

# ETHNIC DISCRIMI NATION & EDUCA TIONAL INEQUA LITY

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# Ethnic Discrimination and Educational Inequality

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## Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VIII
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: MAIN CONCEPTS	7
CHAPTER 2: ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION AND ETHNIC INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION: THEORETICAL APPROACHES	13
CHAPTER 3: COPING WITH ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION	33
CHAPTER 4: FLEMISH CONTEXT	45
CHAPTER 5: OPERATIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	53
CHAPTER 6: HOW DOES ETHNIC AND NON-ETHNIC VICTIMIZATION BY PEERS AND BY TEACHERS RELATE TO THE SCHOOL BELONGINGNESS OF ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS IN FLANDERS, BELGIUM? AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY	79
CHAPTER 7: TEACHERS' IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT ATTITUDES TOWARDS ETHNIC MINORITIES: RELATION TO STUDENTS' SENSE OF SCHOOL BELONGING	105
CHAPTER 8: THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION BY TEACHERS AND PARENTS' ETHNIC SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES ON ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS' SENSE OF ACADEMIC FUTILITY IN FLANDERS, BELGIUM	143
CHAPTER 9: THE RELATIONSHIPS OF ETHNIC TEACHER DISCRIMINATION, ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION AND HOST NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION TO SCHOOL DEVIANCE OF TURKISH AND MOROCCAN IMMIGRANT ADOLESCENTS IN BELGIUM	167

CHAPTER 10: DO ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL INFLUENCE THE UNDERACHIEVEMENT OF TURKISH AND MOROCCAN MINORITY STUDENTS IN FLANDERS? THE ATTITUDE-ACHIEVEMENT PARADOX REVISITED	199
CHAPTER 11: GENERAL CONCLUSION	229
REFERENCES	250
APPENDIX A	287
APPENDIX B	289

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## Introduction

Throughout Europe, ethnic minorities receive messages that there is no room for 'their' culture in 'our' western society, that they have to go back to 'their' country, that they are outsiders, even if they are second or third generation immigrants (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Goldberg, 2006; Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008). In Belgium, this manifests itself, for example, in discrimination on both the labor and housing markets (Baert, Cockx, Gheyle, & Vandamme, 2013; Van der Bracht, Coenen, & Van de Putte, 2014), the anti-immigration propaganda of extreme-right wing parties (Billiet & De Witte, 2008), but equally so in the predominantly Belgian-origin actors and actresses in television series (De Ridder, 2010). Belonging to an ethnic minority group creates barriers that hinder a person from making his/her desired choices and from creating opportunities to be a successful, healthy and happy person, just because s/he is not a member of the dominant ethnic majority in society.

The life chances of ethnic minority members are affected by ethnic inequality and ethnic discrimination from early childhood on. They are not spared from ethnic discrimination until they reach adulthood. Research on policy, curriculum or inter-ethnic relationships has shown that ethnic discrimination is a source of educational inequality (Stevens & Dworkin, 2014). This is especially the case during secondary education, when educational choices, aspirations and academic achievement are pivotal to higher education access and future labor market opportunities. Hence, in an important transitional period in life, ethnic discrimination can create constraints that impede the desired school careers of ethnic minority adolescents.

The research field of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality is underdeveloped in some respects. Empirically, there is a rich tradition of research, particularly in the UK, Canada, Argentina and Cyprus, explaining ethnic inequalities in education by discriminatory processes in schools (Stevens & Dworkin, 2014). In these studies, discriminatory processes are related to the selection of students in high/low status tracks, distribution of scarce educational resources, biased curriculum, unfair punishment/reward systems and stereotypical thinking of school staff. These studies are mostly small-scale, qualitative studies, which offers the possibility to describe the complex and subtle ways in which ethnic discrimination manifests itself in educational settings. However, this field would also benefit from more large-scale, quantitative research that can represent the prevalence of ethnic discrimination and test the consequences and mediating/moderating processes on different outcomes for a large group of students. At the moment, there are few quantitative studies in this area of research.

Theoretically, the field of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality is characterized by a lack of theory that focuses explicitly on the experience of ethnic discrimination, the mechanisms that underpin the experience of ethnic discrimination and its consequences. The relationship between ethnic discrimination and educational inequality is often discussed as a given or as a logic conclusion and consequently, only discussed implicitly. Furthermore, ethnic discrimination is often approached from the standpoint of the offender, not from the standpoint of the target, as social psychologists and sociologists have developed several theories to explain why people are prejudiced and/or discriminate against others (e.g., Allport, 1979; Brown, 2011; Operario & Fiske, 1998; Tajfel, 1981). Although these theories deepen our understanding of why people are more/less prejudiced, they tell only one side of the story. An important

exception is the more recent development of a critical race approach to ethnic inequalities in education. This approach developed several analytic frames and conceptual tools to guide researchers focusing on the experience of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality (Gillborn, 2008).

In this dissertation, we want to add to the existing knowledge and therefore use quantitative research methods to focus on the experiences of ethnic minority adolescents with ethnic discrimination in secondary education. First, we want to consider ethnic discrimination and students' experiences with ethnic discrimination as complex phenomena. In quantitative research, researchers often ask respondents with one single question if they experienced ethnic discrimination. However, the ample evidence from qualitative studies shows that ethnic discrimination does not happen in a vacuum (Connolly & Keenan, 2002; Gillborn, 2003; Gillborn & Youdell, 1999; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Stevens, 2008, 2009, 2010). The experience is part of a social interaction (e.g., peers, teachers) that is situated in social structures of ethnic inequality. It is influenced by cultural (e.g., Europe, Flanders, immigrants of Turkish, Moroccan or East-European descent), historical (e.g., migration and education policies, migration history, the current zeitgeist) and situational factors (e.g., the school context, the ethnic composition of the school population). Furthermore, the range of behaviors that can be considered as ethnic discrimination varies widely. From individual (e.g., prejudices about an ethnic group) to institutional (e.g., systemic oppression) discrimination, from daily microaggressions (i.e., 'subtle, innocuous, preconscious or unconscious degradations and putdowns' (Pierce, 1995, p. 281)), to life events (e.g., not being allowed to enroll in a school because of one's ethnicity) (Harrell, 2000). Hence, we will pay attention to the complexity of ethnic discrimination and use self-collected quantitative data from a large sample and a comprehensive survey with measures that are specifically developed to capture the complexity of ethnic discrimination.



Second, as discussed before, few theories have been developed to explain the *experience* of ethnic discrimination in all its facets and/or its consequences for educational inequality. However, some theories developed in other fields are applicable in this field, e.g., social stress theory (Pearlin, 1989), and other theories implicitly discuss the role of ethnic discrimination, e.g., cultural-ecological framework (Ogbu, 2008). Consequently, one of the goals of this dissertation is to review several of these theories and to develop a more comprehensive theoretical framework that may help to understand the experience of ethnic discrimination and its consequences, underlying mechanisms, and coping responses. In addition, many of these theories are developed for, and tested in an Anglo-Saxon context, and within the Anglo-Saxon context, mainly for the African Americans in the USA. Hence, there is a need for research that assesses these theories in other national contexts and in relation to other ethnic minorities.

Third, much of the research on educational inequality has a rather narrow approach of educational inequality. Many researchers focus solely on achievement. However, non-cognitive outcomes can be important prerequisites for academic achievement (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Osterman, 2000; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010). Furthermore, research on inequality cannot be reduced to academic achievement. Non-cognitive outcomes are important indicators of the well-being of students in an institution where they spend most of their waking hours. Hence, we want to look at achievement outcomes, but also consider educational well-being outcomes.

Finally, there is need for quantitative studies that look at the protective factors that might diminish the effects of ethnic discrimination (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). On the one hand, this helps to create one integrated theory on both the consequences of ethnic discrimination and the intermediate processes that counterbalance these consequences. On the other hand, insights in how to

protect ethnic minority adolescents against a barrier in education can help to actualize the emancipatory power of education to its fullest.

In sum, the main objective of this thesis is to conduct a quantitative study that focuses on how the experience of ethnic discrimination relates to the academic achievement and educational well-being of ethnic minority students in Flanders—the Dutch-speaking, northern part of Belgium—, with specific attention towards the processes that moderate and mediate these relationships.



## Chapter I: Main concepts

### Ethnicity

There is a consensus among social scientists that ethnicity is a social category (Allport, 1979; Bell, 2008; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Lopez, 1994; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Wimmer, 2013). It is not an essential, but a socially constructed category, contingent on time and space. As gender and socio-economic status, ethnicity is an important structuring variable of social organization. To define ethnicity is to define how one will see social reality. A definition can be focused on seeing similarities amongst the differences (e.g., the Muslims) or more directed towards seeing differences amongst similarities (e.g., the different branches of the Berber people) (Yinger, 1994). In this dissertation, we use a very broad definition of ethnicity: 'Ethnicity is understood as a subjectively felt belonging to a group that is distinguished by a shared culture and by common ancestry. This belief in shared culture and ancestry rests on cultural practices perceived as 'typical' for the community, or on myths of a common historical origin, or on phenotypical similarities indicating common descent.' (Wimmer, 2013, p. 7).

This definition is very interesting in the sense that it shows the tension between ethnicity as a social fact and ethnicity as a social construction. It is about a 'subjectively felt belonging to a group', hence, ethnicity is not an essential category. However, this belief is based on cultural practices perceived as typical, myths of a common historical origin or a common descent. It is experienced as a social fact at a certain moment in time in a certain context. However, some researchers criticize what they call 'groupism'. That is, ethnicity is a complex phenomenon that may appear as a way to categorize ethnic groups with a shared culture and common ancestry, but it is actually a constant process of ethnic boundary-making (Brubaker, 2004; Wimmer, 2013). In the words of Frederik

Barth (1969) 'it is the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses.'

The concept of ethnicity goes hand in hand with the idea of minority and majority groups, especially in research focused on inequality and discrimination. Belonging to an ethnic minority often implies that you belong to an ethnic group that is a numerical minority in that specific nation, but in essence, it is not about numbers, but about power. Wirth sums up ethnic discrimination clearly in his definition of an ethnic minority group: 'We may define a minority group as a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics are singled out from the others in society in which they live by differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore see themselves as objects of collective discrimination. The existence of a minority in a society implies the existing of a corresponding dominant group with higher social status and greater privileges. Minority status carries with it the exclusion from full participation in the life of society' (Wirth, 1945; Yinger, 1994).

### **Ethnic discrimination**

Ethnic discrimination can be defined as the differential treatment on the basis of ethnicity that disadvantages a member of an ethnic group (Quillian, 1995). It is the result of ethnic prejudice and power (Gillborn, 2003, p. 8). It is 'an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group' (Allport, 1979). If people hold an ethnic prejudice and they have the power to influence others' experiences and life chances, than we speak of ethnic discrimination (Gillborn, 2003). This emphasis on power places ethnic discrimination in wider structures of ethnic stratification.

Power is unequally distributed, so although ethnic discrimination encloses every form of unequal treatment on the basis of ethnicity, most of the ethnic discrimination will be directed from the dominant group towards an ethnic minority group.

To clarify the complexity of this multi-layered concept, in the outline of this dissertation we will discuss the various relevant kinds of discrimination. In a school context, ethnic discrimination can be situated at three levels (Jones, 1972). The most obvious form of discrimination is *individual discrimination*. Individual discrimination takes place in an interpersonal context, for example, being called names because of one's ethnicity. *Cultural discrimination* is more subtle and mainly focused on status-quo maintenance (Harrell, 2000). This kind of discrimination is motivated by the idea that the cultural norms and practices of the ethnic group are superior over those of other ethnic groups, for example, culturally biased linguistic preferences (Utsey, Ponterotto, & Porter, 2008). *Institutional discrimination* occurs when social systems and organizations, intentional or unintentional, tolerate or create and implement policies that lead to inequalities and disparities among ethnic groups, for example, banning all headgear in schools (Utsey et al., 2008). Those three forms of ethnic discrimination are interrelated in complex ways.

Closely related with cultural discrimination is ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism encompasses a positive image of everything related to the own in-group (e.g., norms, values, culture). Everything related to ethnic out-groups is rated negatively compared to this group (Billiet, Carton, & Huys, 1990; Kleinpenning & Hagendoorn, 1993; Sumner, 1906). Ethnocentrism often involves the idea that the members of the ethnic out-group are a threat to the culture of the in-group and that it is important that out-group members adjust to the cultural standards of the in-group. This concept is interesting insofar as it helps to explain how many well-meaning teachers, principals and other school personnel act in a

discriminatory way that creates ethnic educational inequality, because they act solely out of their own frame of reference (Gillborn, 2003).

### **Ethnic discrimination versus racism**

The literature on the difference between racism and ethnic discrimination is extensive. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to give a complete reflection of this discussion. However, as throughout the empirical studies of this dissertation the term ethnic discrimination is used, it is important to explain why we opted for the use of the term ethnic discrimination rather than racism.

First, very often the terms racism and ethnic discrimination can be substituted for each other without a significant change in meaning. However, there are analytic differences. Racism includes both prejudices and discrimination, but in the case of racism, this affect and behavior is rooted in a hierarchy where the ethnic group is considered biologically and/or culturally inferior to the dominant group (Harrell, 2000; Quillian, 1995; Wilson, 1976). Racism is related with the one-directional oppression of a racial/ethnic group by the dominant group. Racism is thus inextricably intertwined with the dominance of the ethnic majority in society, but these power dynamics can change easily in the context of a school. School populations can vary from no ethnic minority students to no ethnic majority students and with the difference in numerical majority, the power dynamic can change (Graham, 2006; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2006). Since this dissertation is focused on the school context, the term ethnic discrimination is deemed more appropriate.

Second, racism, race and biology are strongly interrelated, while ethnic discrimination is associated with ethnicity and culture. Racism, race and skin color are central themes in the research literature and in the public debate in the United States, while in Europe the much-debated topics are immigrants of non-

Western culture, Islam, and ethnic discrimination. Within Europe, scholars, policy makers and the lay public will consider race as a benchmark to classify humankind in a few distinct categories and ethnicity as a benchmark to classify all the different groups living in Europe (Bell, 2008). The fragmented and pluralistic character of the term ethnicity encompasses the intricate structure of the ethnic minority and majority groups living in Europe better, especially since the large majority of ethnic minorities can be considered (by themselves and/or others) as 'white'.

Finally, the role that race played in different dreadful periods in history makes it a more value-laden concept compared to ethnicity (Jones, 1972). This connotation can obscure a more objective approach to the experience of ethnic discrimination.





## Chapter 2: Ethnic discrimination and ethnic inequality in education: theoretical approaches

The research field of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality is characterized by studies that are driven by explorative analyses rather than theory. Furthermore, studies that do build on theory often use theories developed in other fields of research or theories that implicitly discuss the role of ethnic discrimination. Consequently, one of the central goals of this dissertation is to review several theories and to develop a more comprehensive theoretical framework that can help us to understand the experience of ethnic discrimination for adolescents and the consequences it has on cognitive and non-cognitive educational outcomes, and at the same time, to consider the underlying mechanisms, and coping responses involved. Each of the following theories is chosen because of the insights it can provide to develop a better understanding of the relationship between ethnic discrimination and educational inequality.

Ogbu's (2008) cultural-ecological framework, the thesis of acting-white (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), Mickelson's (1990) abstract and concrete attitudes, and critical race theory (Gillborn, 2008) are key theoretical frameworks used in this area of research and that allow us to get a better understanding of ethnic discrimination in a broader context. Subsequently, we focus on the social stress model. This model is developed in the area of stress research, and is ideal to explain the process of trigger (i.e., ethnic discrimination) and response. Finally, the minority stress theory, developed in the research area of LGBT studies, as well as the social-psychological attribution theory are discussed, since these theories help to understand how individuals experience and perceive ethnic and other forms of discrimination in their daily lives.

## Contextual approaches

### The cultural-ecological framework of John U. Ogbu

The anthropologist John U. Ogbu developed a cultural-ecological framework built around the question: ‘What factors determine the achievement, motivation and effort of ethnic minority students in school?’ His holistic model is unique and has transformed thinking about the academic achievement of ethnic minorities, especially in the USA. Although the framework is not free from criticism, nobody will deny the impact it had on educational research and theory, in the USA and beyond.

The model postulates that there are two reciprocal parts that influence ethnic minority students’ achievement: (1) societal or school factors or *the system*, and (2) ethnic community factors or *community forces* (Ogbu, 2008).

The three central elements within *the system* are (1) the educational policy at different societal levels; (2) the treatment of ethnic minority students in school and in the classroom, which encompasses the daily interactions between teachers and students, teachers’ expectations, handbooks and the curriculum, assessment practices, the assignment to different tracks and more; (3) the returns on education society gives students on the labor market, namely the opportunities and the wages.

*Community forces* can be defined as the dynamics within the ethnic community that influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of an ethnic minority student in relation to education. The four central elements are: (1) frame of reference for comparison; (2) relational beliefs about education; (3) symbolic beliefs about education; and (4) instrumental beliefs about education (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). These elements can be explained via four questions. First, does the student compare his/her situation at school and his/her job opportunities with the country of origin or with the country of residence? Second, does the ethnic

community and the student have trust in the school personnel and in the school institution itself as part of the dominant society? Third, do they see their own culture and collective identity as oppositional to the dominant culture? Fourth, does the community and the student perceive good education as the key to success?

The interaction between the system and the community forces results in different educational strategies that in turn influence students' social adjustment and academic achievement (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Furthermore, there is much variability in minority school performance and according to Ogbu, it is possible to explain this variability by looking at the migration history of immigrants and the self-perceptions of the immigrants vis-à-vis the dominant society (Ogbu, 1992, 2008). If minorities migrated voluntarily to the receiving country (such as Chinese immigrants in the USA), searching for a better life, they are very optimistic about their opportunities in this new society (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). They have a strong belief that all opportunities are open to them and that they just have to work hard in life and then they will be successful in school and later on in life. Ethnic discrimination and inequality are adaptation problems that they, as a community, have to overcome. To overcome cultural differences and difficulties, they are willing to accommodate to all the rules and mores of the societal institutions and to learn the mother tongue of the receiving country. Compliance with the rules of the receiving country is considered an addition to their own culture, not a denial.

Involuntary minorities (such as African Americans in the USA) did not migrate in search of a better life, but were forced to do so through slavery, conquest, or colonization (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). These involuntary minorities experienced ethnic discrimination and inequality for many generations and still do so. They do not see ethnic discrimination as an obstacle they have to overcome, but as an obstacle they will always have to adjust to. Especially the fact that

educational credentials are not necessarily rewarded with job opportunities and good wages (e.g., the job ceiling), weighs heavily on the ethnic community. The limited opportunities to be successful in society creates mistrust in the members and institutions of the dominant society, and discouragement among the ethnic minority members. Another important difference between voluntary and involuntary minorities is their interpretation of cultural differences. Although involuntary minorities strongly believe that speaking the mother tongue of the 'receiving' country and compliance to the rules are essential prerequisites to be successful in school and in wider society, they have difficulties doing so because of two reasons. First, the requirements to be successful are imposed on them by a society that forced them to submit. Second, the experience of ethnic discrimination and inequality for many generations has contributed to the development of a collective identity in opposition to the collective identity of the dominant society. For members of the ethnic community, cultural differences are not obstacles to overcome, but markers of a collective identity that have to be maintained.

