The Ethnic Prejudice of Flemish Pupils: The Role of Pupils’ and Teachers’ Perceptions of Multicultural Teacher Culture

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Background/Context: As a result of migration processes, schools in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium) are notably ethnically diverse. This evolution has coincided with an increasing number of studies focusing on ethnic-minority pupils’ experiences of ethnic prejudice from their ethnic majority counterparts.

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: Taking into consideration the lack of research on the importance of cultural school features to students’ ethnic prejudice, this study investigates the association between a multicultural teacher culture and the ethnic prejudice of Flemish secondary school pupils. In addition, the analysis tests the mediating role of pupils’ perceptions of the multicultural educational practices of teachers and controls for individual and school characteristics that have been shown to be related to ethnic prejudice.

Population/Participants/Subject/Research Design: Multilevel analyses were carried out on data from 2,083 Flemish pupils and 636 teachers in 40 secondary schools, collected by means of a written questionnaire.

Findings/Results: The main finding of this study is that a more multicultural teacher culture is associated with reduced ethnic prejudice among Flemish pupils. However, the association between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice is mediated by pupils’ perceptions of multicultural teaching.

Conclusions/Recommendations: These findings highlight the importance of including macro factors, individual variables, and their interdependence when explaining ethnic prejudice. The findings also show that what matters most for reducing prejudice among pupils is not what teachers claim they do in terms of multicultural teaching, but pupils’ perceptions of what their teachers do in practice.

From the Second World War onward, Flanders (the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium) has developed into a multi-ethnic society. As a result of labor migration processes, migrant family reunification, and chain migration processes (Sierens, Van Houtte, Loobuyck, Delrue, & Pelleriaux, 2006; Vandyvulslager, Wets, Noppe, & Doyen, 2013), schools in Flanders are now notably ethnically diverse, particularly in urban areas (Brief et al., 2005; Desmedt & Nicaise, 2006). This evolution has coincided with an increasing number of studies focusing on the out-group attitudes of ethnic majority pupils, including their degree of ethnic prejudice. Research on this topic tends to focus on the victims (ethnic minority pupils) and the undesirable consequences of ethnic prejudice for them with regard to their motivation, mental health, and self-esteem (Sierens et al., 2006; Timmerman, Hermans, & Hoornaert, 2002; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003), but neglects the determinants of ethnic prejudice. The few studies that pay attention to the variability of ethnic prejudice among pupils tend to restrict their attention to individual-level characteristics, such as gender, socioeconomic status (SES), age, and level of education (Coenders, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2004; Vervoort, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2008). To date, research about the influence of school, teachers, and the importance of underlying processes has been notably scarce. However, these types of variables are important, in that school staff or policymakers have considerable control over the school’s processes and can change them more readily than they can change pupils’ characteristics (Marcoulides, Heck, & Papanastasiou, 2005).

Despite the finding that multicultural education in school is associated with improved democratic attitudes among majority pupils (Banks, 2009) and with enhanced intergroup relations (Agirdag, Merry, Van Houtte, 2016; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013; Zirkel, 2008), the association between multicultural teaching and pupils’ ethnic prejudice is rarely examined (for an exception, see Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). However, it is important to reduce ethnic prejudice, since Flanders has developed into a multi-ethnic society, but ethnic minorities in Flanders continue to experience discrimination and ethnic prejudice from the ethnic majority group on different domains, such as the labor and housing market and school (Verhaeghe, Van der Bracht, & Van de Putte, 2015; Vervaet, D’hondt, Van Houtte, & Stevens, 2016).

The school context is not only a place to study, but also a place where pupils learn to function in our (multicultural) society. Education is often seen as a key mechanism through which pupils learn to cope with the existing diversity and to develop a less prejudiced and respectful attitude towards ethnic minorities, for example by providing multicultural teaching (Luciak, 2006). Multicultural teaching in our study refers to the extent to which teachers use examples from a variety of cultures as illustrations in their discipline (Banks, 1989, 1993), which can stimulate ethnic majority pupils to develop more constructive and positive attitudes to cultural diversity. These more positive intercultural attitudes can in turn help to develop a more just society with less discrimination. Research shows that in primary schools, children’s perceptions of multicultural education mediate its impact on their prejudiced attitudes (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). The relative stability of ethnic attitudes during adolescence implies that secondary education is a theoretically...
interesting period for examining the association between multicultural teaching and ethnic prejudice (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). In addition, most of the existing research on multicultural education focuses on America, which calls for further research in different contexts, such as Flanders, where ethnic minorities experience prejudice and discrimination in education (Vervaet et al., 2016). The importance of MCT in the context of Belgium cannot be overstated in the light of the recent terrorist activities and increased radicalization of ethnic minority youth in Europe. Research has shown that ethnic minority youth may respond to ethnic prejudice by anti-social activities, such as radicalization (Bhui, Warfa, & Jones, 2014; Brondolo, Ver Halen, Pencille, Beatty, & Contrada, 2009). It is therefore crucial that teachers and teacher education programs in Belgium and similar contexts explore the potential of MCT to develop more positive attitudes towards diversity amongst ethnic majority students and empower ethnic minority students, in order to prevent them from turning to violence and anti-social activities in response to perceived injustices.

This study contributes to existing research into ethnic prejudice by examining the association between a multicultural teacher culture, pupils’ perceptions of teachers’ multicultural educational practices, and the ethnic prejudice of Flemish secondary school pupils. We control for ethnic school composition and various sociodemographic characteristics that have been shown to be related to ethnic prejudice.

