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Summary

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Bullying Contextualized:

Changing the Group Process by Changing Outsiders' Involvement

In **Chapter One** the theoretical background for the school bullying dynamics was outlined. First of all, bullying was contextualized as a group process in which several different types of behavior could be distinguished. Secondly, outsiders' potential role in changing the social dynamics of bullying was clarified. Finally, a brief prelude to the empirical chapters of this thesis was given.

In **Chapter Two** an empirical study on the social cognitions of outsiders and defenders about their intervention strategies in response to witnessed victimization events was described. The main question under investigation was how outsiders and defenders think about behaving when confronted with imaginary witnessed victimization scenarios. And what is the role of different competence beliefs or of friendship selectivity in provictim intervention. The results showed that friendship selectivity did not differentiate outsiders from defenders, that is, both claimed an intervention preference for victimized friends. With regards to competence, defenders — compared with outsiders — claimed to be more likely and better able to perform direct intervention. No competence differences were found for indirect intervention, but outsiders — compared with defenders — claimed to be more likely to perform indirect interventions. Moreover, outsiders — compared with defenders — also expressed a lower ability to cope with the consequences of being victimized themselves. These findings suggest that outsiders — like defenders — have the intention to help victimized classmates *and* that they already do so at the cognitive level, at least by using indirect intervention strategies. With a view to intervention strategies, the findings suggest that outsiders need to be persuaded to act in accordance with their cognitions.

In **Chapter Three** an empirical study on the social cognitions of outsiders and defenders about the antecedents of their provictim interventions in response to (imaginary) witnessed victimization events was described. Based on the social psychological theories on bystanders' behavior in response

to emergency situations, the main question under investigation was whether students' provictim intervention decision was based on a cost-reward analysis or on an analysis based on the presence and reactions of others in the witnessed victimization event. The results showed that neither a cost-reward analysis nor a social-situational analysis could fully explain students' behavioral reputation as outsider or defender. However, awareness of victim's distress caused by victimization and a moral commitment to the victim's fate (i.e., experiencing feelings of guilt and shame for not helping the victim) were positive predictors for students' defender reputation. With a view to intervention strategies, the findings suggest that outsiders' awareness need to be increased, both with regards to the negative consequences of victimization on victims and with regards to their own role in the (dis)continuation of victimization. Outsiders need to be aware of the fact that their victimization-avoidant behavior can reinforce the bullies' behaviors.

In **Chapter Four** an empirical study on outsiders' and defenders' actual (daily reported) behavioral response to witnessed victimization events was described. The main question under investigation was whether students' behavioral reputation as outsider — despite previous findings of their occasional performed and believed defensive behaviors — could be explained by their actual provictim intervention behavior. Do students with an outsider reputation intervene less conspicuously or only selectively for friends, *or* do they cognitively overestimate their actual behavior in response to witnessed victimization events. The results showed that — regardless of friendship connection to the victim — students' outsider reputation is related to their nonintervention behavior, while having a defender reputation is related to actually performing indirect interventions. With a view to intervention strategies, the findings suggest that the differences between outsiders and defenders are only small and that outsiders could become defenders by increasing their awareness of indirect provictim intervention

strategies and how to execute them skillfully. Outsiders seem to cognitively overestimate their actual behavioral response to witnessed victimization events.

In **Chapter Five** an empirical study on differences in outsiders' and defenders' personality profiles was described. The main question under investigation was whether differences between students' behavioral reputation as outsider or defender could be explained by differential personality characteristics, based on the Big Five and on the Reinforcement Sensitivity models. The results showed that both students' reputation as outsider and defender was characterized by a prosocial nature, that is, by agreeableness. However, only students' outsider reputation was also characterized by introversion (lacking in dominance ambition), emotional stability (impulse control), punishment sensitivity and reward insensitivity. With a view to intervention strategies, these findings suggest that antibullying programs seeking to activate outsiders' defender potential should be aware of these personality tendencies and incorporate strategies to bypass them. Outsiders need to increase their social and emotional competence and resilience.

In **Chapter Six** a two-study empirical report on the longitudinal (in)stability of students' behavioral reputation as outsider in relation to their perceived popularity status was described. The main questions under investigation was whether students' outsider behavior remained at a stable level during the transition from middle childhood into adolescence and whether this (in)stability was related to their social dominance position and/or a change in peer group composition due to the transition from primary to secondary school. The results showed that a lack of social dominance related to students' future tendency to show outsider behavior *and* vice versa, while social dominance did not relate to their future tendency to show defender behavior *or* vice versa. Moreover, some students with an outsider reputation started to (also) show defender behavior over time, but this was unrelated to the

change in peer group composition due to school transition. With a view to intervention strategies, the findings suggested that outsiders' defender potential may be activated by using defenders as role models for behavioral change. Outsiders — at least some of them — are able to transcend their outsider niche and to activate their defender potential.