In sum, Ogbu's framework describes the unremitting interaction between the system and the different community forces. It is the closely interwoven play of action and reaction between the dominant society and the members of the ethnic minority community that results in different adaptation strategies of the ethnic community. These strategies in turn influence the social adjustment, world-views, well-being and academic achievement of the ethnic minority members. The interpretation of this unremitting interaction depends, according to Ogbu, completely on the migration history of the ethnic community.

Ogbu did not develop a theory about ethnic discrimination, but a theory about the achievement of ethnic minority students. Although the role of ethnic discrimination is seldom explicitly discussed in Ogbu's work, one could say that

ethnic discrimination is the connective thread that runs throughout framework. To state it very simply, the system performs discriminatory acts in different domains and levels in society, the ethnic community reacts in a specific collective manner and this specific collective manner is determined by whether or not the migration history of the ethnic community is colored by ethnic discrimination. The strength of Ogbu's work is that it puts ethnic discrimination into a broader context. It raises the awareness that ethnic discrimination can have an impact on ethnic minority students in many different and interplaying ways.

The cultural-ecological framework has its merits, but has also been the subject of criticism (Gibson, 1997). Ogbu is so focused on ethnicity that he seems to overlook the importance of the socio-economic background and the gender of students. Doing so would help to align his framework even more with the complexity of reality. Another important critique on the cultural-ecological framework is that there is little to no attention paid to differences within the group of (in)voluntary immigrants and to individual differences in school success within the ethnic community (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Ogbu (2008) was aware of this shortcoming, but it was his goal to develop a framework that described the ecological and cultural structures that influence the underachievement of ethnic minority students and this left no room for individual differences.

### **The Fordham-Ogbu thesis of acting white**

The Fordham-Ogbu thesis of acting white is a welcome supplement to the cultural-ecological framework of Ogbu, since it focuses on individual differences within the group of African American students. A large group of African American students are academically successful, despite the limited opportunity structure they face (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2008). Fordham and Ogbu came to the conclusion that they cannot explain this based on Ogbu's work and consequently,

based on ethnographic research, they added two factors, namely the oppositional collective identity and the oppositional cultural frame of reference.

As explained in the cultural-ecological framework, as a consequence of the history of the African Americans, in combination with the difficult relationship with the dominant society, African Americans developed a collective identity (e.g., their we-feeling or sense of belonging) and a cultural frame of reference (e.g., the correct way of behaving and talking) in opposition to the collective identity and cultural frame of reference of the dominant society (Ogbu, 2004).

School and academic performance is seen as the pre-eminent target area of the white American (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). For many generations, white Americans believed that African Americans were intellectually inferior, denied them the opportunity to succeed academically, and did not reward them adequately when they did succeed. Hence, the white dominance in this area caused the equation of adopting attitudes and behaviors conducive to making good grades with 'acting white' and thus also with giving up 'acting black' (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). During their research, Ogbu and Fordham found relatively few students who rejected good grades because that would be considered 'white', but many students did reject speaking standard English, being smart during lessons, doing homework every day and so on, because they perceived it as acting white (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2004). Consequently, the Fordham-Ogbu thesis of acting white states that the underachievement of African Americans could partly be explained by the fact that African American students do not strive to get good grades, since working hard in school is perceived as acting white.

Furthermore, this theory not only discusses the dilemma that African American students face of choosing between acting white and acting black in school, but it also discusses different strategies that allow African American

students to be successful and to cope with the burden of acting white (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2008). It discusses strategies such as camouflaging academic effort with clowning, getting protection by 'bullies' in return for helping them with their schoolwork, being really good in sports (which is seen as a Black activity). Hence, according to the Fordham-Ogbu thesis, every African American student is, to a certain extent, confronted with the burden of acting white. However, because of different coping strategies, not every African American student will react to the burden of acting white with a refusal of putting effort into school.

The strength of this theory is that it shows how historical and distal forms of ethnic discrimination can re-define the school context and the normative behaviors that are expected within that school context. African American students, themselves, do not have to experience ethnic discrimination by peers or teachers to develop an oppositional identity. The experience of ethnic discrimination and oppression for many generations has created dynamics that influence the academic achievement, motivation and effort of the next generation.

The acting white hypothesis is much debated among social scientists. This thesis has proven to be rather controversial. It also has a very narrow perspective on identity. It seems as if students have to choose between an ethnic identity or a host national identity, while research has shown that ethnic identity and host national identity are bi-dimensional (Berry, 1997; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Phinney, 1990). A weak or strong connection to one's ethnic background does not have to be related to a strong or weak connection to the host national society. The connectedness to both kinds of identity are independent from each other. Furthermore, this theory is very difficult to prove empirically. Different scholars attempted to validate (or invalidate) this hypothesis, but empirical support remains scarce and inconsistent (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998;



Cook & Ludwig, 1997; Farkas, Lleras, & Maczuga, 2002; Fryer & Torelli, 2010; Tyson, Castellino, & Darity, 2005). For example, the study of Fryer and Torelli (2010) found the largest acting white effect for African American students who attend schools with less than 20% African American students, while Farkas et al. (2002) only found evidence for the acting white hypothesis for African American students who attend schools with more than 75% African American students. While other studies find little to no evidence for this hypothesis (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Cook & Ludwig, 1997; Tyson et al., 2005). Nevertheless, it is an interesting theoretical idea, since it draws our attention to the opposing forces that can be at work in the school careers of ethnic minority students.

### **Abstract and concrete attitudes**

In the USA, African American students underachieve compared to their white peers. This is better known as the 'Black and White Achievement Gap' (Dworkin, 2014; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). The underachievement stands in contrast to the optimistic attitudes towards education and high educational aspirations of these students (Kao & Tienda, 1995, 1998; Ogbu, 2008; Phalet & Claeys, 1993; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2002). The phenomenon of underachievement, in spite of positive attitudes towards schooling, is known as the attitude-achievement paradox. Mickelson (1990) tried to unravel this paradox in the context of the USA by examining African American students' optimistic school attitudes more in depth.

In her study, she found that African American students had multi-layered attitudes towards education. On the one hand, these students hold abstract attitudes which relate to the general and widespread idea that schooling is key to achieve success and upward mobility. On the other hand, life experiences help to develop more concrete school attitudes that represent students' opinions about

the role of schooling for their personal future life. Mickelson's analyses reveal that students developed these concrete, situation-specific attitudes based on the perceived rewards educated people get on the labor market, namely the opportunities and the wages. For middle-class, white students, there is a convergence between their concrete and abstract attitudes. However, for ethnic minorities and working class students who have personally experienced or witnessed significant others being discriminated against, there is a gap between their abstract and concrete attitudes (Mickelson, 1990, 2008; Ogbu, 2008). Therefore, these ethnic minority students have optimistic abstract attitudes, but hold more pessimistic concrete ones about the role of schooling for their individual future success. This distinction between abstract and concrete attitudes helps to understand the attitude-achievement paradox, according to Mickelson. While abstract attitudes are not related to the achievement of ethnic minority students, concrete attitudes are.

The strength of Mickelson's theory (1990) is that it shows how the distal experience of ethnic discrimination influences students' attitudes and motivation in school. Ethnic minority students may not use their potential to the fullest, due to the awareness that ethnic discrimination creates barriers later on in life. It is a way of coping with structural inequality, but unfortunately, in this way ethnic minority students unwittingly help to reproduce ethnic inequality in education.

This theory has been very influential. Although Mickelson's theory inspired many scholars, very few researchers have actually tested the theory as such. The few studies that did test Mickelson's theory found mixed results. Mickelson's findings were reaffirmed in some studies (Carter, 2005; Herman, 2009; Mickelson, 2001; 2008 using different data; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992), but not all scholars could replicate these results (Downey, 2008; Downey, Ainsworth, & Qian, 2009; Harris, 2006, 2008). These mixed results may suggest two things.

First, they indicate the importance of maintaining conceptual and methodological clarity between different types of school attitudes, as research shows that students make nuanced distinctions about the role of schooling in their future life (Harris, 2008). For example, Downey et al. (2008; 2009) used 12 school attitudes (e.g., discipline is fair; education is important for getting a job later on) from the 'National Education Longitudinal Study, 1990-2000' to test Mickelson's theory in the USA and found that the school attitudes of the African American adolescents appeared to influence their achievement in school. Although these results seem to undermine Mickelson's theory, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions, as Downey et al. used different measurement tools than Mickelson. Second, more attention should be given to the importance of the context, especially given the situational character of concrete attitudes. Students may perceive distinct opportunities depending on the context in which they live and this may vary according to the country of residence (Herman, 2009) or the ethnic minority group they belong to (Carter, 2005; Herman, 2009; Steinberg et al., 1992).

### **Critical race theory**

Critical theories can be characterized by 'constructivism' and 'transformation' (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Stevens & Crozier, 2014). First, these researchers consider reality as being primarily socially constructed. Although many members of society accept concepts and group boundaries as indisputable facts (e.g. ethnic minority, race, ethnicity, but also achievement, success), these researchers indicate that 'the truth only exists for this person in this predicament at this time in history' (Delgado, 1991, p. 11). Since these researchers assume that reality is time-specific, context-specific and non-universal, their goal is not to capture reality, but to capture the meanings given by people to reality (Delgado, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Qualitative research methods such as storytelling, biographies and narratives are preferred over quantitative approaches. Second, by de-constructing concepts, definitions and group-boundaries, they want to transform the existing power relationships (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The goal of the critical approach is not to accumulate knowledge, but to use scientific research as a tool to disclose and challenge fundamental inequalities in society (Stevens & Crozier, 2014).

Within the critical theories, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the movement that focuses on race and racism. CRT starts from the premise that racism is a normal and endemic component of our social fabric (López, 2003). With the decline of overt and intended expressions of racism, there is the idea that racism is not a central problem anymore neither in society, nor in education. However, CRT disagrees and indicates that the whole societal and educational system is characterized by cultural and institutional racism. It is saturated with 'assumptions and practices that have the routine effect of privileging White people over minorities' (Gillborn, 2008, p. 3). Racism and racial inequality structures the school as an institution, the curriculum, the method of instruction, the method of assessment, school funding, the method of punishing and more (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The goal of CRT is to expose the structures of inequality and reveal how much our social order is structured by racial lines (López, 2003). This resulted in a wealth of case-studies that testify how racism expresses itself in education, how minorities experience racism and how racism and racial inequality is part of their lives.

The major strength of CRT is that these studies are eye-openers. They bring to our attention that racism, racial inequality and ethnic discrimination are omnipresent in every aspect of society, in the whole educational system. Furthermore, they draw attention to the fact that racism is a complex phenomenon with many different expressions, at the institutional, cultural and

individual levels, both intended and unintended. However, since CRT approaches racism as inextricably bound up with ethnic educational inequality, researchers provide a wealth of evidence that ethnic minority students experience (institutional) racism in school, but without giving insight into how teacher-student interactions, student-student interactions and the organization and policy of the school have an impact on ethnic minority students' academic achievement and wider outcomes, such as their self-esteem and motivation (Stevens & Crozier, 2014). However, by assuming that racism is an endemic to our social fabric and that society is saturated with white privilege (Gillborn, 2008; López, 2003), critical race theorists are not focused on charting and explaining the variability in the experience of ethnic discrimination and its consequences and the influence of the context, and, hence, they fall short in giving concrete insights into the specific role of ethnic discrimination in educational ethnic inequality. This opens up other fruitful areas of research that start from the premise that both the experience and influence of discrimination can vary according to the context.

### **Individual approaches**

#### **Ethnic discrimination as stressor**

Different scholars discuss the idea that the experience of ethnic discrimination can be considered a stress experience. Hence, the social stress model applies to the experience of ethnic discrimination (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Harrell, 2000).

First, the social stress model indicates that the probability of experiencing stressors is not equally distributed over the population. Ethnic stratification creates an unequal distribution of stressors. For example, ethnic minority students are much more likely to experience ethnic discrimination than ethnic majority

students (Vandezande, Fleischmann, Baysu, Swyngedouw, & Phalet, 2009; M. Verkuyten, 2002; M. Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002).

Second, the social stress model explains how the experience of ethnic discrimination can affect the psychological and physiological well-being of a person (Pearlin, 1989; Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, & Mullan, 1981). If a person experiences ethnic discrimination (stressor), a stress response may follow. For example, a person can feel angry, helpless or sad. These stress responses may affect physical (e.g., high blood pressure), psychological (e.g., depression), social (e.g., loss of social connectedness), functional (e.g., academic achievement) and spiritual (e.g., loss of faith) outcomes (Harrell, 2000).

Third, the social stress model discusses the reasons why ethnic discrimination can affect every person differently. On the one hand, contextual factors influence the interpretation of a situation as being a stressful or not. For example, the Dutch study by Verkuyten and Thijs (2002) found that ethnic minority students who believed that they could tell their teacher about their experiences of being discriminated against and believed that their teacher would respond to this in a positive way were less likely to perceive ethnic discrimination. This study also showed that the relative size of the ethnic minority/majority group in the classroom has an influence, as being the numerical minority in a class room is linked with more perceived incidents of ethnic victimization.

At the same time, when people experience a stress-provoking condition (e.g., ethnic discrimination), they confront it with internal characteristics (e.g., resilience), socio-cultural variables (e.g., faith), specific coping behaviors (e.g., problem-focused) and/or external resources (e.g., social support) (Pearlin et al., 1981). Depending on the availability of the used resource and its ability to alter, mediate or counterbalance ethnic discrimination, this will result in more or less stress responses and negative outcomes as a reaction to the experience of ethnic

discrimination (Harrell, 2000; Pearlin et al., 1981). Hence, the responses to ethnic discrimination vary widely, as a consequence of these moderating coping resources.

The strength of the social stress model is the insight it gives into both the process that explains why ethnic discrimination has negative consequences, and into the processes that are responsible for the fact that not every person experiences ethnic discrimination in the same way: namely, because of contextual factors and moderating coping responses. The broad and generalizable character of the theory, however, makes it easily applicable to a spectrum of situations, and as a result, it does not provide (adequate) insight into the complexity and the concrete mechanisms at play in the experience of ethnic discrimination.

### **Minority stress theory and attribution theory**

Minority stress theory and attribution theory explain how individuals experience ethnic discrimination. Both theories discuss ethnic discrimination in relation to other kinds of stressors. By doing so, these theories give insight into the unique and detrimental character of ethnic discrimination.

According to minority stress theory, the experience of ethnic discrimination is different from the experience of non-ethnic discrimination for members of an ethnic minority (Meyer, 2003). First, belonging to an ethnic minority can often mean belonging to a stigmatized social category. This creates unique stressors in addition to life's general stressors (Meyer, 2003; Smedley, 1993; Wei et al., 2010). For example, taking exams is stressful for many students, but ethnic minority students may feel extra pressure to perform because they do not want to reinforce the idea that ethnic minority students are less intelligent than other students (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Therefore, ethnic victimization is seen as one of those unique minority stressors (Harrell, 2000; Meyer, 2003). Second, ethnic

discrimination is embedded in the power structures in wider society (Graham, 2005; Meyer, 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001; M. Verkuyten & Kinket, 2000). This creates a specific dynamic, that is, even when a person experiences ethnic discrimination in an interpersonal interaction, this experience originates from ethnic lines in social structures beyond the individual. Third, the intention to discriminate ethnic minorities stems from an ethnic prejudice that is widespread in society. Since a person cannot change ethnicity, and since this is a stable basis for discrimination, it is very likely that ethnic minority students will encounter ethnic discrimination throughout their lives (Meyer, 2003). Hence, on a theoretical level, minority stress theory specifies that ethnic discrimination has some unique features that make it different from other forms of discrimination for ethnic minority students; unique features that should be incorporated in studies focusing on the influence of ethnic discrimination on individual outcomes.

Attribution theory discusses the idea that attribution processes can influence the perception and consequences of ethnic discrimination (Graham, 2005; Graham & Juvonen, 1998). Except in the case of overt ethnic discrimination, ethnic minority students are often confronted with internal doubt, e.g., 'Do I get bad grades because I did not study enough or because of ethnic discrimination by the teacher?' Experimental research shows that in ambiguous situations, ethnic minorities consistently assign bad grades to the quality of their work, rather than to discrimination (Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997; Taylor, Ruggiero, & Louis, 1996). Research on attribution processes indicates that there are two types of self-blame: characterological and behavioral. Characterological self-blame is characterized by the attribution of victimization to a stable and uncontrollable cause (e.g., 'It's about the way I am, not about the things I did'). Behavioral self-blame is the opposite of characterological self-blame: characterized by instability and a sense of



control (e.g., 'It is something I did'). Students' well-being is more heavily influenced by characterological than by behavioral self-blame. If ethnic minority students see bad grades as the result of their own work, this is behavioral self-blame. If ethnic minority students consider bad grades as ethnic discrimination, this is characterological self-blame.

Hence, the strength of attribution theory is two-fold. First, it provides insight into the individual processes that result in different perceptions of the same situation. Second, it helps to understand why a confrontation with ethnic discrimination is negative for individuals: namely, because it takes away a person's sense of control (Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, we present a more comprehensive theoretical framework (see Figure 2.1), that can help to understand the experience of ethnic discrimination and its consequences, underlying mechanisms, and coping responses. All the theories discussed have strengths and weaknesses, and now it is our aim to combine these theories into one theoretical model.

The cultural-ecological framework (Ogbu, 2008) and CRT (Gillborn, 2008) give unique insights into how institutional, cultural and individual discrimination influence educational inequality, but their strength is also their weakness, since these theories lose sight of the individual differences. They are very strong and complete on an abstract, theoretical level, but as a consequence, also very difficult to validate or invalidate quantitatively. These theories are added to the theoretical model as a contextual frame that supports researchers in their critical reflection of different contextual, historical and situational influences that are important in the relationship between ethnic discrimination and educational inequality.