ETHNIC PREJUDICE

Ethnic prejudice and ethnocentrism both refer to certain ideas and attitudes regarding ethnic out-groups (Elchardus & Siongers, 2009). Sumner (1906) describes ethnocentrism as a concept with a dual structure, including an overly negative attitude to the out-group together with an exaggerated positive attitude to the in-group. In this study, we use the term ethnic prejudice only referring to a negative attitude from the majority group to ethnic out-groups (De Witte, 1999; Quillian, 1995), because in Flanders, no strong relationship has been observed between a positive in-group attitude and a negative out-group attitude (Elchardus & Siongers, 2009). Moreover, previous research confirms the harmful consequences of negative attitudes from the majority group to the out-group for ethnic minorities (Sierens et al., 2006; Timmerman, Hermans, & Hoornaert, 2002; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Accordingly, the negative component of ethnocentrism is thought to be the most problematic (Billiet & De Witte, 1995; Elchardus & Siongers, 2009). Because negative out-group attitudes of ethnic majorities are undesirable for ethnic minorities (Elchardus & Siongers, 2009) and Flemish schools are becoming increasingly diverse, this study aims to explain the variability in the ethnic prejudice of ethnic majority pupils, specifically by examining multicultural teaching.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND MULTICULTURAL TEACHING

Multicultural education is conceptualized in various ways in educational research literature (Banks, 1989, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 1992). We use the theoretical contributions of James Banks (1989, 1993) to define the meaning of a multicultural teacher culture, because this conceptualization is the most widely used framework in the field of multicultural education (Bigler, 1999; Munroe & Pearson, 2006; Stanley, 1996). Moreover, Banks’ (1989, 1993) remarkably lucid conceptualization of multicultural education appears meaningful in the context of Flanders, because it offers a good representation of the way in which Flemish teachers understand and thus may implement multicultural teaching in school (Agirdag, et al., 2016).

BANKS’ MODEL OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Banks (1993) identifies five dimensions of multicultural education. Content integration refers to the extent to which teachers use examples from a variety of cultures as illustrations in their discipline. The second dimension, the knowledge construction process, describes how teachers help their pupils to understand that scientists create knowledge and how this knowledge construction is influenced by the positions of individuals and groups. Prejudice reduction defines strategies to support pupils to develop more democratic attitudes and values. Equity pedagogy, the fourth dimension, exists when teachers take the initiative to improve the academic achievement of pupils from low-status population groups. The last dimension refers to restructuring the organization and culture of a school, creating an empowering school culture, and producing educational equality for pupils from any racial, ethnic, and social-class group.

Banks (1989) further identifies four approaches to multicultural content integration. In the same way as a stage theory, each approach implies an improvement over the previous one. The contribution approach is the easiest way to incorporate multicultural content in the curriculum. Ethnic role models and discrete cultural artefacts such as food, holidays, and music are added to the mainstream curriculum. The additive approach refers to the addition of content or themes, such as a book or film, still viewing the ethnic content from the perspective of the mainstream. The transformative approach changes the fundamental goals and structure of the curriculum, and therefore differs from the previous approaches. Through the interaction of diverse cultural elements from various groups, pupils learn to view issues from different perspectives and extend their understanding of the multicultural society. Lastly, the social action approach includes teachers’ efforts to empower pupils and educate them with regard to social action and decision-making skills.

Many teachers’ understanding of multicultural teaching in Flemish schools as well as other contexts (Agirdag, et al., 2016), is limited to the content integration dimension (Banks, 1993). Moreover, content integration is probably the most widely implemented, but least studied, aspect of multicultural education (Zirkel, 2008). Therefore, in this article we use the term multicultural teaching to refer to Banks’ conceptualization of content integration: the extent to which teachers use examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principals, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline (Banks, 1993).
Because pupils in secondary schools are tutored by a variety of teachers during the school year, it makes sense to examine the impact of the wider teacher culture on pupils’ outcomes (Van Houtte & Demanet, 2016). Teacher cultures arise because after a while, teachers in the same school develop shared work-related values and ideas about education and school (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, 1992). Teachers’ instructional methods in this study, the practice of multicultural teaching can be seen as an expression or manifestation of the prevalent teacher culture (Schein, 1984). Therefore, we do not focus on the multicultural teaching practice of individual teachers, but instead on the effects of the overall multicultural teacher culture.

MULTICULTURAL TEACHER CULTURE AND PUPILS’ ETHNIC PREJUDICE

By considering teachers’ instructional practice as an evident manifestation of the teacher culture, it can be linked to various individual pupil outcomes (Van Houtte, 2002). There is considerable evidence that multicultural teaching improves intergroup relations and out-group attitudes (Stephan & Vogt, 2004; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013; Zirkel, 2008). On the one hand, multicultural teaching emphasizes particular social norms, because it stresses the unacceptability of ethnic prejudice and discrimination. On the other hand, it attempts to increase knowledge and understanding of cultural differences.

Learning about these differences may be effective in various ways. First, pupils’ negative out-group attitudes can be challenged when they are confronted with counter-stereotypical information (Pettigrew, 1998). Second, multicultural teaching may create a better understanding of different cultural traditions, practices, and behaviors, resulting in a less-prejudiced attitude (Pettigrew, 1998; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). Third, multicultural teaching might highlight similarities between ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority, by focusing on what these groups have in common (Houlette et al., 2004; Levy et al., 2005). However, it is important not to look only for commonalities between cultures, because this entails the risk of ignoring or minimizing group differences, i.e. color blindness (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009). Color blindness proposes that cultural differences do not matter and should not be considered. The color blindness perspective is associated with greater racial attitude bias (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009; Richeson, & Nussbaum, 2004). On the other hand, the multiculturalism approach regarding cultural differences, which proposes that group differences need to be acknowledged, considered and celebrated, yields more positive outcomes for intergroup relations (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009; Richeson, & Nussbaum, 2004). Therefore, we focus on the multiculturalism approach.