In **Chapter Seven** an empirical study on the practical application of an antibullying intervention — the Stand Strong: Interact training — that aimed at activating outsiders' defender potential by increasing their social and emotional resilience was described. The main question under investigation was whether Stand Strong: Interact could effectively reduce students' tendency to show outsider behavior, while at the same time increasing their tendency to show indirect defender behavior. The results showed that Stand Strong: Interact indeed effectively reduced students' tendency to show outsider behavior. While students' tendency to show indirect defender behavior did not increase, the normal decreases in indirect defender behavior — visible in the control sample — were counteracted by Stand Strong: Interact. These findings suggest that it is possible to effectively intervene in the bullying group process by focusing intervention efforts on a subgroup of classroom students and that outsiders can potentially be activated to support victims of bullying like defenders do.

In **Chapter Eight** the empirical findings obtained in Chapter Two through Seven were discussed in light of the main aims of this thesis as outlined in Chapter One. First, a theoretical framework for outsiders and their defender potential was created. The presented research suggests that outsiders are quite similar to defenders and that outsiders could become defenders by working on their social and emotional competence, and on within-classroom friendship connectivity. Second, practical and theoretical implications of the presented research were discussed. Finally, some recommendations for future practical and theoretical research were provided.



Dutch Summary | Samenvatting

Pesten Gecontextualiseerd:

**Het Veranderen van het Groepsproces door het Veranderen van de Betrokkenheid
van de Buitenstaanders**

In **Hoofdstuk Een** werd de theoretische achtergrond voor de pestdynamiek binnen de schoolcontext geschetst. Allereerst werd pesten gecontextualiseerd als een groepsproces waarbinnen verschillende soorten gedrag kunnen worden onderscheiden. Ten tweede werd de potentiële rol van buitenstaanders in het veranderen van de sociale dynamica rondom pesten verhelderd. Ten slotte werd een voorproefje gegeven van wat er in de empirische hoofdstukken van deze these aan bod zou komen.

In **Hoofdstuk Twee** werd een empirische studie naar de sociale cognities van buitenstaanders en verdedigers over hun interventiestrategieën in response op waargenomen pestsituaties beschreven. De hoofdvraag die bestudeerd werd was of buitenstaanders en verdedigers zich verschillend gedragen in waargenomen pestsituaties door verschillende gedachten over hun competentie in deze situaties of door vriendschapsselectiviteit in het ingrijpen voor slachtoffers. De resultaten lieten zien dat vriendschapsselectiviteit buitenstaanders en verdedigers niet van elkaar deed onderscheiden, dat wil zeggen, beiden claimden dat ze eerder zouden ingrijpen voor gevictimiseerde vrienden. Met betrekking tot competentie, claimden verdedigers — vergeleken met buitenstaanders — een hogere waarschijnlijkheid en een beter vermogen om directe ingrijpstrategieën uit te voeren. Voor indirect ingrijpen werden geen competentieverschillen gevonden, maar buitenstaanders — vergeleken met verdedigers — claimden een hogere waarschijnlijkheid om indirecte ingrijpstrategieën uit te voeren. Echter, buitenstaanders — vergeleken met verdedigers — gaven ook aan dat ze minder goed in staat waren om met de gevolgen van gepest worden om te gaan. De bevindingen suggereren dat buitenstaanders — net als verdedigers — de intentie hebben om gevictimiseerde klasgenoten te helpen *en* dat ze dit op het cognitieve niveau ook al doen, in ieder geval met betrekking tot indirecte ingrijpstrategieën. Voor de praktijk suggereren de bevindingen dat buitenstaanders moeten worden overtuigd om zich in overeenstemming met hun cognities te gedragen.