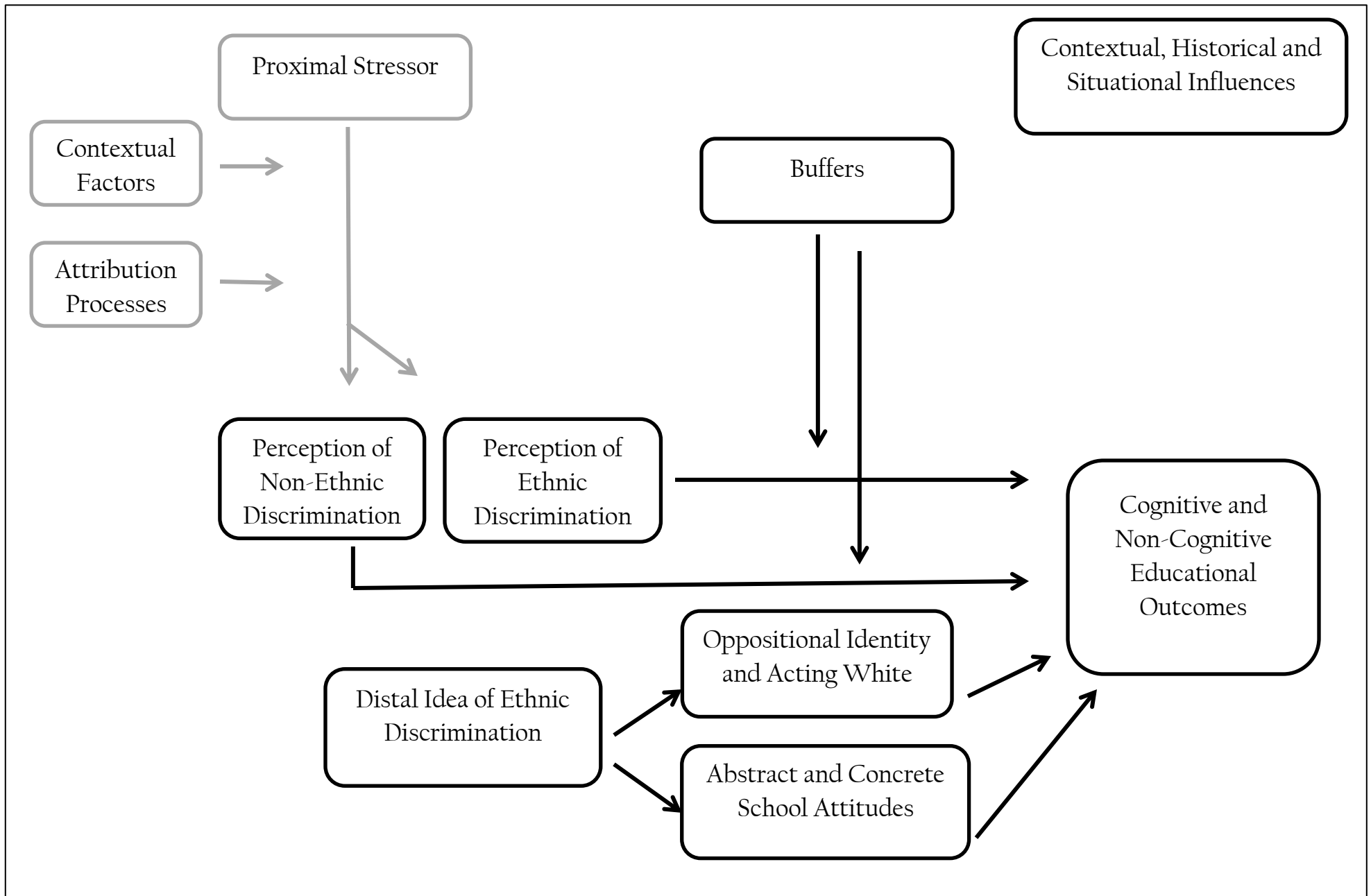
The Fordham-Ogbu thesis of acting white (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and Mickelson's theory (1990) on abstract and concrete attitudes show that a distal idea of ethnic discrimination can be equally influential as a proximal experience of ethnic discrimination. Furthermore, each theory discusses a mechanism that attempts to explain how the distal idea of ethnic discrimination can influence the academic achievement of ethnic minority adolescents. We added the distal idea of ethnic discrimination, mediated by 'acting white' and 'abstract and concrete attitudes' to the theoretical model. These relationships are visualized in the bottom half of Figure 2.1.

The social stress model explains how the proximal experience of ethnic discrimination can affect adolescents' cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes (Pearlin, 1989). Furthermore, it discusses the idea that contextual factors influence the interpretation of a proximal stressor as being stressful, and integrates the idea that coping can attenuate the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination. The model describes a sequence of stressors that may precipitate stress (e.g., the experience of ethnic or non-ethnic discrimination), depending on contextual factors, which in turn affect adolescents' cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, depending on the availability and ability of coping resources. This sequence is displayed in Figure 2.1.

Minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003) and attribution theory (Graham, 2005) are two theories that provide more insight into the experience of ethnic discrimination. Minority stress model brings to the attention that ethnic minority adolescents can also experience other forms of stress. Hence, next to ethnic discrimination, we added non-ethnic discrimination to the model, because it can help to understand the complex experience of ethnic discrimination. Attribution theory shows that a negative proximal stressor is not always perceived in the same way. In other words: there are invisible attribution processes at work within the

individual, and how a proximal stressor is perceived is partly a reflection of these attribution processes. These invisible processes are represented in grey in Figure 2.1. The elements discussed in the social stress model, minority stress model and attribution theory are portrayed in the upper half of Figure 2.1.

Figure 2. 1. Theoretical model





### Chapter 3: Coping with ethnic discrimination

The intensity of ethnic discrimination cannot be the sole predictor of the intensity of one's response to it (Pearlin et al., 1981). The experience of ethnic discrimination can activate a wide range of coping responses. Coping is defined as a process whereby an individual attempts to manage stressors or threats through cognitive and behavioral efforts (Lazarus & Folkman, 1986). An individual may attempt to change the situation, to manage the meaning of the situation in a manner that reduces its threat, or to focus on a decrease of stress symptoms (Pearlin, 1989). While every coping response is directed towards managing stressors, not every coping response is equally successful. An adaptive coping response can influence the outcome of the stressful situation and sometimes modify the stressor (Harrell, 2000). A maladaptive coping response does not attenuate stress and may even negatively affect the well-being or health of the individual (Clark et al., 1999). It is important to be aware that coping is a sequential and dynamic process, embedded in a context (Stevens, Charalambouw, Tempriou, Mesaritou, & Spyrou, 2013). For example, a qualitative study of Stevens et al. (2013) shows that Turkish Cypriot minority students use different coping strategies within school, than outside of school. In school, some students respond in a more controlled way to the experience of ethnic discrimination, because they fear they would otherwise get into trouble. Furthermore, the Turkish Cypriot students use different coping strategies consecutively (e.g., in a first stage they ignore the perpetrator, in a second stage they tell the teacher about it). Hence, researchers have to keep in mind that the adaptive power of coping responses must be discussed in relation to the dynamic and contextual character of coping.

Coping is a multidimensional concept. It covers many different responses to stressors and strain. Two broad dimensions can be outlined. On the one hand,

there are specific coping responses (e.g., getting angry, or telling somebody about it). Specific coping responses are ‘the behaviors, cognitions, and perceptions in which people engage when actually contending with their life-problems. (...) Coping responses represent some of the things that people do, their concrete efforts to deal with the life-strains.’ (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, p. 5). On the other hand, there are coping resources (e.g., ethnic identity, spirituality, ethnic socialization). ‘Resources do not refer to what people do, but to what is available to them in developing their coping repertoires’ (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, p. 5).

In conclusion, because of the wide range of coping responses—specific or resources—, and because of the dynamic and contextual character, coping is a complex phenomenon to study. The existing empirical evidence is inconclusive about which coping responses are adaptive and consequently, we cannot draw conclusions about which conditions a successful coping response must comply to. Because of this, we chose to discuss three coping responses more in detail: specific coping responses, parental ethnic socialization and ethnic identity. These three coping responses are important in the literature on coping with ethnic discrimination, and consequently, this helps to build on the existing knowledge and to learn more about which coping responses can attenuate the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination for ethnic minority adolescents in an educational context (Brondolo, Brady, Pencille, Beatty, & Contrada, 2009).

### **Specific coping responses**

The wide variety of specific coping responses challenged scholars to develop classifications that provide more clarity. The dimensions most used to structure the different forms of coping are ‘approach versus avoidance’ and ‘problem-focused versus emotion-focused’ (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001).

The approach-avoidance dimension (Roth & Cohen, 1986) or, as a synonym, engagement-disengagement dimension (Compas et al., 2001) has its origin in a fight or flight response to threat. Approach coping includes responses that are directed towards the stressor, and encompasses an acknowledgement of the stressor, for example, teaching the perpetrator about how wrong his/her stereotypes are or taking control back by using humor to defuse ethnic discrimination (Mellor, 2004; Roth & Cohen, 1986). Avoidance coping is directed towards the avoidance of thinking about the stressor or its consequences. It is not only about the denial of the problem, but also about seeking distraction, for example, by detaching oneself from the ethnic community and denying one's ethnic identity -- by just blocking out the experience (Mellor, 2004).

The second dimension is problem-focused coping versus emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is about seeking information, generating possible solutions to a problem, and taking actions to change the circumstances that are creating stress, while emotion-focused coping is about expressing one's emotions, seeking support from others and trying to avoid the source of stress. An example of problem-focused coping is joining an anti-discrimination demonstration (Harrell, 2000). An example of emotion-focused coping is sharing the experiences of ethnic discrimination with others with similar experiences (Mellor, 2004). There is a lot of disbelief with regard to ethnic discrimination, so this sharing helps the individual to feel acknowledged in his/her experience. While these two dimensions serve as an interesting way to group different coping responses, two categories are simply too few to adequately grasp the reality of the complex variety of existing coping responses (Compas et al., 2001; Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003).

Research shows that not every specific coping response is equally successful in managing stressors. The review of Compas et al. (2001) on coping with stress



among adolescents, based on 63 studies, illustrates this perfectly. First of all, studies found that coping more often had no impact on the relationship between stressors and internalizing problems (e.g., depression), externalizing problems (e.g., aggression), or social and academic competence. In the group of studies that did find significant results in terms of the success of coping skills/responses, Compas et al. identified two broad patterns. First, the majority of studies that examined the impact of engagement coping and problem-focused coping reported that these coping responses are associated with fewer internalizing and externalizing problems and with more social competence. The most successful problem-focused and engagement coping strategies were problem solving, cognitive restructuring, and positive reappraisal of the stressor. Second, in contrast, the majority of studies that focused on disengagement coping and emotion-focused coping found that these coping responses are associated with more internalizing and externalizing problems and with less social competence. Of course, one must be careful with drawing strong conclusions from these findings, since all the reviewed studies were cross-sectional and it is likely that adolescents with fewer psychological problems and more social competence were also more capable of generating effective solutions to problems and to maintain a positive outlook when confronted with stress. Furthermore, the authors of this review find that disengagement coping and emotion-focused coping could be adaptive if the stressor was uncontrollable (e.g., conflict with parents or sexual abuse), and that problem-focused coping was associated with better psychological adjustment if it was in response to a controllable stressor (e.g., disagreement with a friend). Hence, the authors conclude, in line with previous research, that specific coping responses are most efficacious if they match the controllability of the stressor.

## Coping resources

The role of coping resources is two-fold: on the one hand, they can be a resource that supports adolescents at the moment they experience ethnic discrimination; on the other hand, they can influence the perception of reality (Harrell, 2000). The latter, which we will call antecedent coping resources, influence how people perceive their cultural and ethnic background, give meaning to the world, and perceive ethnic discrimination and ethnic inequalities in life (Harrell, 2000; Pearlin, 1989). In this dissertation, we discuss two kinds of coping resources: parental ethnic socialization and ethnic identity.

### Parents' ethnic socialization practices

Parental ethnic socialization is about the transmission of parents' ideas about ethnicity by way of subtle, overt, deliberate, and unintended mechanisms with the central goal to protect children against the negative effects of ethnic discrimination and ethnic inequalities (Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006). Although the goal is the same for every parent, the mode of transmission, the content of the message, and the frequency differ widely (Coard & Sellers, 2005). Parents transmit their message through oral communication (e.g., storytelling), modelling (e.g., demonstrating particular behavior), role playing (e.g., practicing desirable behavior to hypothetical situations) or exposure (e.g., visiting a historical museum) (Coard, Wallace, Stevenson Jr, & Brotman, 2004).

Based on a review of Hughes et al. (2006), four types of content are distinguished. The first type is cultural socialization. The focus of cultural socialization is on the promotion of ethnic pride (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007; Hughes et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009). Parents try to counterbalance the negative experiences by teaching their children to be proud of their ethnic background and

by teaching them about their cultural heritage, history, traditions or customs. The second type is preparation for bias (Fisher et al., 2000; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Hughes et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). The goal of preparation for bias is to prepare children to cope with ethnic discrimination. Parents want to make their children aware of ethnic barriers and hand them tools to overcome these obstacles. The third type is promotion of mistrust (Hughes et al., 2006). In contrast to preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust is not about handling tools to overcome obstacles, but purely about warning about obstacles and the need for wariness and distrust in interracial interactions. The fourth type is egalitarianism and silence about race (Hughes et al., 2006). This last category is not typical for ethnic socialization, since the content is specifically not directed towards ethnicity, but towards individuality. Parents teach their children that individuality is the most important characteristic to value in a person, more important than race, and some parents even avoid mentioning race at all.

The empirical studies on parental ethnic socialization and ethnic discrimination yield a mixed picture. Some studies find that parents' socialization practices act as a protective factor between ethnic discrimination and African American students' resilience, well-being or psychological distress (D. L. Brown & Tylka, 2011; Fischer & Shaw, 1999), whereas others find no such evidence for African American students' academic achievement and school involvement (Miller & MacIntosh, 1999). Some studies find that only specific ethnic socialization messages act as a buffer: the study of Bynum et al. (2007) showed that messages of being proud of your ethnicity did not buffer the impact of experiencing ethnic discrimination, while parents' messages emphasizing the importance of religion, Black history, and kinships did protect African American adolescents against psychological stress. Other studies even indicate that parents' socialization may

contribute to more ethnic discrimination distress by raising awareness about it (Brega & Coleman, 1999; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999).

These inconsistent results might be a consequence of the complexity of ethnic socialization. The term covers different messages, transmitted in different ways and at different frequencies. Moreover, different theories suggest contradicting mechanisms to explain the moderating role of parental ethnic socialization. To illustrate this, we will discuss the moderating role of the two most researched messages of ethnic socialization: cultural socialization and preparation for bias (Fisher et al., 2000; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Hughes et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009).

According to social identity theory, cultural socialization will protect adolescents against the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination (Tajfel, 1974). Cultural socialization will help adolescents to maintain a positive image of their ethnic group and to focus on the positive aspects of their in-group. This will strengthen their self-esteem, which helps to maintain a positive self-image, even when they experience ethnic discrimination. Researchers also expect that preparation for bias will play a protective role insofar as it teaches children how to cope with ethnic discrimination (Fisher et al., 2000; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Hughes et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009).

In contrast, research on rejection sensitivity suggests that cultural socialization and preparation for bias will exacerbate the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination. Not everybody perceives and reacts to rejection in the same way (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). Cultural socialization can raise the awareness of the adolescent for the presence of rejection cues because of one's ethnic cultural background. Preparation for bias can lead to the development of anxious rejection expectations. Hence, instead of helping adolescents to cope with ethnic discrimination, it is

possible that it raises the sensitivity of the adolescent and instills an idea that there is no way to escape the negative experience of ethnic discrimination, which can lead to more intense reactions when adolescents actually experience ethnic discrimination (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002).

## **Ethnic identity**

Ethnic identity is not interchangeable with ethnicity. The latter is a social fact, while the former is part of adolescents' social identity. Tajfel (2010, p. 2) defines social identity as follows: 'social identity must be understood as that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.' Many scholars have focused on the underlying dimensions of ethnic identity (Oyserman, Kimmelmeier, Fryberg, Brosh, & Hart-Johnson, 2003; Phinney, 1990; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). In this dissertation, we follow Sellers' work (1998), which discusses four underlying dimensions of ethnic identity: centrality, public and private regard, and ideology. Ethnic centrality is about the extent to which individuals' ethnicity is a central part of their overall social identity. Regard consists of two sub-dimensions. Private regard is about individuals' emotions towards the ethnic group. Public regard is about how individuals think the mainstream society perceives their ethnic group. The fourth and last dimension, ideology, discusses the ideas that individuals have about how a member of their ethnic community should think and act. All these different dimensions combine into an individual sense of ethnic identity.

In the literature, ethnic identity has been identified both as a protective factor and as an exacerbating factor for the negative consequences of ethnic

discrimination on the well-being of adolescents (Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008). The protective hypothesis argues that having a strong ethnic identification will attenuate the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination on well-being. According to social identity theory (see above), once individuals identify with a specific group, they feel an urge to focus on the positive and unique aspects of the in-group (Tajfel, 1974). This urge helps in-group members to maintain a positive self-image, even when they are confronted with ethnic discrimination. The exacerbating hypothesis states that ethnic identity fosters the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination on adolescents' well-being. Seeing as ethnicity is an important part of your social identity, Being discriminated against because of your ethnicity exacerbates the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination (McCoy & Major, 2003). It is psychologically painful to experience that others devalue a core element of your social identity.

The empirical evidence is inconclusive. Some studies find evidence for the protective hypothesis (Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2004; Wong et al., 2003), others for the exacerbating hypothesis (Yoo & Lee, 2005), and some find no evidence that ethnic identity moderates the relationship between ethnic discrimination and certain outcomes (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Wong et al., 2003).