In sum, multicultural teaching not only involves the transmission of social norms but also tries to increase knowledge and understanding of cultural differences, resulting in less negative out-group attitudes (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). Therefore, we hypothesize that a more multicultural teacher culture is associated with reduced ethnic prejudice among Flemish pupils (H1).

MULTICULTURAL TEACHER CULTURE AND PUPILS’ PERCEPTION OF MULTICULTURAL TEACHING

Research shows that pupils’ perceptions of classroom practices are related to various cognitive and affective outcomes (Goh & Fraser, 2000). For example, achievement scores can be explained by pupils’ perceptions of the cultural environment of the school, because their perceptions of what teachers do in classrooms are related to their math performance and their attitudes about learning the subject (Marcoulides, Heck, & Papanastasiou, 2005). To the best of our knowledge, the association between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ perceptions of teachers’ involvement with multicultural teaching in secondary schools has not previously been examined in ethnic prejudice research. However, the assessments of teachers and the perceptions of pupils might both be important to take into account, because the effects of teachers’ practices on pupils’ attitudes might be mediated by the perceptions of pupils regarding their teachers (Way, 2011).

Related to multiculturalism, Verkuyten & Thijs (2013) found that in primary schools, the aggregated perceptions of classmates about the multicultural practices of teachers are positively related to pupils’ evaluations of ethnic minority groups, and that this relationship is mediated by children’s individual perceptions. Moreover, these perceptions have a greater impact on pupils’ ethnic attitudes than teachers’ own assessments of their multicultural educational practices (Verkuyten & Kinket, 2000; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2004). In line with these findings, we hypothesize that the perceptions of pupils concerning teachers’ involvement with multicultural teaching will mediate the relationship between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice (H2).

ETHNIC SCHOOL COMPOSITION, INTERGROUP FRIENDSHIPS, AND PUPILS’ INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Previous research shows that the ethnic composition of a school is related to pupils’ ethnic prejudice, as a higher proportion of ethnic minority pupils in school is associated with reduced negative out-group attitudes among ethnic majority pupils (Bakker, Denessen, Pelzer, Veneman, & Lageweg, 2007; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Within a school context, the ethnic composition will determine the opportunities to establish interethnic contact (Fritzsche, 2006; Van Praag, Stevens, & Van Houtte, 2014), because ethnic minorities and majorities will evidently have a greater likelihood of interacting when the proportion of ethnic minorities increases (Blau, 1994). Research shows that the mere presence of out-group members (Zebrowitz, White, & Wieneke, 2008), or simply a higher concentration of ethnic minorities (Kalin, 1996), is associated with reduced ethnic prejudice. This can be partly explained through Zajonc’s mere exposure hypothesis (1968), which suggests that repeated exposure to ethnic minorities results in familiarity, and is associated with more positive out-group attitudes. Allport’s intergroup contact theory (1954) argues that four conditions are necessary to make mere exposure effective. According to Allport (1954), increased intergroup contact leads to reduced ethnic prejudice, only when (a) different groups expect and perceive equal status in the situation, (b) they pursue common goals, (c) cooperation exists, and (d) there is support from authoritative figures. Researchers have added friendship as a fifth condition for optimal intergroup contact associated with reduced ethnic prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998). Existing research often confirms the negative relationship between
intergroup friendship and ethnic prejudice (Pettigrew, 2008; Vervoort, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2008; Vezzali, Giovannini, & Capozza, 2012). In addition to ethnic school composition and intergroup friendships, some individual characteristics may also be related to pupils’ ethnic prejudice. Research shows that women are more tolerant than men (Coenders & Scheepers, 1998; Vervoort, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2008), people with a higher income may be less ethnically prejudiced (Coenders & Scheepers, 1998), and lastly, a higher level of education is related to less prejudice toward out-groups (Coenders, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2004; Vervoort, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2008). The main goal of multicultural education is ‘both to know and to tolerate people with different cultural backgrounds’ (Portera, 2008, p. 485).

THE PRESENT STUDY

In this study, we explore the role of a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ perceptions of multicultural teaching as determinants of Flemish pupils’ ethnic prejudice. The ethnic composition of the school is taken into account, because a higher proportion of ethnic minority pupils in school has been shown to be related to reduced ethnic prejudice among ethnic majority pupils (Bakker, Denessen, Pelzer, Veneman, & Lageweg, 2007; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). First, we focus on how a multicultural (teacher) culture in a school is associated with pupils’ ethnic prejudice. We hypothesize that a more multicultural teacher culture is associated with reduced ethnic prejudice among Flemish pupils (H1). Second, we assume that pupils’ perceptions of teachers’ involvement with multicultural teaching mediate the relationship between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice (H2).

FLEMISH IMMIGRATION AND THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

At the beginning of the 1960s, laborers from Morocco, Turkey, and subsequently from various Eastern European countries (e.g. Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Kosovo) migrated to Belgium to live and work there, and were later joined by their families (Vanduynslager et al., 2013). In Flanders, the largest ethnic minority groups share a Muslim identity; a religious background that is not particularly welcomed (Agirdag, et al., 2016). Flemish teachers often have negative attitudes to Islam (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Juchtmans, & Nicaise, 2013), and many ethnic minority pupils continue to lag behind their Flemish counterparts academically (Agirdag, Loobuyck, & Van Houtte, 2012).