In **Hoofdstuk Drie** werd een empirische studie naar de sociale cognities van buitenstaanders en verdedigers over de antecedenten van hun pro-slachtoffer ingrijpgedrag in response op waargenomen peestsituaties beschreven. Gebaseerd op de sociaalpsychologische theorieën over het gedrag van omstanders in response op noodsituaties, was de hoofdvraag die bestudeerd werd of de pro-slachtoffer ingrijpbeslissing van leerlingen werd gebaseerd op een kosten-baten analyse of door een analyse gebaseerd op de aanwezigheid en reacties van andere getuigen in de waargenomen peestsituatie. De resultaten lieten zien dat zowel de kosten-baten analyse als de sociaal-situationele analyse niet volledig de gedragsreputatie van leerlingen als buitenstaander of als verdediger konden verklaren. Echter, bewustheid van de distress die het slachtoffer wordt aangedaan door het pesten en een moreel verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel voor het noodlot van het slachtoffer (d.w.z., waargenomen gevoelens van schuld en schaamte voor het niet helpen van het slachtoffer) waren positieve voorspellers voor de verdediger reputatie van leerlingen. Voor de praktijk suggereren deze bevindingen dat de bewustheid van buitenstaanders moet worden verhoogd, zowel als het aankomt op de negatieve gevolgen van pesten op slachtoffers als wanneer het aankomt op hun eigen rol in de (dis)continuïteit van victimizatie. Buitenstaanders moeten zich bewust worden van het feit dat hun peestsituatie vermijdende gedrag het gedrag van de pesters kan versterken.

In **Hoofdstuk Vier** werd een empirische studie naar de daadwerkelijke (dagelijks gerapporteerde) gedragsmatige response van buitenstaanders en verdedigers op waargenomen peestsituaties beschreven. De hoofdvraag die bestudeerd werd was of de gedragsreputatie van leerlingen als buitenstaander — ondanks eerdere bevindingen over hun incidenteel uitgevoerde en veronderstelde verdedigende gedragingen — kon worden verklaard door hun daadwerkelijke pro-slachtoffer ingrijpgedrag. Grijpen leerlingen met een buitenstaander reputatie minder opvallend of alleen selectief voor vrienden in, *of* overschatten ze op cognitief niveau hun daadwerkelijke

gedragsmatige response op waargenomen pestsituaties. De resultaten lieten zien dat — ongeacht de vriendschapsconnectie met het slachtoffer — de buitenstaander reputatie van leerlingen gerelateerd is aan hun non-ingrijpgedrag, terwijl het hebben van een verdediger reputatie gerelateerd is aan daadwerkelijk uitgevoerde indirecte ingrijpstrategieën. Voor de praktijk suggereren deze bevindingen dat de verschillen tussen buitenstaanders en verdedigers slechts klein zijn en dat buitenstaanders verdedigers kunnen worden door het vergroten van hun bewustheid op het gebied van indirecte pro-slachtoffer strategieën en hoe deze bekwaam kunnen worden uitgevoerd. Buitenstaanders lijken op cognitief niveau hun daadwerkelijke gedragsmatige response op waargenomen pestsituaties te overschatten.

In **Hoofdstuk Vijf** werd een empirische studie naar verschillen in de persoonlijkheidsprofielen van buitenstaanders en verdedigers beschreven. De hoofdvraag die werd bestudeerd was of verschillen in de gedragsreputatie van leerlingen als buitenstaander of verdediger konden worden verklaard door verschillen in persoonlijkheidskarakteristieken, gebaseerd op de *Big Five* en op de *Reinforcement Sensitivity* modellen. De resultaten lieten zien dat zowel de gedragsreputatie van leerlingen als buitenstaander en als verdediger te karakteriseren waren door een prosociale aard, dat wil zeggen, door vriendelijkheid/altruïsme. Echter, alleen de gedragsreputatie van leerlingen als buitenstaander was ook te karakteriseren door introversie (een gebrekkig streven naar dominantie), emotionele stabiliteit (impuls controle), strafgevoeligheid en beloningsongevoeligheid. Voor de praktijk suggereren deze bevindingen dat antipestprogramma's die het verdedigerspotential van buitenstaanders willen promoten, zich bewust moeten zijn van deze persoonlijkheidstendensen en strategieën moeten includeren om ze te kunnen omzeilen. Buitenstaanders moeten versterkt worden in hun sociale en emotionele competentie en weerbaarheid.

In **Hoofdstuk Zes** werd een twee-studie empirisch rapport over de longitudinale (in)stabiliteit van de gedragsmatige reputatie van buitenstaanders in relatie tot hun waargenomen populariteit beschreven. De hoofdvragen die werden bestudeerd waren of de gedragsmatige reputatie van buitenstaanders op een stabiel niveau blijft gedurende de transitie van de middelkindertijd naar de adolescentie en of deze (in)stabiliteit gerelateerd was aan hun sociale dominantiepositie en/of de veranderende sociale groepscontext als gevolg van de transitie van de basisschool naar de middelbare school. De resultaten lieten zien dat een gebrek aan sociale dominantie gerelateerd was aan de toekomstige neiging van leerlingen om buitenstaandergedrag te vertonen *en* andersom, terwijl sociale dominantie niet gerelateerd was aan hun toekomstige neiging om verdedigergedrag te vertonen *of* andersom. Bovendien vertoonden sommige leerlingen met een buitenstaander reputatie na verloop van tijd (ook) verdedigergedrag, maar dit was ongerelateerd aan de veranderende sociale groepscontext door de schooltransitie. Voor de praktijk suggereren deze bevindingen dat het verdedigerspotentiaal van buitenstaanders geactiveerd zou kunnen worden door het gebruik van verdedigers als rolmodellen voor gedragsverandering. Buitenstaanders — in ieder geval sommigen van hen — zijn in staat om hun veilige buitenstaander positie te overstijgen en om hun verdedigerspotentiaal te activeren.