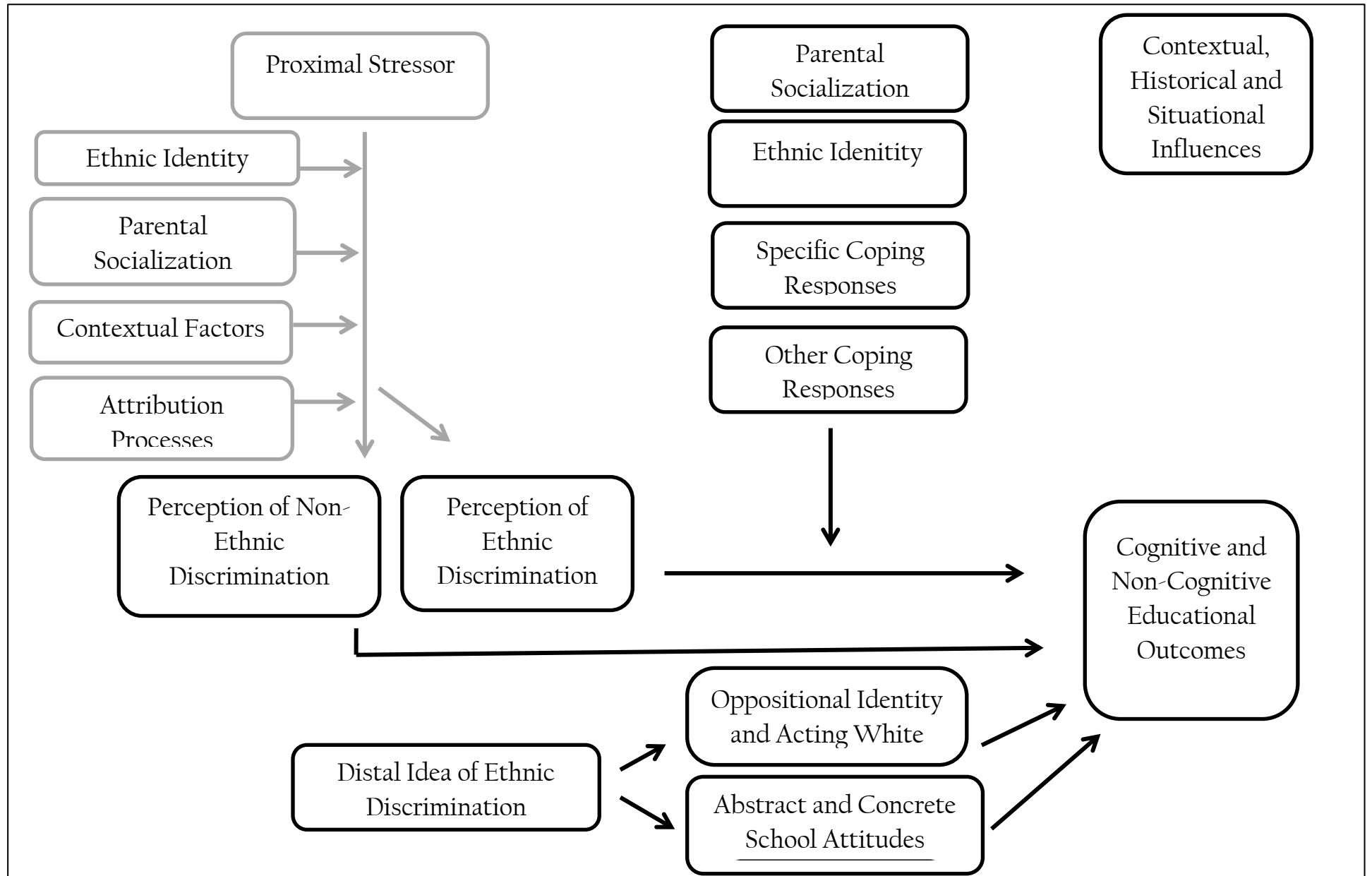
To end, a small note on host national identity. Although most research focuses on ethnic identity, we should not forget that adolescents with an immigrant background are connected to their country of origin and to their country of settlement. The social identity of immigrant adolescents can contain both an ethnic identity and a host national identity. Considering that the knowledge about the moderating role of the host national identity is very limited, both theoretically and empirically (Maes, Stevens, & Verkuyten, 2013), it would

be theoretically interesting if future research on ethnic identity would also take host national identity into account.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, after discussing theories and empirical evidence on specific coping responses and coping resources, it still remains unclear which coping approaches could be adaptive in response to ethnic discrimination. However, knowledge on which factors might attenuate the consequences of ethnic discrimination on cognitive and non-cognitive educational outcomes is both theoretically and socially interesting. Therefore, it is an important research topic. Consequently, we added the three different coping approaches to the theoretical framework discussed in the previous chapter to create a more comprehensive model, which focuses on both the consequences of ethnic discrimination and the moderating processes that might counterbalance these consequences (see Figure 2). On the one hand, we added parental ethnic socialization and ethnic identity to the left hand-side of the model, since these two coping resources can influence the interpretation of a proximal stressor as antecedent coping resources. On the other hand, we replaced the variable 'buffers' by the more specific coping responses discussed in this chapter.

Figure 3. 1 Theoretical model with coping responses







## Chapter 4: Flemish context

Flanders is the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. Belgium comprises three linguistic communities (Dutch, French, and German) and three regions (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels). Although Belgium has only 11 million inhabitants, it has a rather complex government structure that also affects the organization of the educational system. Since the federal restructuring of 1989, education is the responsibility of the linguistic communities. This results in there being a Dutch-speaking educational system, a French-speaking educational system and a German-speaking educational system.

### Background of ethnic minority students

In 2011, figures of the Crossroads Bank of Social Security showed that 81.3% of adolescents aged 12 to 17 living in Flanders were of Belgian descent, 6.0% of Western European descent, 2.8% of East-European descent, 2.8% of Turkish descent, 3.2% of Moroccan descent, and 4.0% have their roots in other countries (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013). The three largest groups of people with a non-Western European background living in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking northern part of Belgium) are people of Moroccan, East European and Turkish descent.

The migration history of the Moroccans and the Turks started during the 'Golden Sixties', when Belgian industry was in need of extra labor force and many Moroccans and Turks came to Belgium as labor migrants. As a consequence of the economic crisis in the early 1970s, the Belgian government decided to stop the influx of labor migrants and only allow migration because of family reunification or political reasons. In the beginning, immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan descent were very welcome. They worked in the mining industry or in the textile factories. However, when the economy changed and it became clear to the Belgian

inhabitants that these immigrants would not return to their home country, the atmosphere became much more hostile. This is illustrated by surveys that aim to capture ethnic Belgians' prejudices against other ethnicities (Billiet et al., 1990; Meuleman & Billiet, 2005). People of Turkish and Moroccan descent were confronted with electoral successes of an extreme right party who was anti-Islam and focused explicitly on people of Turkish and Moroccan descent. Field experiments with correspondence tests on the labor market and the housing market indicate that people of Turkish and Moroccan descent are still discriminated against (Baert et al., 2013; Van der Bracht et al., 2014). Furthermore, they are almost four times as likely to be unemployed as people of Belgian descent and this gap has remained constant since the early 1980s (OECD, 2008). Of the inhabitants of Belgian descent, 10.16% live at risk of income poverty (= earn less than 60% of the median equalized income) (Van Robaeys, Perrin, Vranken, & Martiniello, 2006). For inhabitants of Turkish and Moroccan descent, this is 55.56% and 58.94% respectively.

The migration of East Europeans to Belgium started in the early 1990s, but gained force in 2004 with the expansion of the European Union. Since 2004, different East European countries joined the European Union and after a few years of transitional measures, there is now free movement of workers and persons. More job opportunities and higher wages are important pull-factors for migration to Belgium (Touquet & Wets, 2013). However, the migration channels and the residence status differ widely between immigrants of East-European descent. Some become permanent residents, others are temporarily seconded to Belgium or reside illegally in Belgium. Due to the recent migration history and the free movement of workers and persons in the European Union, it is very difficult to find studies that give detailed information about the number of East European

immigrants living in Belgium, about their living condition or their experiences with ethnic discrimination. For inhabitants of East European descent, a recent study suggests that 36.0% live at risk of income poverty (Van Haarlem, Coene, & Lusyne, 2011). However, we have to be careful with this statistic, because there is only a limited amount of information available.

### **Educational system**

In Flanders, education is compulsory between the age of six and eighteen (Boone & Van Houtte, 2013a; Van Praag, Stevens, & Van Houtte, 2014). In a regular trajectory, students follow six years of primary school, after which they make the transition to secondary school, which also lasts six years. Primary school is similar for all children, in contrast with secondary education. The six years of secondary education are divided into three cycles of two years each. The differentiation in terms of educational tracks and fields of study within those tracks increases over subsequent grades, but in general, students choose between four tracks: academic (ASO), technical (TSO), vocational (BSO) or artistic (KSO) secondary education. Parents, teachers and students perceive the academic track differently from the technical and vocational tracks. As a consequence of the diminishing focus on cognition, academic tracks are given more status than the 'lower', more practical technical and vocational tracks (Stevens & Vermeersch, 2010; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009). Rather than being allocated to a certain track, students select one themselves, mainly based on their prior achievement in primary education and on their social background (Boone & Van Houtte, 2013). In contrast to many other countries, such as the UK or the USA, there are no centrally-organized standardized tests in Flanders. Teachers have considerable autonomy, because they are responsible for designing and correcting the exams. In addition, at the end of the school year, secondary school teachers come together to

decide, based on students' exam results, motivation and behavior, if a student can continue to the next year or has to retake the school year. Students in all tracks have the possibility to enter higher education, except for students in vocational track (Van Praag et al., 2014). These students have to follow an extra year of specialization before they receive their secondary education diploma. In general, there are no entry exams to enter higher education, so every student with a diploma of secondary education can start higher education. Moreover, since higher education is heavily subsidized, it is relatively cheap. However, academic tracks are explicitly preparing for higher education, while technical tracks, and in particular vocational tracks, are not.

Although the goal of tracking is the grouping of students with the same ability and interests, Flemish research shows that tracking often results in the grouping of students with the same socio-economic status and ethnic background (Agirdag, Demanet, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2011; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010; Van Praag et al., 2014). Students from lower social or non-West-European ethnic backgrounds are overrepresented in the lower status tracks (i.e., technical, but especially vocational track), while students from higher social and West-European ethnic backgrounds are overrepresented in the academic – higher status – track. In addition, not every school offers the same track composition: multilateral schools offer all the tracks, while categorical schools only offer one or two tracks, most often academic secondary education or technical and vocational secondary education (Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009). As a consequence, segregation of students between tracks often equals segregation of students between schools.

This process of socio-ethnic segregation is exacerbated by the educational policy of free parental school choice. Since every parent can choose a school for their child and there are no regulations, parents can select or avoid a specific

school because of the student composition. Especially for secondary education, the proximity of the school is not the first concern of the parents (Creten, Douterlungne, Verhaeghe, & De Vos, 2000). They are more concerned with the ‘reputation’ of the school. However, since middle class, mostly ethnic Belgian parents, have more resources to act upon their wish to send their children to a ‘good, white, middle-class school’, the free parental choice exacerbates the socio-ethnic segregation between schools.

### Schooling of ethnic minority students

Ethnic minority students underachieve compared to the ethnic majority students. The OECD PISA study (2012) shows that Flanders has the largest difference in mathematics scores between the children of immigrants and native students of all OECD countries, even if controlled for socio-economic status. The underachievement manifests not only in the test results of the PISA2012-data, but also in the overrepresentation of these minorities in less esteemed tracks, higher drop-out rates, higher levels of grade retention, and their underrepresentation in higher education compared with their peers of Belgian descent (Duquet, Glorieux, Laurijssen, & Van Dorsselaer, 2006; Heath, Rotheron, & Kilpi, 2008).

Flanders has educational policies that focus on the elimination of ethnic inequalities and the integration of ethnic minorities in school (Sierens, 2006; Van Praag et al., 2014). However, the first real educational policy focusing on the integration of ethnic minorities was only developed in the early 1990s. Since then, different policies were introduced, but the key mechanism in all these policies is the donation of extra funding if schools meet certain criteria, for example, the number of at-risk students (i.e., the educational priorities policy in 1991 or the equal education opportunities policy in 2002). Although there are guidelines and a certain pressure from above to use the money in a certain way, depending on the

dominant ideas of the Flemish Ministry of Education at that moment, schools are fairly autonomous with respect to how they decide to use the money. For example, in the 'equal education opportunities policy' educational funding is distributed according to the social characteristics of the student population: home language, educational degree of the mother, income of the parents, and the neighborhood of the school. Schools use this extra funding for different purposes; for example, some schools invest in extra teachers to have smaller classes for all students, while other schools invest in extra teachers that can help at-risk students one-on-one for a couple of hours a week.

Despite these efforts, the realization of ethnic equality and integration has advanced with difficulty (Sierens, 2006). The translation of policy into practice sometimes failed due to a lack of financial and practical support. Flemish schools have a lot of autonomy, so if school principals or teachers are not supportive of an educational policy, there is no guarantee that it will be implemented in the school or in the classroom (De Wit & Van Petegem, 2000). The immigration context of Belgium changes constantly and educational policy lags behind. There is a strong belief that learning Dutch is the key to resolving all problems, so the mother tongue and the ethnic identity of the students are practically ignored, or perceived as a barrier to educational success (Agirdag, 2009; Extra & de Ruiter, 2001; Sierens, 2006). This results in a daily reality in Flemish schools and on a social policy level is often very different from the theoretical willingness to realize educational equality.

### **Prevalence of ethnic discrimination in secondary education**

Very few studies give information about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination in Flemish secondary education. The TIES project shows that in their sample of 651 students of Turkish and Moroccan descent more than half of

the male students and nearly half of the female students in Antwerp experienced ethnic discrimination one or more times during secondary education (Vandezande et al., 2009). Furthermore, at least 7% of the male and female students of Turkish and Moroccan descent experienced ethnic discrimination *frequently*. Of the male students, 36.25% experienced discrimination by peers and 39.4% by teachers. For female students, this was 47.3% and 36.2% respectively. In Antwerp, 71.5% of the male students and 86.5% of the female students of Belgian descent never experienced ethnic discrimination. The study by Teney et al. (2013) focused on secondary schools in the Brussels region. They find that 30% of the students of Turkish descent, 35% of the students of Moroccan descent and 33% of the students of East European descent all experienced discrimination at school. Most of the discrimination experiences were attributed to ethnicity, religion or skin color.

Hence, based on these studies, we can conclude that it is likely that a large number of ethnic minority students in Flemish secondary schools were confronted with ethnic discrimination, and that it was much more common among ethnic minority students than among ethnic majority students. Finally, the study by Teney et al. (2013) also finds that the prevalence of ethnic discrimination is rather similar for students of Turkish, Moroccan and East European descent.





## Chapter 5: Operational and methodological framework

### Operational framework

We developed the more comprehensive theoretical framework as a generative model; that is, it can be used as a starting point for several empirical studies that focus on ethnic discrimination and educational inequality. In the five empirical chapters of this dissertation, we start from the theoretical framework, but not every element will be discussed. Figure 3 gives an overview of the applied theoretical framework that will be used in the empirical studies of this dissertation. The concrete operationalization of the determinants, the process variables and the outcomes are discussed below.

*Determinants.* Ethnic discrimination is the central determinant of this dissertation. Mindful of how complex a phenomenon it is, we choose to approach ethnic discrimination from various different angles. Additionally, it is difficult to capture ethnic discrimination with quantitative measures. Ethnic discrimination is about the differential treatment because of a person's ethnicity. As a consequence, the only way one can be certain that a person is discriminated against because of his/her ethnicity is to compare two identical situations, in which the target has a different ethnicity in the first situation than in the second one (Quillian, 1995).

This coincidence would not happen 'in real life'. Well conducted field audit studies, however, do approach the ideal measurement situation closely (Quillian, 1995). Audit studies are quasi-experiments that use pairs of testers. These two persons are matched to be similar on all the characteristics that influence the outcome, except for their ethnicity. They then take part in a real life situation where discrimination can be suspected (e.g., apply for a job). The researcher

compares the outcomes of many audits and when there is a significant difference between the two situations, this gives very solid proof of the existence of ethnic discrimination. However, audit studies can only be performed in specific situations (e.g., impossible for the measurement of job promotion or the quality of teacher-student relationships) and can only be used to determine if ethnic discrimination is present in that specific situation. Since this dissertation focuses on the experiences of minors in an educational context over a longer period of time, field audit studies are not the best option.

The survey is a commonly-used method in quantitative research. This method has many practical benefits, for example, it is not necessary that the researcher be present while respondents fill out the survey, a large group of respondents can be reached simultaneously, and it is less time-consuming than an audit study. For the measurement of ethnic discrimination, it is better to focus on the experiences of the targets, than on the discriminatory actions of the perpetrators, since the answers of the latter will very likely be biased due to blind spots, social desirability or fear of legal prosecution (Quillian, 1995). One of the major strengths of questioning the potential targets of ethnic discrimination is the possibility of capturing their lived experiences of ethnic discrimination, however, the subjective nature of how respondents *perceive* their experiences of ethnic discrimination is also considered a significant drawback to the method (Quillian, 1995). Nevertheless, in line with the Thomas Theorem, ‘if people define situations as real, they will become real in their consequences’— the meaning that people give to a situation is more important than the objective features of that situation ( Thomas & Thomas, 1928). The use of a survey where targets can report their experiences is therefore a valuable method for measuring ethnic discrimination.

Additionally, the use of a survey that addresses the perpetrators is a useful instrument to gain a better understanding of the prejudices and ethnocentrism, with the downside of this method being the potential bias in the answers due to social desirability. The norm has shifted in the last few decades and it is no longer socially accepted to express blatant prejudices. Since this is at odds with the evidence of persisting ethnic inequalities in society and the experience of ethnic discrimination in school and on the labor and housing market, scholars have developed new scales – e.g., subtle and blatant racism (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). These scales are developed to identify the level of ethnic prejudice that is still present in today’s society. In line with the development of new scales, new measurement techniques have also been developed to capture current ethnic prejudices. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is one of those new measurement techniques and has received a lot of research attention (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Implicit measures such as IAT have been specifically developed to handle social desirability by eliminating the control respondents have over their answers: respondents are unable to control how they score on implicit measures. The IAT is designed to measure automatic associations between two pairs of concepts (e.g., Turkish versus Belgian names, and positive words versus negative words). Using the test results, it is sometimes possible for researchers to link the insight they have regarding the prejudices of one ethnic group with the test outcomes of another ethnic group. For example, a Dutch study by Van den Bergh et al. (2010) assessed the prejudices of 41 elementary school teachers using a self-report scale and IAT. These self-report measures and IAT scores were then linked with students’ achievement results. They found that the achievement gap between students of Dutch origin and ethnic minority students was larger in classrooms with teachers who held more negative implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities.

However, they found no evidence that self-reported prejudiced attitudes influenced the ethnic achievement gap.

In conclusion, although no flawless method exists, there are several methods that can successfully be used to capture the complex experience of ethnic discrimination. There are other methods than the ones discussed here, especially different kinds of experimental designs, but since we are interested in the real-life experiences of ethnic minority students, those are less relevant for this dissertation. In the empirical chapters six, eight and nine, we will approach the proximal experience of ethnic discrimination with a student-survey that asks about the experiences of ethnic discrimination. In chapter ten, we will also use a student-survey, but this time to discuss the distal idea of ethnic discrimination. However, the distal idea of ethnic discrimination will only be measured indirectly, through the process variable abstract and concrete school attitudes. Therefore, this relationship is displayed in grey in the operational framework (see Figure 3). In chapter seven, the focus is on the proximal experience of ethnic discrimination, but in this chapter, we will make use of a teacher-survey to capture teachers' attitudes towards ethnic minorities, both measured in an explicit way with a self-reported measure and in an implicit way with a specific version of the IAT. In sum, the central determinant in the empirical chapters of this survey is ethnic discrimination, captured by different measurement techniques, which should allow us to discuss the complexity of ethnic discrimination in an in-depth way.

