people use their identity?

- Appearance – authority: He looks like a president
- Feminism
- Style of clothing

- Being different in a homogeneous group, opportunity to celebrate diversity!

Looking at your background

What have you experienced as
an enrichment or a difficulty?

Analyzing Identity Development (draft)

- Look at the questions
- Write down your first associations
- Bullet points
- Start writing your biography
- Narrow it down to a personal description
5-6 lines

- When did you first become aware you belong to an ethnic minority group
- How old were you?
- Can you describe the effect it had on you?

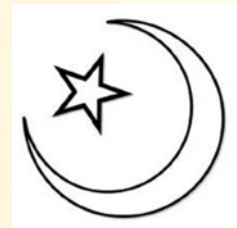


- What did you do with this experience?
- In what way were you able to give a new value to your cultural identity?
- Were you able to accept this Part of your identity?



What other aspects of your identity are important to you?

- Gender
- Socio-economic background
- Age
- Religion
- Political Background
- Family



From bullet points to personal description:

- Eldest of 2 children
- Migration from Eritrea, age 2
- Warm family environment
- Conflicting ideas
- Common ground → connection for living and working together
- Creativity
- Service minded
- Open minded



Personal description:

The eldest of two children. Migrated as a two year old with my parents from Eritrea. Arrived in NL, my sister and I were brought up in a warm environment. As a young child I learned that people have opposite views and that similarities are the key for living and working together. I pursue progress on every level using my qualities: creativity, service and open mindedness.

From bullet points to personal description:

- Motivation
- Perseverance
- Service Minded
- Flexibility
- Empathatic
- Giving back to my community
- Info point for my community
- Translator



Personal description:

Through my motivation and perseverance I am able to develop myself in different areas. Through my service mindedness, flexibility and empathy I can help people find their place in the complexity of Dutch society. It is important for me to give back to my community. In my neighborhood I am a contact point for the Turkish community. Helping people with writing official letters, filling out forms, how to apply for services; and act as a translator if necessary.

Experience with Identity Development

1. Aspiration workshops at high schools
2. Training program graduating student in transfer to labour market
3. Writing Masterclass / Narrating Identity

Methodological insights

1. Provided students with the historical, political and cultural framework to put their own process of identity construction in perspective,
2. Enabled them to take control of their process of identity construction
3. Enabled them to understand how and why other groups of people construct different identities.

Methodological insights

4. Open attitude to 'Self' and 'Other'
5. Sharing and discussing biographic narratives contributes to a better understanding of the 'self' and of other people's background and place in society but also to the awareness of shared commonalities.
6. This brings forth an open attitude towards diversity on ethnic, socio-economic and other grounds.

Thank you for your attention

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