Flanders has a unique educational system. Every school in there is state subsidized, and the Flemish government is fully responsible for the educational policy within its territory. Education is compulsory from the ages of 6 to 18 and most Flemish children also attend nursery school from the age of two and a half onward. After six years of primary education, children transfer to secondary education, comprising four main tracks: (1) general secondary or academic education (preparing for higher education), (2) technical secondary education (focusing more on technical and practical topics), (3) artistic secondary education (general education combined with active art practice), and (4) vocational secondary education (very practical and job-specific education). Tracks are commonly hierarchically classified by the level of abstraction and theorizing, and academic education is widely regarded as the most valued and demanding track, whereas technical and vocational tracks are located at the bottom of the ladder (Boone & Van Houtte, 2013; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010). Although pupils can select the track they will pursue, their actual opportunity to do so is mainly a function of prior achievement in primary education and their socioeconomic status (Boone & Van Houtte, 2013). As a result, ethnic minority pupils are overrepresented in the lower tracks (Boone & Van Houtte, 2013; Khmelkov & Hallinan, 1999; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009). At the end of each year, pupils are given a certificate indicating whether they can continue their current educational path (A certificate) or not (B or C certificate). Students given a B certificate may progress to the next year, but need to join a lower track, whereas a C certificate means that the student has to repeat the year. A diploma of secondary education in Flanders grants unlimited access to all forms of higher education.

In 1991, the Dutch Ministry of Education launched Educational Priority Policy, a three-pillar plan to deal with the disadvantaged position of migrant children in Belgian school, through: "Education in their own language and culture", "Dutch as a Second Language" and "Intercultural Education". Also in 1991, the final curriculum objectives for schools were developed and implemented. These are objectives in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes which the government sees as necessary and attainable for the student population. These objectives include (limited) aspects of intercultural education, such as “learn to function in a multicultural society” and “behave respectfully to other identity; a religious background that is not particularly welcomed (Agirdag, et al., 2016). Flemish teachers often have negative attitudes to Islam (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Juchtmans, & Nicaise, 2013), and many ethnic minority pupils continue to lag behind their Flemish counterparts academically (Agirdag, Loobuyck, & Van Houtte, 2012).

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However, the implementation of intercultural education in Flanders is still restricted, and often relates to one-off projects. This lack of interest in applying intercultural teaching can partly be explained by the freedom of the schools and teachers, since every school is free to choose if and how they implement intercultural education (Suijs, 2004). When given freedom to choose what to implement in terms of policies, schools still seem to focus on policies that aim to assimilate ethnic minorities to the dominant (language) culture (De Wit & Van Petegem, 2000; Verlot & Sierens, 1997). Moreover, teachers in Flanders (almost all of who have a majority ethnic background) still rely on a deficit model in explaining the educational disadvantages of ethnic minorities, and point to pupils’ cultural (and particularly language) shortcomings as the main cause of ethnic minority underachievement (Verlot & Sierens, 1997). Furthermore, teachers who took responsibility for these particular courses in school were given a lower status by the
teaching staff, and even experienced overt resistance from other members of staff (De Wit & Van Petegem, 2000). Finally, Flemish schools are often reluctant to implement intercultural education and few teachers are trained for intercultural competence (De Wit & Van Petegem, 2000; Verlot & Sierens, 1997).

METHODS

SAMPLE

The data used is taken from the Racism and Discrimination in Secondary Schools survey (RaDiSS 2), collected during the school year 2014-2015. A multistage sampling frame was used, in order to ensure sufficient variability and cases in terms of the level of urbanization of the school environment and pupils’ ethnicity. First, four large, multi-cultural Flemish districts were selected for sampling (Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt, and Sint-Niklaas). Second, all the secondary schools (excluding artistic education, due to the small number of pupils enrolled) in these areas were divided into three location categories: city center, suburban area, or rural area. The aim was to select two thirds of the schools from urban areas and one third from suburban and rural areas.

Within these districts, a further selection was made of one third of schools with a low proportion of ethnic minority pupils (less than 15%), one third with a medium proportion (between 15% and 49.9%), and one third with a high proportion (between 50% and 100%) (Flemish Educational Department, 2011). In total, 55 schools were contacted, out of which 49 were willing to participate (a response rate of 89%). Of those in the sample, 29 schools were located in a city center, 13 in a suburban area, and 7 in a rural location. In terms of pupils’ ethnicity, 15 schools had a low proportion of ethnic minorities, 17 a medium proportion, and 17 a high proportion. As a result, the participating schools cover the entire range of ethnic minority composition from 0% to 95% (see Table 1).

Teachers in Grade 6 (comparable with Grade 12 in the American system) were asked to complete a written questionnaire. They could do this when and where they wanted and could return it free of charge, as we paid for the postage and envelopes with the aim of obtaining a high response rate. In total, 669 out of 1584 teachers completed the questionnaire, equating to a response rate of 42%. Because we only asked for the name of the school, the anonymity of the teachers was guaranteed. In view of our research questions, we only incorporated schools where at least five teachers completed the questionnaire, which is in line with other research (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2009), resulting in a sample of 636 teachers across 40 schools.