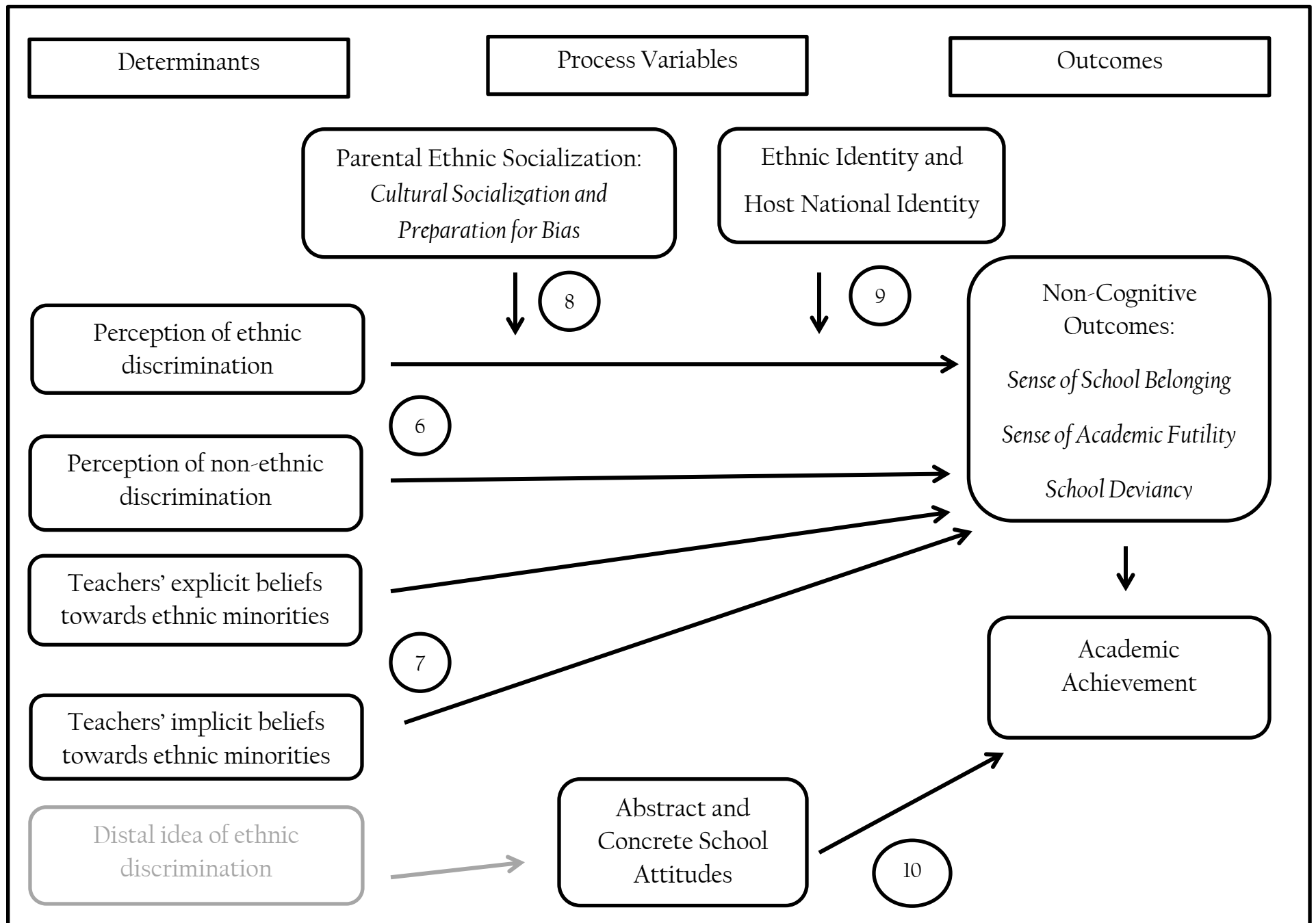
*Process variables.* The process variables included in the operational framework are a direct reflection of the process variables included in the more comprehensive theoretical model. In chapter six, we will focus on the mediating role of abstract and concrete school attitudes, in line with the work of Mickelson (1990). In line with the literature on coping discussed in chapter three, we will include the

moderating role of parents' ethnic socialization practices in the analyses of chapter eight and the moderating role of ethnic identity and host national identity in the analyses of chapter nine.

*Outcomes.* One of the goals of this dissertation is to focus on both cognitive and non-cognitive educational outcomes, which will result in a wide range of possible outcomes. The final selection of outcomes is a consequence of both scientific and practical concerns. Chapter ten is the only chapter in which we will use a cognitive outcome variable. In Flanders, there are no centrally-organized standardized tests (see the section on the Flemish educational system). We could have administered our own tests, but a survey plus a test would have taken two hours and we did not want to burden the schools too much, so we will make use of the only uniform system in Flemish education, namely a certificate given at the end of the school year (see below for more information). In the other chapters, we focus on non-cognitive outcome variables. We chose these outcome variables mainly according to gaps in the literature, a process that will be dealt with in the following chapters. In chapter six and seven, we will focus on sense of school belonging. In chapter eight, we will discuss the association between ethnic discrimination and sense of academic futility. In chapter nine, school delinquency will be the central outcome variable.



Figure 5. 1. Operational framework





## Data

Before discussing the operationalization of the variables included in the framework, we will focus on the procedure of data collection. Since there was no large-scale quantitative dataset available with measures appropriate for the purpose of this research, it was necessary to develop new surveys and to collect new data. An example of the surveys can be obtained upon request. More specifically, in the school year 2011-2012, we collected data in 55 secondary schools and obtained data from 4322 students and 645 teachers.

### The sampling strategy

The central goal of this dissertation is to carry out a quantitative study on the consequences of ethnic discrimination for ethnic minority students. To realize this goal, we opted for a multistage sampling frame. This gave the opportunity to ensure sufficient variability and cases in terms of schools' ethnic composition and the level of urbanization of the school environment.

In a first step, we chose four large, multi-cultural Flemish districts for sampling (Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt, and Sint-Niklaas). The central focus of this dissertation is on the experience of ethnic discrimination for ethnic minority students, so these four districts were selected according to the high number of inhabitants with a non-West-European background (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013). Second, we listed all the secondary schools in these areas. Method schools or schools that exclusively offered artistic education were excluded from the sample, since both have a very particular pedagogical profile. Subsequently, all the secondary schools were divided into three urban categories, namely situated in a city center, a suburban area, or a rural area, and into three ethnic composition categories, namely a low proportion (less than 15% ethnic minority students), a medium proportion (between 15% and 49.9% ethnic minority students) and a high

proportion (between 50% and 100%). In this phase of the research, we had no knowledge of the country of origin of the students, but every school year the Flemish Department of Education provides a list with student population characteristics for every school in Flanders. One of those characteristics is the home language of the student. The Department asks the parents: 1) Does the child speak Dutch with his/her mother? 2) Does the child speak Dutch with his/her father? and 3) Does the child speak Dutch with his/her siblings? If the parents answered negatively to two out of three questions, the Department registered the child as 'non-Dutch speaking at home'. Depending on the proportion of students in a school who were registered by the Department as 'non-Dutch-speaking at home', schools were categorized in one of the three ethnic composition categories (e.g., low, medium, high).

Once the list of schools was completed, schools were randomly selected from each category according to predefined criteria. The overall goal was to realize a sample of 60 schools with two thirds of the schools from an urban area and one third from a suburban or rural area. Within these categories, a further selection was made: one third of schools with a low proportion of ethnic minority students (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%).

### **Realization of the sample**

The predefined criteria did not always match reality, though. For example, Sint-Niklaas is the smallest district of the four (237.097 inhabitants compared to 985.332 inhabitants of Antwerp), so there is no suburban area in this district and none of the secondary schools had a high proportion of ethnic minority students.

The recruitment of the schools was realized in two stages. The first-time schools were contacted according to the following scheme:

	<i>Ghent:</i> <i>city center</i>	<i>Hasselt:</i> <i>city center</i>	<i>Antwerp:</i> <i>city center</i>	<i>Sint-Niklaas:</i> <i>city center</i>
<i>Low Proportion</i>	5	5	5	2
<i>Medium Proportion</i>	7	8	5	5
<i>High Proportion</i>	2	1	4	/
	<i>Ghent:</i> <i>suburban area</i>	<i>Hasselt:</i> <i>suburban area</i>	<i>Antwerp:</i> <i>suburban area</i>	
<i>Low Proportion</i>	1	2	1	/
<i>Medium Proportion</i>	2	2	1	/
<i>High Proportion</i>	1	/	2	/
	<i>Ghent:</i> <i>rural area</i>	<i>Hasselt:</i> <i>rural area</i>	<i>Antwerp:</i> <i>rural area</i>	<i>Sint-Niklaas:</i> <i>rural area</i>
<i>Low Proportion</i>	2	2	2	2
<i>Medium Proportion</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>High Proportion</i>	/	/	/	/

When a school responded negatively, we randomly selected a school with the same profile and with attention to the predefined criteria. Out of the 104 schools we contacted, 55 responded affirmatively. Hence, a response rate of 53% was obtained. If a school refused, we asked for the underlying reason. Of the 49 schools that refused, 36 specified a reason: 15 had too many requests to participate in a study, ten already participated in a study, four only participated in studies of alumni or the Department of Education, four had other priorities, one school had big construction-works at their school, one school did not want to burden their new students with a study and one school thought it was pointless since there

was a great turnover after the third year of secondary education and this study was designed as a longitudinal study. Since schools are swamped with requests to participate in academic research, they often accept requests on a “first come, first served” basis. Consequently, refusal to participate in this study was more likely due to a prior commitment to another study than any systematic bias based on the content of the survey.

The sample that was realized encompassed 33 schools located in a city center, 15 in a suburban area, and seven in a rural location. Further, 17 schools have a low proportion of ethnic minorities, 16 a medium proportion, and 22 a high proportion. It is important to note that these last figures are calculated based on the ethnicity of the students, as indicated in the survey, not on the ‘non-Dutch speaking’ indicator of the Department of Education.

### **Response of students and teachers**

In the participating schools, the researcher asked all third-grade students present to complete a written questionnaire. The students carried this out in the presence of the researcher and one or more teachers. The teachers were only present to maintain silence. They did not answer any questions about the content of the survey, neither did they collect the surveys. The questionnaires were not anonymous, to allow the matching of the data with other data, such as academic results provided by the schools. All the students were informed that their names would be removed once the database was complete, making the final database anonymous and confidential. A few students were not present during the survey due to absence or field trips. In total, 4322 students of the 4672 students filled out the questionnaire (a response rate of 92.5%).

Furthermore, all teachers that instructed courses in Grade 3 were asked to fill in an online questionnaire. They received a letter with some broad information

about the research project, a link to the online survey and a code specific for that school. Since the code was only specific for the school, anonymity was guaranteed. In total, 645 out of 1613 teachers completed the questionnaire, which resulted in a response rate of 40%. In three schools, none of the teachers filled out the questionnaire.

### **Communication procedure**

In a first step, the principals of the selected schools were contacted by an information letter. This letter contained information about the focus of the study (1), what we expected from the school (2) and what the school gained from participating in the study (3). (1) The focus of the study was deliberately kept vague, because of the sensitivity of the topic. It was described as a study on the relationship between social cohesion and the well-being and academic achievement of students. (2) Since we were aware of the fact that schools are swamped with research requests, we explained clearly what we expected from the school and stressed that we would do everything to minimize the work load for the school. (3) As a reward for taking part in the study, every school was promised a personalized report with the most important findings of the study. An example of such personalized report can be obtained upon request. Next to the information letter, there was an answer form where the principal could indicate whether he/she was willing to participate with the school. If the answer was negative, the principal could write down a reason. If the answer was negative or if we did not receive an answer after a period of time, we contacted the principal by telephone. This gave us the opportunity to answer all the questions and concerns of the principals and to convince them to co-operate. Regardless of the outcome, the principals were asked to give us their answer in a written format (scan, e-mail, fax).

## Operationalization of the central variables

In this section, we discuss the operationalization and the descriptive statistics of the central variables in this dissertation. More details about the control variables used in the different studies can be found in the respective empirical chapters.

### Determinants

#### *Ethnic discrimination*

The measure of ethnic discrimination was inspired by the work of Pachter et al. (2010). To record students' experiences with ethnic discrimination, we opted to first present the students with five potential experiences of discrimination by peers: (1) another student called you names, (2) another student threatened you, (3) another student pushed or hit you, (4) another student treated you unfairly, (5) another student excluded you. The students were asked if they had experienced each one of these situations since the beginning of secondary education. If students reported they experienced one of the situations of discrimination since the beginning of secondary education, they were subsequently asked to indicate how often they were discriminated against and what they presumed the reasons were. First, the students could choose from six different frequency categories: once, a few times, sometimes, often, very often, or all the time.

Second, ten perceived underlying reasons were presented, as well as an additional possibility to record a reason in full text, under the category 'other'. The ten underlying reasons included clothes, ethnicity, doing your best at school, home situation, because you fall in love with boys, because you fall in love with girls, the way you talk Dutch, appearances, gender and skin color. For ethnic discrimination, there is a grey area in terms of the underlying attribute on which discrimination was focused, as appearance or clothes could be interpreted as both

ethnic and non-ethnic victimization. Therefore, only when students reported discrimination due to nationality/ethnicity or skin color did we consider them to be discriminated against based on ethnic grounds.

The same procedure was repeated to measure ethnic discrimination by teachers, but in this case, the students were presented with six potential experiences of ethnic discrimination: (1) a teacher gave you a lower grade than you deserved, (2) a teacher gave you the feeling that you were stupid, (3) a teacher offended you or called you names, (4) a teacher called on you less in class, (5) a teacher punished you undeservedly, (6) a teacher treated you unfairly. Subsequently, the same question about the frequency and the underlying reason was asked.

The tables 5.1a-6b present a descriptive analysis of the perceived experience of ethnic and non-ethnic discrimination of the ethnic minority and ethnic majority students in the sample by teachers and students, by gender, by track and by ethnic school composition. If students experienced discrimination once, a few times or sometimes, this is considered non-frequent discrimination. If students experienced discrimination often, very often or all the time, this is considered frequent discrimination.

Table 5.1a. The experience of teacher discrimination for ethnic majority students, by gender (N = 2788)

	Male	Female
No Teacher Discrimination	25.9	37.7
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	64.8	55.6
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	6.5	5.5
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	2.2	1.0
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	0.7	0.1

Table 5.1b. The experience of teacher discrimination for ethnic minority students, by gender (N = 1350)

	Male	Female
No Teacher Discrimination	32.1	40.8
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	32.1	33.8
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	4.1	3.0
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	23.7	18.7
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	8.0	3.6

Table 5.2a. The experience of student discrimination for ethnic majority students, by gender (N = 2810)

	Male	Female
No Student Discrimination	15.3	25.6
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	71.6	64.8
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	6.3	6.3
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	5.9	3.0
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	0.8	0.4

Table 5.2b. The experience of student discrimination for ethnic minority students, by gender (N = 1380)

	Male	Female
No Student Discrimination	35.3	42.0
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	32.6	35.2
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	2.9	2.9
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	26.9	17.6
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	2.3	2.2



Table 5.3a. The experience of teacher discrimination for ethnic majority students, by track (N = 2735)

	Academic Track	Technical Track	Vocational Track
No Teacher Discrimination	35.7	28.4	27.2
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	59.2	62.6	60.4
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	4.1	6.6	8.2
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	0.8	1.7	3.4
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	0.1	0.7	0.8

Table 5.3b. The experience of teacher discrimination for ethnic minority students, by track (N = 1341)

	Academic Track	Technical Track	Vocational Track
No Teacher Discrimination	38.8	32.5	37.9
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	37.8	32.8	30.2
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	3.9	2.3	4.0
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	17.1	25.1	21.2
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	2.3	7.3	6.7

Table 5.4a. The experience of student discrimination for ethnic majority students, by track (N = 2755)

	Academic Track	Technical Track	Vocational Track
No Student Discrimination	24.8	16.2	15.6
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	69.3	69.6	64.9
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	3.4	7.7	10.1
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	2.2	5.9	7.7
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	0.2	0.6	1.6

Table 5.4b. The experience of student discrimination for ethnic minority students, by track (N = 1372)

	Academic Track	Technical Track	Vocational Track
No Student Discrimination	31.1	33.2	45.4
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	40.7	36.1	28.8
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	2.0	2.8	3.4
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	24.6	26.2	19.7
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	1.6	1.7	2.8

Table 5.5a. The experience of teacher discrimination for ethnic majority students, by student body composition (N = 1356)

	Low Proportion Ethnic Minority Students	Medium Proportion Ethnic Minority Students	High Proportion Ethnic Minority Students
No Teacher Discrimination	33.3	28.1	30.1
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	60.6	60.7	58.6
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	4.8	8.6	6.6
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	1.0	2.1	4.1
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	0.3	0.6	0.6

Table 5.5b. The experience of teacher discrimination for ethnic minority students, by student body composition (N = 1356)

	Low Proportion Ethnic Minority Students	Medium Proportion Ethnic Minority Students	High Proportion Ethnic Minority Students
No Teacher Discrimination	34.4	34.5	37.6
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	40.6	36.3	30.3
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	5.5	2.4	3.8
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	18.0	22.4	21.2
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	1.6	4.5	7.1

Table 5.6a. The experience of student discrimination for ethnic majority students, by student body composition (N = 2814)

	Low Proportion Ethnic Minority Students	Medium Proportion Ethnic Minority Students	High Proportion Ethnic Minority Students
No Student Discrimination	21.8	17.9	17.4
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	70.7	66.4	59.8
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	5.4	8.5	6.5
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	1.9	6.4	14.3
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	0.3	0.8	1.9

Table 5.6b. The experience of student discrimination for ethnic minority students, by ethnic school composition (N = 1387)

	Low Proportion Ethnic Minority Students	Medium Proportion Ethnic Minority Students	High Proportion Ethnic Minority Students
No Student Discrimination	20.6	35.2	42.9
Non-Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	40.5	35.7	32.0
Frequent Non-Ethnic Discrimination	3.2	2.8	2.9
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	32.5	24.4	20.0
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	3.2	1.8	2.3

The descriptive statistics show that both ethnic minority and ethnic majority adolescents are confronted with ethnic discrimination by peers and by teachers, but the number of ethnic minority adolescents who experienced ethnic discrimination is higher. The prevalence of ethnic discrimination is higher among girls than among boys and much higher among ethnic minority students than among ethnic majority students. Ethnic majority students experience less teacher and student discrimination in the academic track than in the vocational track. For

ethnic minority students, the levels of teacher discrimination are very similar between vocational and academic tracks, but they experience less student discrimination in the vocational track than in the academic track. The ethnic composition of the school influences the prevalence of ethnic and non-ethnic discrimination. A higher percentage of ethnic minority students is associated with a lower prevalence of discrimination among ethnic minority adolescents and a higher prevalence among ethnic majority adolescents. Furthermore, ethnic minority adolescents experience less ethnic discrimination by peers if there is a higher percentage of ethnic minority students in school, but they experience more ethnic discrimination by teachers.

