This PhD thesis focuses on the epidemiology and origins of suicidal behavior. The research examined whether young South Asian-Surinamese, Turkish and Moroccan women in The Netherlands demonstrate suicidal ideation and suicidal behavior more often than Dutch majority women. Through an investigation of surveys, medical case files and life-story interviews, the relation of suicidal behavior to ethnicity and migration is explicated. The results transpire how the origins of suicidal behavior are social, cultural and individual in nature. For many minority women, the lack of autonomy and the denial of strategic life choices were central to their suicidal behavior. By contrast, the absence of connectedness in family relations was crucial to a suicide attempt for other minority women and Dutch majority women. The study reveals how suicidal behavior results from the interplay of autonomy, gender and social dimensions of selfhood in a multicultural society.

Diana van Bergen was a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology, VU University Amsterdam. Currently, she is a researcher at the Social and Cultural Planning Office in The Hague, The Netherlands.