Pupils in Grade 6 were also asked to complete a written questionnaire. In total, 3367 out of 4107 pupils completed the questionnaire, which equates to a response rate of 82%. The only reasons pupils did not participate were because of absence due to illness or because a class was on a field trip, so no bias occurred. Pupils filled out the questionnaire in the presence of a researcher and one or more teachers. In order for the data to be linked to other information, such as academic results provided by the schools, the pupil questionnaires were not anonymous. However, all the pupils were informed that their names would be removed once the database was complete and that teachers were not allowed access to the completed questionnaires, making the final database anonymous and confidential. Because the ethnic prejudice of pupils is taken into account—which includes prejudice against Turks, Moroccans, and Eastern Europeans—for this study only native pupils (61.9%) were selected, resulting in a final sample of 2083 Flemish students. Of these, 49.8% were female. With regard to the track, 24.5% were in vocational, 30.8% in technical, and 44.7% in academic education. The mean SES was 54.94 (range 16-90) and the mean age 17.46 (range 15-29).

VARIABLES

Ethnic Prejudice

Ethnic prejudice refers to a negative attitude to out-groups (De Witte, 1999; Quillian, 1995). Because the majority of the ethnic minorities in Flanders come from Morocco, Turkey, and Eastern Europe (e.g. Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Kosovo), negative attitudes to these three groups were measured separately and then totaled to assess the ethnic prejudice of Flemish pupils. A 5-point Likert scale with 18 items was used, ranging from absolutely disagree (=1) to completely agree (=5). Three examples of the items are: “Moroccans/Turks/Eastern Europeans do not contribute to the welfare of Belgium”, “In some areas, the government does more for Moroccans/Turks/Eastern Europeans than for the Belgians who live there”, and “Moroccans/Turks/Eastern Europeans are commonly unreliable” (Quillian, 1995). Missing values were imputed by item correlation substitution: A missing value for one item was replaced by the value of the item correlating most closely to it (Huisman, 2000). The scale was created by taking the mean scores on the 18 items, resulting in possible scores from 1 to 5, with a higher value indicating greater ethnic prejudice. Cronbach’s alpha for the ethnic prejudice scale is 0.89 (n = 2083; mean (M) = 2.85; SD = 0.68) (See Table 1).

Multicultural Teacher Culture

Multicultural teacher culture was measured by a 6-point Likert scale of our own design. It refers to one of the five dimensions identified by Banks (1993) as outlined above, namely the content integration dimension, referring to the extent to which teachers use examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principals, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline (Banks, 1993). Because teachers in Flanders only seem to apply the content integration dimension but not the other dimensions of Banks (Agirdag, Merry, & Van Houtte, 2016), the measure of multicultural education is only based on this dimension. The scale consists of 12 items, ranging from absolutely disagree (=1) to completely agree (=5) and inapplicable (=6). The last category was recoded to 1, because when teachers answered “inapplicable”, it indicates that they did not pay attention to that item during their lessons. Two example items are: “During my lessons at school, I work explicitly on themes about differences between cultures” and “During my lessons at school, the many different cultures in our
society are discussed”. Missing values were imputed by item correlation substitution (Huisman, 2000). The scale was created by the mean scores on the 12 items, resulting in possible scores from 1 to 5, with a higher score indicating that teachers practice more multicultural teaching. Exploratory factor analysis reveals that there is one underlying dimension. The item loadings range between 0.463 and 0.833, and Cronbach’s alpha for the multicultural teaching scale is 0.87. Because we wanted to examine the role of a multicultural teacher culture, teachers’ individual practices were aggregated to the school level. As is common practice, this can be achieved by calculating the mean value for each school (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Van Houtte, 2004). We used the index of “mean rater reliability” (Glick, 1985; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979), to ascertain whether the practice of multicultural teaching is indeed shared by the teachers in the same school. This index is based on the intra-class correlation (ICC) in a one-way analysis of variance, which measures the degree of resemblance between micro units belonging to the same macro unit (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). The ICC is calculated by the formula

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\text{ICC} = \frac{\text{between mean square - within mean square}}{\text{between mean square}}
\]

If this value is greater than 0.60, then we can state that the practice of multicultural teaching is common to teachers from the same school, and that it is therefore legitimate to speak of a multicultural culture at the school level (see also Van Houtte, 2004). For the measurement of multicultural teaching, this ICC is 0.71 ($F = 3.503$, $p < .001$), showing that multicultural teaching is indeed shared by the teachers from the same school. The measurement of the culture of multicultural teaching has a mean of 2.98 ($SD = 0.31$. See Table 1).

Ethnic School Composition

Ethnic composition at the school level is a metric variable, based on the proportion of ethnic minority pupils. The ethnicity of the pupils was assessed primarily by the birthplace of the pupil’s maternal grandmother (OECD, 2008). If this data was not available, their mother’s birthplace was used. In the event that this information was also missing, the country of birth of the pupil was used. As is common practice, and in line with the official Flemish definition of non-native groups, pupils were considered as being of foreign descent if their maternal grandmother, their mother, or the pupils themselves had a birthplace other than Western European (Timmerman, Vanderwaeren, & Crul, 2003). The average proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 0.19 ($SD = 0.19$. See Table 1).

Gender

Our sample is almost equally divided with regard to gender (female = 1), with 49.8% being female. (See Table 1).

Socioeconomic Status

The SES of origin of the pupils was measured by the profession of their father and mother. The parents’ professions were recoded, using the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, & Treiman, 1992), derived from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88). This metric variable has a range from 16 to 90. The highest score out of the two parents was used, and the higher the score, the higher the SES. In our sample, the minimum score is 16 and the maximum 90, with a mean score of 54.94 ($SD = 15.97$. See Table 1).