#### *Teachers' explicit beliefs about ethnic minorities*

The teachers' explicit attitudes about ethnic minorities were based on an ethnocentrism-scale developed by Billiet, Carton and Huys (1990) and focused mainly on ethnic minorities as a threat to the economy and the Belgian culture. This was a 18-item scale ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ) with the following items: (1) In general, Turkish people are not trustworthy, (2) Turkish people contribute to the wealth of Belgium (invers), (3) Turkish people deprive the Belgian people of job opportunities, (4) Turkish people are a threat to our culture and habits, (5) In some neighborhoods, the government invests too much in Turkish people and too little in the other inhabitants, and (6) Turkish people take advantage of welfare support. These six items were repeated two more times, once in relation to Moroccans and once in relation to East Europeans. A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from 'absolutely disagree' to 'completely agree'. The higher the teacher's score, the more negative their attitudes were towards ethnic minorities.

### *Teachers' implicit negative associations with ethnic minorities*

The SC-IAT was used for the measurement of the implicit attitudes towards ethnic minorities, using Inquisit by Millisecond Software (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006). The target concept in this study was typical Turkish and Moroccan names (e.g., Fatma and Youssef), comprising four boy's names and four girl's names. The attribute dimension is 'good' versus 'bad', with words like fantastic and tragic. In the selection of the attribution-words we paid attention to the length of the words and the number of syllables to make the positive and negative words as equal as possible. The SC-IAT consisted of five blocks, which all participants completed in the same order. In the first block, the participants had to execute 20 practice trials in which they categorized good and bad words. In the second and third block there were 14 and 49 compatible trials, respectively. In this part of the test, foreign names and bad words had to be categorized using the 'i'-key, while good words had to be categorized under the 'e'-key. The second block was a practice block with 6 good words, 4 bad words, and 4 foreign names. The third block was the compatible test block and had 21 good words, 14 bad words, and 14 foreign names. This unequal distribution is a compromise between having an equal number of 'e' and 'i' responses, and having an equal number of good and bad words. Foreign names, good and bad words were presented in a random order that was fixed between participants. The fourth and fifth blocks consisted of incompatible trials. Bad words were still categorized with the 'i'-key, but the foreign names were now categorized together with the good words with the 'e'-key. Block four was a practice block and had 14 trials. Block five was the incompatible test block and contained 49 trials (14 good words, 21 bad words, and 14 foreign names). The order was again randomized but fixed between participants. Each block was preceded by a set of instructions to familiarize the respondent with the task and the last block was followed by a text to thank the respondent for his/her

participation and an e-mail address to obtain more information. Each target or attribution word appeared centered on the screen. Category reminder labels were positioned on the left and right side of the screen. If the respondent gave an incorrect response, a red X popped up in the center of the screen. After this sign, the respondent had to correct himself/ herself to proceed with the task.

The SC-IAT scores were computed based on the D-score algorithm for IAT data (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003). All practice trials were omitted from the analysis, since the only goal of those trials was to practice. Two participants with a high percentage of response latencies below 300 milliseconds (32 and 90 percent) were eliminated. The average response latencies of the compatible block (foreign names + bad) were subtracted from the average response latencies of the incompatible block (foreign names + good). This quantity was divided by the standard deviation of all response times of both test blocks. If a respondent obtained a positive score, it meant that this person responded faster when foreign names shared a response key with bad rather than good words. This is often interpreted as evidence for having more negative than positive associations with foreign names. If the respondent obtains a negative score, it is the other way around.

## **Process variables**

### *Abstract and concrete attitudes*

Abstract attitudes are measured using a 7-item scale and concrete attitudes with a 6-item scale, adapted from Mickelson (1990, 2008). The items of the abstract attitudes-scale are: (1) Effort in school leads to job success, (2) School success is not a clear path to a better life, (3) Regardless of where you come from, of who you are, if you work hard and get a good education, you have a chance to make it in life, (4) Young people have a chance of making it if they do well in

school, (5) If everyone in Belgium gets a good education, no one has to be poor, (6) The way for people to get ahead in life is for them to get a good education, (7) Education is the key to success in the future. The items of the concrete-attitudes scale are: (1) Even if I don't work hard in school I can make future plans come true, (2) What I don't learn in school I can always pick up later, (3) Even without a good education it is likely that I will end up with the kind of job I want, (4) Studying in school rarely pays off later with good jobs, (5) I know people who flip burgers for a living even though they got a good education, (6) I know people who make good money and haven't finished high school. Although Mickelson used a 7-point Likert scale, a 5-point scale was used in this study to maintain conformity with the other scales in the questionnaire. This Likert scale ranged from 'absolutely disagree' to 'completely agree'. Both scales are aligned in the same direction: the higher the student's score, the more optimistic they are about the role of schooling in future success.

#### *Parents' ethnic socialization practices*

*Cultural socialization* was measured by the following two items: (1) My parents taught me a lot about the culture of my ethnic group and (2) My parents taught me to be proud that I originate from this ethnic group. *Preparation for bias* was measured by: (1) My parents taught me how to cope in a multicultural society and (2) My parents taught me how to cope with ethnic discrimination. A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from 'absolutely disagree' to 'completely agree'. Both variables are skewed to the left. Only a very small percentage completely disagreed with the items; most of the students agreed to a certain extent that they received cultural socialization and preparation for bias from their parents.

### *Ethnic and host national identity*

*Ethnic identification* was measured using a 3-item scale adapted from the Multidimensional inventory of black identification-Teen (Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008). These items focus on how central an ethnic identity is to a person. First, we asked the students to self-identify their ethnicity. Subsequently, they were asked to answer the following three items with that self-identified ethnicity (i.e., ethnic group) in mind: (1) If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would say is that I belong to this ethnic group, (2) I have a strong sense of belonging to other people of this ethnic group, and (3) I feel like a member of this ethnic group. A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from ‘absolutely disagree’ (1) to ‘completely agree’ (5). This measure was constructed using a mean sum of scores. We obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.75. *Host national identification* was measured by one item that asked the students if they felt like a member of the Belgian society. A 10-point scale was used, ranging from ‘no, not at all’ (1) to ‘yes, completely’ (10).

### **Context variable**

#### *Ethnic composition of the school*

First, the ethnic background of the students was assessed primarily by the birthplace of the student’s maternal grandmother. This is common practice in Belgium, as most students of immigrant descent are second or third generation and have Belgian nationality (OECD, 2008; Timmerman, Vanderwaeren, & Crul, 2003). If this data was not available, we used their mother’s nationality. In the event that all this data was missing, we used the birth country of the student. Based on these criteria, we were able to categorize the ethnicity of 99.3% of all the students in the dataset.



Subsequently, the ethnic composition of the school is calculated based on the proportion of non-West-European students in the third year of the school. The mean ethnic school composition is 42.0% (SD = 31.3). The ethnic composition of the schools in this sample varies from 0% ethnic minority students to 100% ethnic minority students.

## **Outcomes**

### *Sense of school belonging*

Sense of school belonging was measured using the Psychological Sense of School Membership scale of Goodenow (1993). A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from ‘absolutely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’. We obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.85. The higher the students scored, the more they felt at home in school. This scale consists of 18 items (see appendix A).

### *Sense of academic futility*

Sense of academic futility was measured using the scale of Brookover et al. (1979), consisting of 5 items. The 5 items used to capture students’ sense of futility are (1) People like me will not have much of a chance to do what we want to in life, (2) People like me will never do well in school even though we try hard, (3) I can do well in school if I work hard, (4) At school, students like me don’t have any luck, and (5) There is no use in working hard at school, a good job is not reserved for people like me. A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from ‘absolutely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’. We obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.78. The higher the students scored, the stronger their feelings of academic futility.

### *School delinquency*

School deviance was measured using a 17-item scale inspired by Stewart (2003). Participants were asked to indicate how often they performed minor deviant acts such as being late for school or skipping classes. A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from 'never' (1) to 'very often' (5). Scores were summed to a scale that ranges from 17 to 85. We obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. The scale consisted of 17 items (see Appendix A).

### *Academic achievement*

In the Flemish educational system, there are no centrally-administered standardized tests. Consequently, there is no test score available with which to compare the achievement results across schools. The only uniform system is the use of a certificate given at the end of the school year. This certificate is the result of a decision made by the teachers and is mainly based on students' final grades at the end of the school year on different subjects. If students received an A certificate, they had completed their school year successfully, meaning that they (generally) had no unsatisfactory grades and could continue with the same subject. If they received a B certificate, they had (multiple) unsatisfactory grades for important subjects and had to change their field of study or track. If they received a C certificate, they had to repeat a year in the same track. Although the evaluation criteria may differ between schools (e.g., some schools more readily give a B rather than a C to students depending on students' classroom behavior, study motivation during this school year and the students' future perspectives and (perceived) capabilities (Stevens, 2007)), the consequences are the same for all students. Students are free to change schools, but the outcome of the certificate counts in every school. We created a dichotomous variable that indicates whether students had *successfully ended their school year* (0 = A, 1 = B or C).

## Research design

Doing research about the experiences of adolescents in secondary schools requires a specific research method, namely multilevel modeling, because of two reasons. First, students are grouped together in a certain school. Since there is a free choice of school in Flanders, this choice is often not random. Furthermore, when students interact, they influence each other in their ideas and values. If we had opted to use a classic regression technique, we would have violated the assumption that observations should be independent from each other. Multilevel models are designed specifically to correct for the fact that the data consists of students grouped in schools. Second, the data is hierarchical. Individual students belong to a certain educational context. Multilevel modeling allows us to verify how much of the variance in the outcome variable can be explained by student characteristics and how much by school characteristics. Furthermore, it allows us to correctly estimate the influence of the student level effects as opposed to the school level effects.

As is customary in multilevel modeling, the first estimated model is an unconditional model to determine the amount of variance in the outcome, within and between schools. From that moment, we perform a step-wise multilevel analysis. However, how these models are built will depend on the research questions of each specific empirical chapter.

## Chapter 6: How does ethnic and non-ethnic victimization by peers and by teachers relate to the school belongingness of ethnic minority students in Flanders, Belgium? An explorative study

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School belongingness has proven its positive effect on a wide range of outcomes that lead to school success. However, the factors that influence school belongingness received little research attention. Hence, the goal of this study is to explore the impact of ethnic victimization on ethnic minority students' school belongingness. Hereto, we will examine the relative impact of ethnic and non-ethnic victimization, since ethnic minority students belong to a stigmatized social category, which creates unique stressors such as ethnic victimization, but does not spare them from the general stressors that exist in life. Moreover, we want to approach victimization from a social-ecological perspective. First, by focusing on both victimization by peers and victimization by teachers and second, by taking the ethnic school composition into account. A multilevel analysis on a large-scale dataset (N=1160 ethnic minority students, 54 schools) collected in the third year of secondary education in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) shows that victimization had a negative influence on ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging. Furthermore, the experience of ethnic victimization was more detrimental for ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging than the experience of other forms of victimization. Thirdly, it did not matter for ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging if they felt victimized by teachers or by peers. Finally, when experiencing ethnic teacher victimization in a school with fewer ethnic minority students, this was more negative for ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging than in a school with more ethnic minority students.

In many Western countries, ethnic minority students are at risk for experiencing academic difficulties, with the “Black-White Achievement Gap” in the United States as a well-documented example (Jencks and Phillips 1998; Dworkin 2014). Scholars have identified a wide range of potentially influential risk factors, such as stereotype threat and family income (Ferguson 2003; Phillips et al. 1998; Steele and Aronson 1995). In addition to risk factors, scholars have focused on protective factors that have a positive impact on ethnic minority student achievement, such as teacher support, connection to one’s ethnic group, and school belongingness (Becker and Luthar 2002; Booker 2006; Gutman and Midgley 2000; Wong et al. 2003; Gaertner et al. 1999; Goodenow and Grady 1993).

In the current study, we focus on school belongingness because it has been proven to have a positive effect on a wide range of outcomes that lead to school success, including study engagement, positive attitudes toward school, and school completion (for an extensive review, see Osterman 2000). Having a strong sense of school belonging is important for all students, but it may be especially important for ethnic minority students at risk for experiencing academic difficulties. While the studies mentioned above show that we should not underestimate the role of school belonging in students’ academic achievement, we still have limited knowledge about the factors that influence this sense of belonging to their school community (Anderman 2002; Hallinan 2008; Osterman 2000). Therefore, the current study focuses on a factor that may be especially detrimental to ethnic minority students’ sense of school belonging: the experience of ethnic victimization.

Ethnic victimization is understood as being the target of aggressive behavior because of one’s ethnic background by one or more persons who are more powerful than the victim (Hawker and Boulton 2000; Olweus 1996; Boulton 1997).

The experience of ethnic victimization has negative consequences on the well-being of adolescents. For example, adolescents who are victimized have lower self-esteem, more behavioral problems, or more depressive symptoms (Fisher et al. 2000; Harrell 2000; van Dijk et al. 2011; Wong et al. 2003). One American study explicitly relates ethnic victimization with sense of school belonging (Faircloth and Hamm 2005). The study found that African American, European American, Asian, and Latino students who experience ethnic victimization have a weaker sense of school belonging. Since the Faircloth and Hamm study is, to the best of our knowledge, the only one that relates ethnic victimization to school belongingness—and since it only provides insight into the context of the United States—the first goal of the current study is to examine the relationship between ethnic victimization and ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium). Therefore, we will examine the relative impact of both ethnic and non-ethnic victimization. After all, the fact that ethnic minority students belong to a stigmatized social category (Graham et al. 2006; Hoglund and Hosan 2013; Verkuyten and Thijs 2002) that creates unique stressors, such as ethnic victimization, does not spare them from the general stressors that exist in life; therefore, both types of victimization are considered (Meyer 2003; Smedley 1993; Wei et al. 2010). Because victimization and ethnic discrimination are in essence two separate topics, few studies have focused on both.

Moreover, we want to approach victimization from a social-ecological perspective (Espelage and Swearer 2003). First, we will focus on victimization by both peers and teachers. Victimization cannot exist without social interaction, but many studies focus solely on psychosocial characteristics of victims and bullies (Espelage and Swearer 2003; Haynie et al. 2001; Veenstra et al. 2005). Since both peers and teachers are important actors in students' sense of school belonging, we

want to gain insight into whether victimization by peers affects the school belongingness of ethnic minority students differently than victimization by teachers (Osterman 2000).

Second, we consider the ethnic composition of the school. On a societal level, people of Belgian origin always form the numerical and dominant majority. However, this may not be the case for every individual school. In some schools, almost all the students are of Belgian origin, while others have no students of Belgian origin at all. This can create different power dynamics and different social support networks, so it is important to consider each school's ethnic composition (Bellmore et al. 2004; Graham 2006; Høglund and Hosan 2013; Wright et al. 1986).

In sum, this study builds on existing research by exploring how ethnic and non-ethnic victimization by peers and by teachers relates to the sense of school belonging of ethnic minority students in Flanders and seeks to determine whether the impact of ethnic and non-ethnic victimization differs according to the ethnic composition of the school.

## **Theoretical background**

In this section, we focus first on ethnic and non-ethnic victimization and, second, on victimization by peers and victimization by teachers. We end by discussing how a school's ethnic composition may influence the consequences of victimization.

### **Victimization and school belonging**

School belongingness is about feeling “personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment” (Noppe and Lodewijckx 2013; Goodenow 1993, p.80), and is established by reciprocal social

relations between the students, their peers, and the adults in school. This need to belong is a universal human need that has a major impact on motivation and behavior throughout life (Baumeister and Leary 1995). For adolescents, who spend many of their waking hours in school, having a strong sense of school belonging has a major impact on a wide range of outcomes that lead to both academic (e.g., more positive academic attitudes) and personal success (e.g., less affective problems or delinquency) (Osterman 2000; Demanet and Van Houtte 2012c; Shochet et al. 2011).

Two empirical studies show that victimization has a negative influence on having a strong sense of school belonging (Demanet and Van Houtte 2012b; Faircloth and Hamm 2005). The Flemish study by Demanet and Van Houtte (2012b) shows that victimized students have lower levels of overall peer bonding, lower number of friendships, a weaker sense of school belonging, and experience less teacher support than students who do not experience victimization at school. The American study by Faircloth and Hamm (2005) discusses different indicators of school belongingness and concludes that for all students (e.g., those of European American, African American, Latino, and Asian descent) ethnic discrimination is an important indicator of school belongingness. The empirical evidence leads us to expect that *the experience of victimization will have a negative impact on ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging* (hypothesis 1). However, the first study by Demanet and Van Houtte does not focus on ethnic victimization or on ethnic minority students, and the second study by Faircloth and Hamm does not focus on non-ethnic victimization.

### **Ethnic and non-ethnic victimization**

In the current study, we want to focus on the specific relation between ethnic victimization and the sense of school belonging of ethnic minority students,



while considering other non-ethnic forms of victimization. When we examine the prevalence of ethnic and non-ethnic victimization, the research results are not conclusive. Ethnic minority adolescents are more often confronted with ethnic victimization than their ethnic majority peers are, but this is not necessarily the case for non-ethnic victimization. Some studies found no differences in the prevalence of non-ethnic victimization according to the ethnic background. Others found that ethnic minority adolescents more often experience non-ethnic victimization than their ethnic majority peers and yet others found a higher prevalence of non-ethnic victimization for ethnic majority adolescents (Graham 2006; Hoglund and Hosan 2013; Verkuyten and Thijs 2002).

Although we do not have a clear picture about the prevalence of victimization among ethnic minority students, what is clear is that ethnic minority students can be the target of both ethnic and non-ethnic victimization. However, what we know about how both kinds of victimization are related to each other is limited. In line with minority stress theory, we may assume that the experience of ethnic victimization will be different from the experience of non-ethnic victimization for ethnic minority students (Meyer 2003). First, belonging to an ethnic minority can often mean belonging to a stigmatized social category. This creates unique stressors in addition to the life's general stressors (Meyer 2003; Smedley 1993; Wei et al. 2010). For example, taking exams is stressful for many students, but ethnic minority students may feel extra pressure to perform because they do not want to reinforce the idea that ethnic minority students are less intelligent than other students (Steele and Aronson 1995). Therefore, ethnic victimization is seen as one of those unique minority stressors (Harrell 2000; Meyer 2003).

Second, ethnic victimization is embedded in the power structures in wider society (Graham 2005; Meyer 2003; Operario and Fiske 2001; Verkuyten and

Kinket 2000). This creates a specific dynamic because it stems from inequalities in social structures beyond the individual.

Third, the intention to victimize ethnic minority students originates from an ethnic prejudice that is widespread in society. Since a person cannot change ethnicity, and since this is the stable basis for the victimization, it is very likely that ethnic minority students will encounter ethnic victimization throughout their lives (Meyer 2003). According to attribution theory, when a person attributes victimization to a stable and uncontrollable cause (e.g., It is the way I am; I am not able to change this), the consequences are more negative than when a person attributes it to something that can be changed (e.g., It is something I did and can change) because they maintain a sense of control (Graham 2005; Graham and Juvonen 1998).