In **Hoofdstuk Zeven** werd een empirische studie naar de praktijktoepassing van een antipest-interventie — de Sta Sterk Training — die zich richt op het activeren van het verdedigerspotentiaal van buitenstaanders door hun sociale en emotionele weerbaarheid te vergroten beschreven. De hoofdvraag die bestudeerd werd was of de Sta Sterk Training effectief het buitenstaandergedrag van leerlingen kon doen afnemen en tegelijkertijd het indirecte verdedigergedrag van deze leerlingen kon laten toenemen. De resultaten lieten zien dat de Sta Sterk Training inderdaad effectief de neiging van leerlingen om buitenstaandergedrag te vertonen deed afnemen. Hoewel de neiging van studenten om indirect verdedigergedrag te vertonen niet toenam, werd de normale afname in indirect

verdedigergedrag — zichtbaar in de controlegroep — wel tegengewerkt als gevolg van de Sta Sterk Training. Deze bevindingen suggereren dat het mogelijk is om effectief te interveniëren in het pest groepsproces door de focus van interventie te plaatsen op een klassensubgroep en dat buitenstaanders potentieel geactiveerd kunnen worden om slachtoffers van pesten te ondersteunen zoals verdedigers doen.

In **Hoofdstuk Acht** werden de in Hoofdstuk Twee tot Zeven verkregen bevindingen bediscussieerd in het licht van de hoofddoelstellingen van deze these zoals beschreven in Hoofdstuk Een. Allereerst werd een theoretisch raamwerk omtrent buitenstaanders en hun verdedigerspotentiaal gecreëerd. Het gepresenteerde onderzoek suggereert dat buitenstaanders en verdedigers veel op elkaar lijken en dat buitenstaanders verdedigers kunnen worden door te werken aan hun sociale en emotionele competentie, als ook door te werken aan vriendschapsverbindingen binnen schoolklassen. Ten tweede werden praktische en theoretische implicaties van het gepresenteerde onderzoek bediscussieerd. Ten slotte werden een aantal aanbevelingen voor toekomstig praktijk en theorie onderzoek besproken.

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The list with “specific mentions” starts in the academic world.

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The list with “specific mentions” ends in the personal world.

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Curriculum Vitae

Jeroen Pronk was born on May 29th 1984 in Maassluis, Netherlands. He graduated from secondary school in 2003 and enrolled in a Bachelor program in Psychology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. He obtained his Bachelor degree in Psychology in 2006, after having conducted his thesis research under the guidance of Dr. Diane Pecher. Subsequently he enrolled in a Master program in Biological and Cognitive Psychology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. He obtained his Master degree in Biological and Cognitive Psychology in 2008, after having conducted his thesis research under the guidance of Dr. Diane Pecher and Dr. Liselotte Gootjes. After a short sabbatical period, he started a PhD program at the departments of Educational Neuroscience and Clinical Child and Family Studies at VU University Amsterdam in December 2010 under the guidance of Dr. Frits Goossens and Dr. Tjeert Olthof. During this PhD program, he obtained a Talent Grant from VU University Amsterdam to visit the Adolescent Peer Relations Lab of Dr. Adrienne Nishina at University of California Davis in the United States as a research fellow for a period of four months in 2013. In January and February of 2015, he visited the research lab of Dr. Damanjit Sandhu at Punjabi University in India as a research fellow. Currently, Jeroen is involved in several ongoing research projects at VU University Amsterdam.

Publications

Published Articles

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Submitted Articles

Pronk, J., Olthof, T., & Goossens, F. A. Changing the Group Process by Changing Outsiders' Involvement: An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the "Stand Strong: Interact" Antibullying Intervention.

Pronk, J., Nishina, A., Olthof, T., & Goossens, F. A. Outsiders' and Defenders' Bullying-related Behavioral Reputation Versus Daily Self-reported Provictim Intervention Behavior.

In Preparation

Pronk J., Olthof, T., & Goossens, F. A. Perceived Popularity and Bullying-related Behavior: Longitudinal Pathways for Remaining an Outsider and not Becoming a Defender.