Track

Pupils were asked to indicate the educational track in which they were enrolled. The possible responses were academic, technical, artistic, and vocational education. Pupils in artistic education were excluded, due to the small number involved. Because previous research indicates that pupils in vocational education are more ethnically prejudiced (De Witte, 1999), a dichotomous variable was constructed, with pupils in academic and technical education placed in one category, which covers 75.5% of the respondents (code 0). If vocational education was one of the categories stated, code 1 was assigned, which incorporates 24.5% of the pupils (See Table 1).

Intergroup Friendships

Pupils were asked how many of their friends were non-natives. The possible answers were: none (= 1), a few (= 2), half (= 3), most (= 4), and all (= 5). We created three dummy variables, with having no non-native friends (12.3%) as the reference category: the variable “a few non-native friends” (73%), the variable “half” (9.1%), and the variable “most or all” (5.6%) (See Table 1).

Pupils’ Perceptions of Multicultural Teaching

Each pupil’s perceptions of multicultural teaching were measured by a 5-point Likert scale of our own design with 12 items. Three sample items are: “How many of your teachers at school talk together with your class about different cultures?” “How many of your teachers at school work explicitly on themes about differences between cultures?”, and “How many of your teachers at school discuss the many different cultures in our society?” The possible answers were none of the teachers (= 1), one teacher (= 2), some teachers (= 3), most of the teachers (= 4), and all of the teachers (= 5). Missing values were imputed by item correlation substitution (Huisman, 2000). The scale was created by the mean scores on the 12 items, resulting in possible scores from 1 to 5, with a higher score indicating that pupils evaluate their teachers as practicing more multicultural teaching. Exploratory factor analysis reveals that there is one underlying dimension. The item loadings range between 0.491 and 0.767. Cronbach’s alpha for the multicultural teaching scale is 0.87, with a mean score of 2.31 ($SD = 0.62$. See Table 1).
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables: Frequencies (%), Means, Standard Deviations (SD), and Minimum and Maximum Values (N = 2083)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic prejudice</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual-level variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Socioeconomic status            | 54.94         | 15.97 | 16   | 90   |      |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic education</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical education</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intergroup friendships</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most/all</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Perception of multicultural teaching | 2.31 | 0.62 | 1 | 5 |

School-level variables

| Multicultural teacher culture   | 2.98 | 0.31 | 2.32 | 3.69 |

| Ethnic school composition      | 0.19 | 0.19 | 0.00 | 0.95 |

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

In view of the fact that we are dealing with a clustered sample of teachers nested within schools, it was most appropriate to use multilevel analysis (MLwiN 2.30). The multicultural teacher culture was added as a school-level feature, and pupils’ perceptions of multicultural teaching as an individual-level feature (see also Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012). We controlled for ethnic school composition at the school level and for gender, SES, track, and the number of non-native friends at the individual level. All metric variables were grand mean centered. A random intercept model was used.

The first estimated model (Table 3, Model 0) is an intercept-only model; an unconditional model to determine the amount of variance occurring at the individual level and at the school level. In the second model (Table 3, Model 1), multicultural teacher culture was added, in order to test the negative relationship between multicultural teacher culture and Flemish pupils’ ethnic prejudice (H1). We controlled for ethnic school composition, because as previously mentioned, research shows that the mere presence of out-group members (Zajonc, 1968; Zebrowitz, White, & Wiencke, 2008), or simply a higher concentration of ethnic minorities (Kalin, 1996), is associated with lower ethnic prejudice. Moreover, we controlled for individual characteristics that recur in research on ethnic prejudice, because men, people with a lower SES, and those with fewer non-native friends appear to be more ethnically prejudiced (Coenders, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2004; Pettigrew, 1998; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014; Vervoort, Sholte, & Scheepers, 2008). In addition and more specifically related to the Flemish educational system-being in vocational education is associated with increased ethnic prejudice (De Witte, 1999). In the third model (Table 3, Model 2), the perceptions of pupils regarding their teachers’ involvement with multicultural teaching was introduced, testing the mediating effect...
of these perceptions (H2), because these might mediate the association between teachers own assessments of their multicultural educational practices and pupils’ ethnically prejudiced attitude (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013).

RESULTS

The bivariate correlations show a significant negative relationship between pupils’ ethnic prejudice, and gender ($r = -.093; p < .01$), socioeconomic status ($r = -.090; p < .01$), intergroup friendships ($r = -.181; p < .01$), and their perceptions of multicultural teaching ($r = -.210; p < .01$). Female pupils, a higher socioeconomic status, more intergroup friendships, and higher perceptions of multicultural teaching are all associated with lower ethnic prejudice among Flemish pupils, with girls overall being less prejudiced than boys. Being in the vocational track is associated with more ethnic prejudice, as track is positively related to pupils’ ethnic prejudice ($r = .200; p < .01$).

Table 2: Bivariate (Pearson) correlations between dependent and independent variables (n = 2083)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>-0.051**</td>
<td>-0.045*</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.093**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Socioeconomic status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.445**</td>
<td>-0.141**</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>-0.090**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Track</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.216**</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.200**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Intergroup friendships</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.133**</td>
<td>-0.181**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Perception of multicultural teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.210**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ethnic prejudice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Statistically significant effects are shown in bold.

We started the multilevel regression analysis, presented in Table 3, with an unconditional model (Table 3, Model 0). This model indicates that 15.32% ($\sigma_e^2 = 0.409, \sigma_u^2 = 0.074$) of the variance in Flemish pupils’ ethnic prejudice is situated at the school level.