Hence, on a theoretical level, minority stress theory indicates that ethnic victimization has some unique features that make it different from other forms of victimization. Therefore, we expect that *both ethnic and non-ethnic victimization will have a unique impact on ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging* (hypothesis 2). Furthermore, based on attribution theory, we expect that *the experience of ethnic victimization will have a more detrimental impact on ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging than the experience of non-ethnic victimization* (hypothesis 3), since ethnicity is a stable factor over which the ethnic minority students have no control.

The few empirical studies that are available however are inconclusive. A Canadian study by McKenney and colleagues (2006) focused on first- and second-generation immigrant adolescents and showed that the negative consequences of ethnic victimization on internalizing (e.g., depression/anxiety) and externalizing (e.g., aggression) problems were stable over time, even after accounting for non-ethnic victimization. After accounting for ethnic victimization, the negative consequences of non-ethnic victimization were associated only with internalizing

problems. Another Canadian study, which compared the impact of ethnic, relational, and physical victimization, could not find an association between ethnic victimization and adjustment problems (e.g., depression/anxiety and physical aggression); relational and physical victimization, however, did influence these adjustment problems (Hoglund and Hosan 2013).

### **Victimization by peers and by teachers**

Although the social environment of a secondary school can be characterized as a complex social network of both peers and teachers, there are very few studies that offer insight into the unique role played by each in the development of a strong sense of school belonging. Furthermore, within the victimization literature, victimization by peers has received substantially more research attention than victimization by teachers (Brendgen et al. 2006; Delfabbro et al. 2006; Hallinan 2008). Nevertheless, the studies that focused on teacher victimization and the ones that focused on peer victimization show that the experience of ethnic and non-ethnic victimization has detrimental consequences on a wide range of outcomes, such as adolescents' academic motivation, self-esteem, academic achievement, or the development of depressive symptoms (Fisher et al. 2000; van Dijk et al. 2011; Wong et al. 2003; Graham and Juvonen 1998; Hanish and Guerra 2002; Hawker and Boulton 2000; Schwartz et al. 2005; Thomas et al. 2009; Brendgen et al. 2006; Delfabbro et al. 2006). In the search for studies that specifically focused on students' sense of school belonging, we came across only Hallinan's longitudinal study (2008), which found that support by teachers increased how much students liked school, from sixth to eighth grade; students' close friends from school had no impact in this regard.

A potential explanation for this finding is two-fold. First, student-peer interactions take place mainly during short breaks; the core of interactions in a

school day is between teachers and students. Teachers interact with their students, verbally and nonverbally, for many hours a week, communicating to them their expectations, support, appreciation, and trust (Anderman 2003; Osterman 2000; Van Houtte 2011; Van Houtte and Van Maele 2012). If students get the message that they are valued and appreciated, this strengthens their sense of belonging.

Second, teachers can be seen as the personification of “the school.” Since the focus of this paper is on sense of belonging to a school, it is likely that negative interactions with teachers affect students’ school belongingness more than negative interactions with peers. For example, connectedness to peers influences students’ school misconduct, the likelihood that they will start smoking, and their desire to help peers with academic problems more than their connectedness to teachers (Demantet and Van Houtte 2012c; Karcher and Finn 2005; Wentzel 1998). Connectedness to teachers is more influential for student motivation and for effort in school (Wentzel 1998).

Hence, based on the literature on victimization, and in line with hypothesis 1, we expect *that both victimization by peers and by teachers will be negatively related to ethnic minority students’ sense of school belonging* (hypothesis 1); however, since we are focusing specifically on school belongingness, we expect that *the experience of teacher victimization will be more detrimental than the experience of peer victimization* (hypothesis 4).

### **Victimization and the ethnic school context**

In Flanders, the teaching staff of the average school consists of a majority of ethnic Belgian teachers. This is in contrast to the student population, which might consist of anything from only ethnic Belgian students to students of only non-Belgian origin. Consequently, while ethnic minority students always belong to an

ethnic minority in wider society, they may belong to a numerical majority within their school, depending on a school's student composition. Since this can create different dynamics in terms of power and social support, it is important to use a social-ecological perspective that considers the schools' ethnic composition (Bellmore et al. 2004; Graham 2006; Høglund and Hosan 2013).

On the one hand, empirical evidence shows that students who belong to the numerical majority in school and experience ethnic or non-ethnic victimization, experience more adjustment problems than students who belong to the numerical minority. This finding may feel counterintuitive, but relates to the idea of being a "social misfit" (Wright et al. 1986). Students who belong to the numerical majority and who are the target of victimization may feel a loss of control (e.g., All the others fit in; I cannot, so I am victimized because of the way I am). Hence, being a member of a numerical majority can lead to blaming oneself, which results in more negative consequences than if a student attributes victimization to an external cause (Graham 2005; Graham and Juvonen 1998).

On the other hand, social support of similar ethnic peers might play an important role when ethnic minority students feel victimized because of their ethnicity. Many kinds of social support can act as an important buffer against the negative consequences of victimization (Pearlin 1989), but in the case of ethnic victimization, social support by other ethnic minority students allows students to share the experience of victimization and confirm that they do not have to take it personally (Mellor 2004). Hence, this sharing helps students to keep their sense of control.

Thus, on the one hand, the idea of being a "social misfit" leads to the expectation that *the experience of victimization while being the numerical majority will be more negative for the sense of school belonging of an ethnic minority student than being in the numerical minority in a school* (hypothesis 5). On the other hand, *being the numerical*

*majority creates more possibilities to find social support from other ethnic minority students, which could diminish the negative impact of the experience of ethnic peer or teacher victimization (hypothesis 6).*

In sum, the current study seeks to answer three research questions. First, what is the relationship between ethnic and non-ethnic victimization and ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging in Flanders, Belgium? This focuses on the unique character of ethnic and non-ethnic victimization and the potential difference in impact that they have. Second, how do victimization by peers and victimization by teachers relate to ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging? Third, how does the ethnic composition of a school influence the relationship between ethnic and non-ethnic victimization by peers and by teachers and ethnic minority students' school belongingness?

## Data and methods

### Sample

The data used in this study is a selection from a broader sample of 4,322 students, 645 teachers, and 55 schools. This data was collected in Grade 3 of secondary education (comparable with Grade 9 in the American system) during the school year 2011–2012 as part of RaDiSS (Racism and Discrimination in Secondary Schools) in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium). A multistage sampling frame was employed to ensure sufficient variability and cases in terms of each school's ethnic composition and level of urbanization. First, four large, multicultural Flemish districts were selected for sampling (Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt, and Sint-Niklaas). Second, all the secondary schools in these areas (except those schools that offer education in the arts exclusively, because of their small number of students) were divided into three categories: a city center, a

suburban area, or a rural area. The aim was to select two thirds of the schools from an urban area and one third from a suburban or rural area. Within these categories, one third of the schools selected had a low proportion of ethnic minority students (less than 15%), one third had a medium proportion (between 15% and 49.9%) and one third had a high proportion (between 50% and 100%) (Flemish Educational Department 2011). In total, 104 schools were contacted, out of which 55 were willing to participate (a response rate of 53%). Schools often use a “first-come, first-served” policy with regard to research participation. Consequently, no systematic biases occurred. In the sample, 33 schools were located in a city center, 15 in a suburban area, and 7 in a rural location. Further, 17 schools had a low proportion of ethnic minorities, 16 a medium proportion, and 22 a high proportion. As a result, the participating schools cover the entire range of ethnic minority composition, from 0%–100%. Within these schools, the researcher asked all participating third-grade students (approximately 15 years old) to complete written questionnaires. A total of 4,322 students completed the questionnaires (a response rate of 92.5%). Students carried this out in the presence of the researcher and one or more teachers. The questionnaires were not anonymous so that the data could be coupled with other data, such as academic results provided by the schools. All the students were informed that their names would be removed once the database was complete, making the final database anonymous and confidential.

## **Participants**

In total, 1,160 students in 54 secondary schools in Flanders participated in the study (49.7% boys; mean age = 15.5). Given the research topic, we selected from the sample of 4,322 students all the students of non-Western European descent. The ethnicity of a student was assessed primarily by the birthplace of the student's

maternal grandmother. This is common practice in Belgium, as most students of immigrant descent are second or third generation and have Belgian nationality (OECD 2008; Timmerman et al. 2003). If this data was not available, we used the mother's nationality. In the event that all this data was missing, we used the birth country of the student. Based on these criteria, we were able to categorize the ethnicity of 99.3% of all the students in the data set. This selection resulted in a group of 1,160 students. Of these, students of Moroccan and Turkish descent made up the two largest groups (32.5% and 22.2%, respectively), followed by students of Eastern European descent (16.3%), and students of Southern European descent (8.5%). A total of 20.5% of the students came from other parts of the world.

## Variables

### *Dependent variable*

*Sense of school belonging* was measured using Goodenow's 18-item Psychological Sense of School Membership scale (1993). A 5-point Likert scale was used, ranging from *absolutely disagree* to *completely agree*. We obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .85. The higher the students scored, the more they felt at home in school. The mean score was 3.49 ( $SD = 0.55$ ) (see Table 6.1).



Table 6.1. Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables: frequencies (%), means, and standard deviations (SD) (*Observations N = 1160, Groups N = 54*)

	Mean or %	SD
Sense of school belonging	3.49	0.55
Socio-economic status	39.44	14.34
Gender: male	49.8%	
Track: academic	24.8%	
technical	27.6%	
vocational	47.6%	
Prior academic attainment: repeat grade	54.5%	
Non-ethnic peer victimization: experienced	37.3%	
Ethnic peer victimization: experienced	25.5%	
Non-ethnic teacher victimization: experienced	35.7%	
Ethnic teacher victimization: experienced	27.8%	
Ethnic school composition: average percentage ethnic minority students	32.0%	0.29
School size	644.45	276.09

### *Independent and control variables*

In the questionnaire, the students were presented with 11 potential experiences of *victimization*, five concerning their peers (e.g., another student excluded you), and six concerning their teachers (e.g., you are called on less in class than others are). This question was inspired by the work of Pachter et al. (2010). The students were asked if they had experienced each one of these situations since the beginning of secondary school. If the response to one or more items was affirmative, the students were directed to indicate in the next question why they thought they were victimized. They could choose from 10 different options (e.g., appearance, doing your best at school, skin color). If their perceived reason did not match any of those presented, they could write something in a box labeled “other reason.” This question was asked one time in relation to victimization by peers and one time in relation to victimization by teachers. For

the analyses, we created a categorical variable in which 0 = did not experience victimization, 1 = experienced non-ethnic victimization, and 2 = experienced ethnic victimization. The reasons for non-ethnic victimization included, among other factors, clothes, appearance, and doing your best at school. For ethnic victimization, there is a gray area in terms of the underlying attribute on which victimization was focused, as appearance or clothes could be interpreted as both ethnic and general victimization. Therefore, to create a clear category for ethnic victimization, only nationality/ethnicity and skin color are included. Of the ethnic minority students, 25.5% experienced ethnic victimization by peers and 27.8% by teachers. Table 6.1 presents detailed figures.

In addition to the independent variable, the analyses included individual-level and school-level control variables. On the individual level, *socioeconomic status* of students was measured using the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom et al. 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 to measure the students' socioeconomic background. The mean score was 39.44 ( $SD = 14.34$ ). Of the sample, 49.8% were male (0 = male, 1 = female). We made a distinction between an academic, technical, and vocational educational track. Of the students, 24.8% followed an academic track, 27.6% a technical track, and 47.6% a vocational track. We measured *prior academic attainment* by previous year retention. A dichotomous variable was constructed based on whether the student had to repeat a year during school (0 = never, 1 = at least once); 54.5% of the ethnic minority students had to repeat a year.

On the school level, *ethnic school composition* was a metric variable, based on the proportion of ethnic minority students in the school. There were on average 32% ethnic minority students per school ( $SD = 0.29$ ). *School size* refers to the total

number of students enrolled in the school. The data was obtained from the Flemish Educational Department. The smallest school in the sample had 100 students and the largest 1,170, with a mean school size of 644.45 ( $SD = 276.09$ ).

### Strategy of analysis

Given that we were dealing with a clustered sample of students nested within schools, the use of multilevel analysis was the most appropriate method (MLwiN 2.26). In the dependent variable measured by means of a scale, we imputed responses for missing values by item correlation substitution: a missing value for one item was replaced by the value of the item correlating most closely with that item (Huisman 2000). All metric variables were standardized for the comparison of effect sizes.

The first estimated model is an unconditional model to partition the amount of variance that occurred on the individual and school level. Next, we added the victimization variables *ethnic and non-ethnic peer victimization* in Table 6.2, Model 1a, and *ethnic and non-ethnic teacher victimization* in Table 6.2, Model 1b, together with the different control variables. The control variables have been demonstrated to relate to sense of school belonging. At the individual level, these variables are *socioeconomic status, gender, educational track, and prior academic attainment* (Goodenow 1993; Osterman 2000; Van Houtte and Van Maele 2012). At the school level, the variables are *school size and ethnic school composition* (Bellmore et al. 2004; Cotton 1996; Hoglund and Hosan 2013). This analysis allows us to test hypotheses 1 through 4. To explore hypothesis 1, *the experience of victimization will have a negative impact on ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging*, we determined whether all the victimization variables—ethnic and non-ethnic victimization, and peer and teacher victimization—were negatively related to ethnic minority students' sense

of school belonging. To explore hypothesis 3, *the experience of ethnic victimization will have a more detrimental impact on ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging than the experience of non-ethnic victimization*, we determined whether the effect size of ethnic victimization is larger than the effect size of non-ethnic victimization. To verify hypothesis 2, *ethnic and non-ethnic victimization will have a unique impact on ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging*, and hypothesis 4, *the experience of teacher victimization will be more detrimental than the experience of peer victimization*, we ran some additional analysis to determine whether there was a significant difference between ethnic and non-ethnic victimization, and peer and teacher victimization, respectively.

In the third and final step (Table 6.2, model 2a and 2b), we analyzed whether ethnic school composition influences the relationship between ethnic and non-ethnic victimization and school belongingness. Therefore, we added an interaction term between ethnic school composition and victimization to the model. This allows us to confirm or reject hypothesis 5, *the experience of victimization while being the numerical majority in a school will be more negative for the sense of school belonging of an ethnic minority student than being the numerical minority*, or hypothesis 6, *being the numerical majority in a school creates more possibilities to find social support from other ethnic minority students, which could diminish the negative impact of the experience of ethnic peer and/or teacher victimization*.

## Findings

First, the descriptive analysis showed that ethnic minority students scored on average 3.49 on the school belongingness scale. This shows that students more often responded positively than negatively to the items on the school belongingness scale.

Second, we examined the relationship between ethnic and non-ethnic victimization and school belongingness. We started the multilevel regression analysis, presented in Table 6.2, with an unconditional model. This model indicated that 1.7% ( $\sigma_{ind}^2 = 0.297$ ,  $\sigma_{school}^2 = 0.005$ ) of the variance in school belongingness was situated at the school level. We expected to find a higher level of variance at the school level, since students at different schools would have less of a similar sense of school belonging than students at the same school. Other studies, however, found a similar result (Ma 2003; Van Houtte and Van Maele 2012). Next, victimization by peers (Model 1a, Table 6.2) and by teachers (Model 1b, Table 6.2) was added to the model, together with the different control variables. Both non-ethnic and ethnic victimization by peers and by teachers had a negative impact on school belongingness (hypothesis 1). However, the negative impact of ethnic victimization by peers or by teachers was larger than that of non-ethnic victimization by peers or by teachers (respectively:  $-.150$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $-.279$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; and  $-.140$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $-.246$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (hypothesis 3). Additional analyses (not shown) showed that ethnic and non-ethnic peer and teacher victimization differ significantly from each other, so both have a unique effect on school belonging (hypothesis 2). Hence, our results confirmed hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. In relation to the control variables, it is noteworthy that the ethnic school composition was not significant: this variable does not appear to play a role in the students' sense of school belonging. Finally, we also ran some additional analyses to compare the effect sizes of victimization by peers and by teachers. In contrast to hypothesis 4, we found no difference in impact. Therefore, victimization by teachers did not appear to affect the school belongingness of ethnic minority students differently than victimization by peers.

Third, we explored how the ethnic school composition influenced the relationship between victimization and school belongingness. We expected that

the ethnic school composition would have an influence (positive or negative) on the relationship between victimization and school belongingness, but this appeared to be the case only for the experience of ethnic victimization by teachers. The negative consequences of ethnic and non-ethnic peer victimization and non-ethnic teacher victimization did not differ according to the ethnic school context. In line with hypothesis 6, and in contradiction to hypothesis 5, the negative impact of experiencing ethnic victimization by teachers was smaller when the ethnic minority students were members of a school where the proportion of ethnic minority students was higher.

Table 6.2. The association between non-ethnic and ethnic victimization by peers and teachers and sense of school belonging, standard errors between parentheses. (observations N = 1160, groups N = 54)

	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1a</i>	<i>Model 1b</i>	<i>Model 2a</i>	<i>Model 2b</i>
Non-ethnic victimization by peers ( <i>ref: no victimization</i> )	-0.150*** (0.037)	-	-	-0.153*** (0.037)	-
Ethnic victimization by peers ( <i>ref: no victimization</i> )	-0.279*** (0.041)	-	-	-0.277*** (0.041)	-
Non-ethnic victimization by teachers ( <i>ref: no victimization</i> )	-	-0.140*** (0.037)	-	-	-0.141*** (0.037)
Ethnic victimization by teachers ( <i>ref: no victimization</i> )	-	-0.246*** (0.040)	-	-	-0.249*** (0.040)
Non-ethnic victimization by peers x Ethnic school composition	-	-	-	0.004 (0.038)	-
Ethnic victimization by peers x Ethnic school composition	-	-	-	0.031 (0.041)	-
Non-ethnic victimization by teachers x Ethnic school composition	-	-	-	-	0.026 (0.036)
Ethnic victimization by teachers x Ethnic school composition	-	-	-	-	0.088* (0.041)

Gender ( <i>ref: male</i> )		0.002 (0.032)	-0.001 (0.032)	0.002 (0.032)	0.000 (0.032)
Prior academic attainment ( <i>ref: no past failure</i> )		-0.005 (0.033)	0.003 (0.033)	-0.005 (0.033)	0.004 (0.032)
Socio-economic status		0.023 (0.019)	0.026 (0.019)	0.022 (0.019)	0.025 (0.019)
Technical track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		-0.095* (0.045)	-0.074 (0.045)	-0.097* (0.045)	-0.078 (0.045)
Vocational track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		-0.172*** (0.042)	-0.145*** (0.043)	-0.174*** (0.042)	-0.146*** (0.043)
School size		-0.011 (0.019)	-0.013 (0.019)	-0.011 (0.019)	-0.011 (0.019)
Ethnic school composition		0.012 (0.018)	0.026 (0.18)	0.002 (0.029)	-0.004 (0.027)
Constant	3.491	3.738	3.709	3.742	3.711
<i>Individual level variance</i>	0.297	0.285	0.287	0.285	0.286
<i>School level variance</i>	0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$



## Discussion and conclusion

In the current study, we addressed three research questions. First, what is the relationship between ethnic and non-ethnic victimization and ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging in Flanders, Belgium? To answer this, we focused on the unique character of both ethnic and non-ethnic victimization and the potential difference in impact that they have. Second, how do victimization by peers and victimization by teachers relate to ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging? Third, how does the ethnic composition of a school influence the relationship between ethnic and non-ethnic victimization by peers and by teachers and ethnic minority students' school belongingness?