In the next step, multicultural teacher culture was included in order to test the direct relationship between multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice (H1) (Table 3, Model 1). The association is negative and significant at the 10% level ($\gamma^* = -0.201; \text{SE} = 0.120; p < .1$. See Table 3, Model 1), thus the first hypothesis of this study—assuming that a more multicultural teacher culture is negatively related to pupils’ ethnic prejudice—is confirmed. The different control variables were also included in this model (Table 3, Model 1). Ethnic school composition is negatively related to pupils’ ethnic prejudice ($\gamma^* = -0.346; \text{SE} = 0.167; p < .05$) and gender is also negatively related to ethnic prejudice by Flemish pupils ($\gamma^* = -0.097; \text{SE} = 0.030; p < .01$). Track is associated with the pupils’ level of ethnic prejudice in that pupils in technical tracks ($\gamma^* = 0.251; \text{SE} = 0.047; p < .001$) and the vocational track ($\gamma^* = 0.482; \text{SE} = 0.051; p < .001$) are more ethnically prejudiced than pupils in academic tracks. Having out-group friends is negatively related to ethnic prejudice, as pupils with a few ($\gamma^* = -0.213; \text{SE} = 0.043; p < .001$), half ($\gamma^* = -0.453; \text{SE} = 0.063; p < .001$), or most/all ($\gamma^* = -0.510; \text{SE} = 0.074; p < .001$) non-native friends are less ethnically prejudiced than pupils with no out-group friends.

To test the mediating effect of pupils’ perception of multicultural teaching (H2), we used the causal steps approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007; Mathieu & Taylor, 2007). We examined whether the association between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice was mediated by the perceptions of pupils regarding teachers’ involvement with multicultural teaching. The first step is to examine the relationship between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice. As mentioned before, this association is significant and negative ($\gamma^* = -0.201; \text{SE} = 0.120; p < .1$. See Table 3, Model 1). Second, a significant, positive relationship is found between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ perceptions of multicultural teaching ($\gamma^* = 0.327; \text{SE} = 0.078; p < .001$. See Table 4, Model 1). Moreover, adding pupils’ perceptions of multicultural teaching to the model reduced the association between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice to an insignificant level ($\gamma^* = -0.164; \text{SE} = 0.114$. See Table 3, Model 2). The association between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice is mediated by pupils’ perceptions of multicultural teaching, confirming the second hypothesis of this study.

Table 3: Ethnic prejudice of native pupils. Results of stepwise multilevel analysis (n = 2083, groups = 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School level</th>
<th>Model 0</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural teacher culture</td>
<td>-0.201+</td>
<td>-0.164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.120)</td>
<td>(0.114)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic school composition</td>
<td>-0.346*</td>
<td>-0.291+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.167)</td>
<td>(0.160)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual level</td>
<td>Gender (ref: Male)</td>
<td>-0.097**</td>
<td>-0.102***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Pupils' perception of multicultural teaching. Results of stepwise multilevel analysis (n = 2083, groups = 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 0</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural teacher culture</td>
<td>0.327*** (0.078)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.356***</td>
<td>2.317***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual-level variance</td>
<td>0.364</td>
<td>0.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-level variance</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Likelihood</td>
<td>3857.449</td>
<td>3842.644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** The centered coefficients are presented, with standard errors shown in parentheses. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Statistically significant effects are shown in bold.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Worldwide migration is associated with increasingly ethnically diverse societies and schools, and related to this, a developing interest in ethnic minority pupils’ experiences of ethnic prejudice from their ethnic majority counterparts. Although the undesirable consequences of such prejudice have been thoroughly researched (Sierens et al., 2006; Timmerman, Hermans, & Hoornaert, 2002; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003), only a few studies have focused on its determinants. Moreover, these studies have usually restricted their attention to individual-level predictors, neglecting the possible influence of the school or teachers (Coenders, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2004; Vervoort, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2008). The current study aims to fill this gap by examining the determinants of ethnic prejudice on different levels within the school context. Most of the existing research on multicultural education focuses on the US context, and the association between multicultural teaching and pupils’ ethnic prejudice is rarely examined (for an exception, see Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). Therefore, our study contributes to the existing research on multicultural education by exploring the association between a multicultural teacher culture, pupils’ perceptions of teachers’ multicultural practices, and the ethnic prejudice of secondary school pupils in Flanders, taking into account ethnic school composition and some sociodemographic characteristics that have been shown to be related to ethnic prejudice. First, we examined the association between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice. Second, we investigated whether pupils’ perceptions of teachers’ involvement with multicultural teaching mediate the relationship between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice.

The main finding of this study is that a more multicultural teacher culture is associated with reduced ethnic prejudice among Flemish pupils, confirming our first hypothesis. Although the act of paying attention to ethnic groups, which is involved in forms of multicultural education, involves the risk of increasing ethnic stereotyping, it seems to have the potential to improve interethnic relations (Bigler, 1999; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). However, the association between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice is mediated by pupils’ perception of multicultural teaching, confirming the second hypothesis of this study. This is in line with previous research in primary schools, which shows that children’s perceptions of teachers’ multicultural practices have an impact on their ethnic out-group attitudes (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). The findings of our study provide some large-scale data support for the importance of creating inclusive school cultures to reduce ethnic prejudice among ethnic majorities and the importance of teachers’ contributions to that. These findings highlight that it is not sufficient to take into account only teachers’ own assessments of their amount of multicultural teaching, because pupils’ perceptions mediate the association between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ ethnic prejudice. To reduce pupils’ ethnic prejudice, they need to recognize that their teachers practice multicultural teaching, because pupils’ ethnically prejudiced
attitude will only change if they are aware that their teachers use examples and information from a variety of cultures in their subject area.

With regard to the role of ethnic school composition, we find that the mere presence of ethnic minority pupils in school is related to lower levels of ethnic prejudice among ethnic majority pupils, because a higher proportion of ethnic minority pupils in school is associated with reduced negative out-group attitudes among Flemish pupils. With regard to pupils’ individual characteristics, this study confirms previous findings about ethnic prejudice: Pupils with a greater number of non-native friends are less ethnically prejudiced (Pettigrew, 2008; Vervoort, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2008; Vezzali, Giovannini, & Capozza, 2012) and female pupils are less ethnically prejudiced than their male counterparts (Coenders & Scheepers, 1998; Vervoort, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2008). In addition, pupils in vocational and technical education are more ethnically prejudiced than those in academic education (De Witte, 1999).

This study has some limitations. First, it uses cross-sectional data, so causality cannot be determined in the relationship between a multicultural teacher culture and pupils’ levels of ethnic prejudice. A selection effect is plausible, whereby pupils who are more ethnically prejudiced are less likely to attend a school with a multicultural teacher culture. However, pupils have little or no choice regarding which school they attend. Second, some issues should be mentioned with regard to our measurements and operationalizations. Because we operationalize multicultural teacher culture by considering school-wide attitudes, we are unable to go into detail with regard to the effects of individual teachers. However, in secondary schools, it is more logical to investigate the role of teacher cultures than that of individual teachers’ practices, because pupils engage with a number of different teachers during a school year (Van Houtte & Demanet, 2016). Third, the scale used to measure pupils’ ethnic prejudice may be sensitive to socially desirable answers, so a more implicit measurement of ethnic prejudice could be recommended (Glock & Krolak-Schwerdt, 2014), because studies show a discrepancy between implicit and explicit prejudice (Banaji & Greenwald, 1994). Lastly, there is only one out-group included, namely “the” ethnic minority pupils, but research shows that ethnic prejudice may vary depending on the nationality of ethnic minorities, related to the immigration history of a country (Chang & Demyan, 2007; Kalin, 1996). However, studies have also shown that the enhanced liking, resulting from exposure and intergroup contact, can be generalized to greater liking for the entire outgroup, outgroup members in other situations, and even outgroups not involved in the contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Rhodes, Halberstadt, & Brajkovich, 2001).

Notwithstanding the identified limitations, this study opens the door to further research on ethnic prejudice within the school context. Our findings confirm that it is theoretically important to include macro factors, individual variables, and their interdependence in explaining ethnic prejudice (Bar-Tal, 1997; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010). This study shows that a substantial part of pupils’ out-group attitudes is attributable to the school level, because the proportion of ethnic minority pupils and the extent of multicultural practices are associated with these attitudes. Other school characteristics, such as ethnic diversity instead of ethnic concentration, may lead to different outcomes (Hooghe & Quintelier, 2013). In addition to the role of the school, this study has examined and confirmed the role of peers. Future studies should consider the combined and interactive influences of school, peers, and family (Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg, 2001), because in addition to school and friends, parents are also influential in children’s inter-ethnic attitudes (Munniksma, Flache, Verkuyten, & Veenstra, 2012). This study shows that pupils’ perceptions of the multicultural practices of teachers are associated with the pupils’ ethnic prejudice. Therefore, it might be interesting to examine how specific school characteristics, such as a participatory and cooperative culture, can positively influence pupils’ perceptions, resulting in a better understanding among teachers of pupils’ perceptions and expectations. Because Flemish teachers’ understanding of multicultural teaching is limited to the content integration dimension (Agirdag, et al., 2016), research in countries other than Belgium, where teachers implement other dimensions of multicultural education, may be interesting for further research on ethnic prejudice.

In terms of social policy, one of the first challenges in reducing ethnic prejudice among Flemish pupils is to create a more multicultural teacher culture in schools. This can partly be created by reducing the ethnic prejudice of teachers, because teachers’ involvement with multicultural teaching is associated with their own level of ethnic prejudice (Agirdag, et al., 2016). Reducing the ethnic prejudice of teachers can partly be realized by educating prospective teachers to reflect on their own prejudices (Gay, 2010; McAllister & Irvine, 2000) and by increasing their knowledge of other cultures (Avery & Walker, 1993; Nieto, 2000). Nevertheless, a multicultural teacher culture in itself is not enough. Pupils’ ethnic prejudices will only decrease when they are aware that their teachers practice multicultural teaching.

The idea of a “school as community” is a recurrent theme in recent research on effective schools and may be useful in this context (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988). According to this approach, an effective school is characterized by a cohesive faculty culture, participation, cooperative relations, social interactions and strong affective ties between pupils and teachers, shared values, common activities, and an “ethic of caring”, including teachers’ personal interest in students (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988). In such a school, students are given a certain amount of influence (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012). When pupils can participate in decision-making and educational processes, and teachers are genuinely interested in their pupils’ opinions, teachers will have a better understanding of pupils’ perceptions, including perceptions of multicultural practices. Teachers can use the knowledge they acquire through informal interactions with their pupils to anticipate their pupils’ perceptions and this can help them to reduce ethnic prejudice among Flemish pupils. Finally, by using certain teaching methods, such as cooperative learning, teachers can facilitate the construction of intergroup friendships among pupils and thus reduce their levels of ethnic prejudice (Cooper, 1999).

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