The first and most general finding of the current study is that victimization has a negative influence on ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging. This is the case for both ethnic and non-ethnic victimization and for victimization by peers and by teachers. Hence, and in line with the hypothesis 1, we can state that every kind of victimization harms ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging.

Second, we focused on how ethnic and non-ethnic victimization relate to each other and to school belongingness. Few studies have considered both ethnic and non-ethnic victimization. However, results of the current study indicate that by considering both forms of victimization, one can get a more comprehensive picture of the school experience of ethnic minority students. As indicated by minority stress theory, ethnic victimization can be considered as a unique stressor that is not interchangeable with non-ethnic victimization (hypothesis 2). Furthermore, the experience of ethnic victimization is more detrimental for ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging than the experience of other forms of victimization (hypothesis 3). This is in line with attribution theory, which states that when people lose their sense of control because they cannot change the reason they are victimized, they experience

more negative consequences than when they think they can change the underlying reason for being victimized (Graham 2005; Bellmore et al. 2004; Graham and Juvonen 2002).

Third, we examined how victimization by peers and by teachers is associated with school belongingness. In contrast to hypothesis 4, being victimized by peers does not affect ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging differently than being victimized by teachers. In accordance with Hallinan's study (2008), we expected that victimization by teachers would be more negative, since the outcome variable is school belongingness and teachers can be seen as the personification of the school, and since students interact most at school with their teachers. However, we found that the negative impact of teacher victimization did not differ from the negative impact of peer victimization. A potential explanation lies in the difference in focus. Hallinan (2008) did not focus on teacher victimization, but, rather, on teacher support. The study of Fisher and colleagues (2000) *did* focus on peer and teacher victimization, but in relation to self-esteem. They also found that both teacher and peer victimization are detrimental, but with little difference in degree of effect. Hence, it would be interesting for future research to consider both peer and teacher victimization and peer and teacher support, and to explore how both kinds of variables relate to different outcomes. Notwithstanding the lack of any difference in effect between victimization by peers and victimization by teachers, it is very important for future research, and for policy development, to pay attention to the negative consequences of teacher victimization, because teacher victimization has received far less attention than victimization by peers (Brendgen et al. 2006; Delfabbro et al. 2006).

Finally, we examined the role of the ethnic school context. In a school with fewer ethnic minority students, experiencing ethnic teacher victimization turns out to be more negative for sense of belonging than in a school with more ethnic minority students. This finding contradicts the idea that students who

hold the numerical majority in school experience more negative consequences from victimization because they feel like social misfits and have lost their sense of control (hypothesis 5) (Graham 2006). However, it is in line with the idea that the social support of other ethnic minority students may play an important role in school belongingness, especially since the ethnic school composition only moderates the impact of ethnic victimization by teachers (hypothesis 6).

For future research, it would be very interesting to use longitudinal data, since the cross-sectional character of the data is an important limitation of this study. Based on studies that focus on the profile of students at risk for peer and teacher victimization, we can expect that the relationship between victimization and school belongingness is reciprocal rather than one-directional (Brendgen et al. 2006; Delfabbro et al. 2006). For example, students at risk for peer victimization show more social alienation than those who are not; therefore, if these students experience peer victimization, it is likely that it will strengthen their idea that they do not belong at that school. Hence, without longitudinal data, it is impossible to gain insight into the reciprocity of these relationships. A second limitation of this study is that we combined different ethnic minorities into the single category of ethnic minority students. It would be very interesting for future research to examine how the relationship between ethnic and non-ethnic victimization and school belongingness varies for different groups of ethnic minorities in different national contexts. Third, while this study was an important first step for gaining insight into the relationship between different kinds of victimization, school belongingness, and the ethnic school context, future research is necessary to explore all the mechanisms that underpin these findings.

In sum, if schools want to improve the school belongingness of their ethnic minority students, they should focus on the reduction of victimization. More specifically, when schools prepare anti-victimization campaigns, it is very important to, (1) take victimization by teachers into account, and, (2) take all

forms of victimization into account, while paying specific attention to ethnic victimization.



## Chapter 7: Teachers' implicit and explicit attitudes towards ethnic minorities: relation to students' sense of school belonging

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Interactions between students and their teachers play a major role in students' personal and academic success. However, teachers can be biased in their judgment of social or academic competence based on a student's ethnicity. The current study focused on the relationship between teachers' implicit and explicit prejudiced attitudes and ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging in secondary schools in Belgium. Teachers' attitudes were measured by self-report and the Single Category Implicit Association Test (SC-IAT). Multilevel analysis indicated teachers' explicit attitudes were related to the sense of school belonging in ethnic minority students, while no relation could be found for the implicit prejudiced teacher attitudes as measured by the SC-IAT.

Sense of belonging is an important universal need that has an immense impact on human motivation and behavior (Bellmore, Witkow, Graham, & Juvonen, 2004; Silberman, Alba, & Fournier, 2007). However, a large number of people with non-Western European backgrounds living in Europe do not have this sense of belonging. Throughout Europe, ethnic minorities have received a message that there is no room for “their” culture in “our” European society, that they should go back to “their own” countries, and that they are outsiders—even if they are second- or third-generation residents (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Goldberg, 2006; Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008). In Belgium, this manifests itself in many ways. Examples include discrimination in labor and housing markets (Baert, Cockx, Gheyle, & Vandamme, 2013; Van der Bracht, Coenen, & Van de Putte, 2014), the ban of Islamic headscarves in public schools, and the propaganda of extreme right-wing parties (Billiet & De Witte, 2008). It also manifests itself in the predominance of native Belgian actors in soap opera series (De Ridder, 2010). These ethnic tensions in the wider society can make ethnic minorities feel unwelcome.

Schools reflect these societal ethnic tensions and inequalities. The current study focused on feelings of sense of school belonging of ethnic minority adolescents in secondary schools in Belgium. Schools are communities where students, teachers, and other personnel interact with each other for many hours a week. Interactions of students with their teachers play a major role in students’ personal and academic success (Demantet & Van Houtte, 2012b; Hallinan, 2008; Konishi, Hymel, Zumbo, & Li, 2010; Murray, 2009; Osterman, 2000; Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2012). With an increasing number of students with non-Western European backgrounds in Belgian schools, the divide between the ethnic backgrounds of teachers and students is growing. Research shows that the method of instruction, teacher support, and teacher authority all play an important role in the students’ sense of school belonging (for a review, see Osterman, 2000). Unfortunately, research also shows that the ethnicity of a

student can bias teachers' interactions with, and expectations of, those students (Chang & Sue, 2003; Glock & Krolak-Schwerdt, 2013; Parks & Kennedy, 2007; van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010).

Most of the research in this field is experimental research focusing on how ethnicity or ethnic stereotypes influence teachers in their judgment of students' social or academic competence (Chang & Sue, 2003; Glock & Krolak-Schwerdt, 2013; Parks & Kennedy, 2007). In this study, we explored the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward ethnic minorities and ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging in a non-experimental study context. This context, as well as the use of school belonging as outcome variable, allows this study to make a valuable contribution to the existing knowledge.

Furthermore, we want to make use of two measures of teacher attitudes—self-reported and implicit—in a non-experimental study context. Many studies make use of self-reported scales to record attitudes toward groups with a different ethnic background (Billiet, Carton, & Huys, 1990; Quillian, 1995; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008; Zick et al., 2008). However, in the last two decades, psychologists have developed new techniques that measure attitudes in a more indirect and automatic way. Since this field of study is characterized by experimental studies, it is useful to explore the value of indirect attitude measures in non-experimental, real-life settings with higher ecological validity, settings in which social norms and personal experiences come into play (Blanton & Jaccard, 2008). Hence, we made use of both self-reported (explicit) scales and the Single Category Implicit Association Test (SC-IAT) (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006), an implicit measure. We then applied these results to a large probability sample of ethnic minority students and their teachers in Flanders (the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium). This provided insight into the relationship between teachers and students, as measured independently from each other. It also allowed us to compare how



teachers' implicitly and explicitly measured beliefs add to ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging.

## Literature review

### Implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities

Scholars in the United States noticed a decline in the overt expression of ethnic stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes over time (for a review, see Quillian, 1995). However, this contrasts with evidence of persisting ethnic inequalities in society, and ethnic discrimination in school, labor, and housing. Because of this apparent contradiction, scholars have developed new scales (e.g., subtle and blatant racism, Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), and have used new measurement techniques (e.g., implicit attitudes, Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) to capture the stereotypical beliefs and prejudiced attitudes that are still present in today's society. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is one of those new measurement techniques that has received a lot of research attention (e.g., the ISI Web of Science site indicates that the founding article of this technique had been cited 2,447 times as of January 2014) (Greenwald et al., 1998). Classic self-report scales are very susceptible to social desirability, since respondents consciously reflect on each item, and, as a result, can adjust their spontaneous evaluations to the social norm (Fazio & Olson, 2003). Implicit measures such as IAT have been specifically developed to eliminate the control respondents have over their answers; that is, respondents are unable to control how they score on implicit measures. However, a certain score on IAT gives no proof that a respondent will act according to that score, since people can adjust their behavior to the social norm. It has often been claimed that implicit measures are not only uncontrollable, but also reveal *unconscious* attitudes. This claim, however, seems to have been premature, as recent research has found evidence that respondents can be quite accurate in predicting their own test scores on the IAT (Hahn, Judd, Hirsh, & Blair, 2013).

The IAT was designed to measure automatic associations between two pairs of concepts. Typically, the first concept of each pair is the target concept (e.g., *European American* versus *African American* names), and the second in each pair is an attribute dimension (e.g., *pleasant* versus *unpleasant*). Each concept is represented by words or other stimuli. All stimuli are presented one by one on a computer screen and participants are asked to categorize them by pressing a response key. If the respondent associates the target concept with the attribute (i.e., if they are congruent), responses are expected to be faster. Differences in response times are the basis for the calculation of the IAT effect. For example, if a person responds faster to the “European American/pleasant” and “African American/unpleasant” pairings than to the “European American/unpleasant” and “African American/pleasant” pairings, then that person is said to have an automatic association between “African American” and “unpleasant” and/or between “European American” and “pleasant.” This is an example of a race IAT, but the target concepts can also be of two brands, pictures of males and females, and so forth. IAT can be used in many different fields of study.

A major drawback of this procedure is that it produces a relative result that could be a consequence of stronger positive associations with European Americans, stronger negative associations with African Americans, or both. To mitigate this drawback, similar measures have been developed that produce a more absolute measure of associations with a single attitude object. In the current study, we make use of one of those variants of IAT, namely Single-Category Implicit Association Test (SC-IAT) (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006). SC-IAT uses the same logic as IAT, but it only compares response latencies between the same concept and two opposing attributes. To use the example above, the SC-IAT would compare “African American/pleasant” and “African American/unpleasant.” If a person responded faster to “African American/unpleasant” than to “African American/pleasant,” that person would

be said to have an automatic association with “African American” and “unpleasant.”

Subsequently, it is important to know if these implicit measures also predict behavior. The SC-IAT has been developed in the last few years and has not been used as widely as the IAT. However, studies that have used SC-IAT show that it is related to eating behavior (Hofmann, Rauch, & Gawronski, 2007), future binge drinking (Thush & Wiers, 2007), and future choices of undecided decision makers (Galdi, Arcuri, & Gawronski, 2008). However, we could not find a study that focused on the relationship between race SC-IAT and discriminatory behavior. Because of this, and because of the limited number of studies that have used SC-IAT to predict behavior, we consider the overall predictive validity of IAT and some examples of race IAT.

Greenwald et al.’s meta-analysis (2009) gives evidence of a moderate predictive validity of IAT. This predictive validity works better for socially sensitive topics. Furthermore, they found a gain in predictive validity if IAT and self-report measures are used jointly for analyses. When considering different studies that have used the race IAT (the focus of this study), the moderate predictive validity is reflected in the mixed results of these studies. While some studies found evidence that the race IAT is predictive of behavior (Greenwald, Smith, Sriram, Bar-Anan, & Nosek, 2009; McConnell & Leibold, 2001; Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Trawalter, 2005; Ziegert & Hanges, 2005), other studies found no relationship (Vanman, Saltz, Nathan, & Warren, 2004). Despite the mixed results, there is one pattern that can be identified in the literature on IAT—and in implicit measures in general—namely, that implicit measures are associated with more subtle, mostly non-verbal, behavior, while self-report measures are associated with more direct, mostly verbal, behavior (Blanton & Jaccard, 2008; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Olson & Fazio, 2007; Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). More subtle aspects of teacher behavior may affect students in

many ways, since students and teachers interact for many hours a week in verbal and non-verbal ways. Additionally, implicit measures are less sensitive to social desirability concerns than are self-report measures. We therefore considered both self-report and implicit measures of teachers' attitudes, and explored if both types of measures contribute uniquely to the school belonging of students.

### **Impact of teachers' attitudes toward ethnic minorities**

Surveys on ethnic stereotypes and prejudices tend to focus on the general population rather than on a specific group like teachers. Furthermore, it is difficult to make statements about teachers as a group because they work with different ethnic populations and in different national and school contexts. One Belgian study by Agirdag et al. (2012) showed that the ethnic composition of students by school and by grade affects teachers' attitudes. For example, teaching at a school where over 50% of students are Muslim has a negative impact on teacher attitudes toward those students. The study also found that secondary school teachers have more negative attitudes than primary school teachers do. At the individual level, they found similar patterns to that of the general population. Teachers who were male, older, or less educated held more negative attitudes toward Muslim students than teachers who were female, younger, or more educated. Although we know little about teachers' attitudes toward ethnic minorities, we do know that stereotypical ideas about students' ethnic backgrounds influence teachers' expectations and judgments.

An experimental USA study by Parks and Kennedy (2007) showed that, based merely on pictures of the children, teachers had lower expectations of the academic and social competence of African American children than they did of European American children. An experimental German study by Glock and Krolak-Schwerdt (2013) presented student teachers with fictitious profiles of German and Turkish students who were supposed to have performed poorly in

school. These teachers assigned lower academic competence to the poorly performing Turkish students than to their German counterparts. The Dutch study by Van den Bergh et al. (2010) is, to the best of our knowledge, the only non-experimental study that has made use of the IAT within the school context. They focused on an ethnically diverse sample of 7- to 12-year-old students. First, they assessed the prejudices of 41 elementary school teachers using a self-report and an IAT. Teachers filled in a teacher expectancy scale for 10 students in their classroom. Self-report measures of prejudiced attitudes and IAT scores were then linked with teacher expectations and student achievement results. Multilevel analyses showed teachers who held more negative implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities are more likely to evaluate their ethnic minority students as less intelligent and as having less promising prospects for their school careers. They also found that the achievement gap between students of Dutch origin and ethnic minority students was larger in classrooms with teachers who held more negative implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities. However, they found no evidence that self-reported prejudiced attitudes influenced teacher expectations or the ethnic achievement gap.

In contrast with Van den Bergh et al. (2010), the current study focused on secondary education. In secondary education, students are not instructed by one or two teachers, but often have a different teacher for each subject. Hence, students' experiences in school are influenced by a set of teachers. Consequently, researchers cannot gain full insight into the relationship between teacher-student interactions and different outcomes by linking just one teacher's attitudes to student outcomes. In quantitative research, this is often resolved by assessing students' experiences with their teachers using one scale, then linking this measure with a different student outcome. Although this technique has many benefits, it could not be used for this study because we wanted to determine if teachers' ideas about ethnic minorities are related to students' sense of school belonging.

Instead, we used a technique of school effects research. A school is characterized by structural features (e.g., size) and compositional features (e.g., ethnic and socioeconomic student composition), as well as its culture (Van Houtte, 2011). The organizational culture of a school can be defined as “a common set of shared meaning or understandings about the group/organization and its problems, goals and practices” (Reichers & Schneider, 1990, p. 23). Although each teacher has his or her own style of student interaction, he or she is also part of the school faculty. Each school has its own challenges and opportunities based on the composition of the student body (e.g., socioeconomic status and ethnicity) and fields of study/tracks offered (Van Houtte, 2011). Over the years, the teaching staff develops shared ideas to respond to the particular challenges and opportunities of teaching in that school (Hargreaves, 1992; Van Houtte, 2011). How teachers interact with their students, and the messages they communicate, are influenced by those shared ideas, or, in other words, their school’s culture (Van Houtte, 2011).

In this study, teachers’ implicit and explicit attitudes were approached as a feature of the school culture. School culture variables were entered into the model by aggregating the individual attitudes of the teachers, after first establishing they were truly shared at the school level (Van Houtte, 2011). This allowed us to examine if, and how, teachers’ shared implicit and explicit ideas influence ethnic minority students’ sense of school belonging in a secondary school context.

### **School belonging**

Students attend school but are not necessarily engaged in it. School engagement is a multifaceted construct with affective (e.g., belonging), behavioral (e.g., positive conduct), and cognitive (e.g., self-efficacy) dimensions (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003). School belonging can be defined as the affective dimension of school

engagement. However, various terms are used to describe it, including school attachment, bonding, identification, and connection (Libbey, 2009). All these terms convey roughly the same meaning. In this study, we used the term school belonging, defined as “the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school social environment” (Goodenow, 1993 p.80). Students have a sense of school belonging when they feel they matter to the group and the group matters to them. This applies to not only peers, but also teachers, other school personnel, and the school as a community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Osterman, 2000).

Research has shown that a sense of school belonging influences many factors that lead to the personal and academic success of a student. For example, a sense of school belonging is positively associated with school achievement (Goodenow, 1993; Wang & Holcombe, 2010) and positive academic attitudes (Neel & Fuligni, 2012; Wang & Eccles, 2012), and negatively associated with delinquency, dropping out (Demant & Van Houtte, 2012b; Finn, 1989), and affective problems (Shochet, Smith, Furlong, & Homel, 2011).

Teachers interact with their students for many hours per week, both verbally and non-verbally. This interaction plays an essential role in the students’ sense of school belonging. When teachers interact with their students, they communicate their expectations, support, appreciation, and trust (Anderman, 2003; Osterman, 2000; Van Houtte, 2011; Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2012). Empirical evidence shows that the way a teacher addresses a student has an impact on a broad range of educational and other outcomes, such as student motivation, misconduct, and achievement. It also affects a student’s sense of school belonging (Demant & Van Houtte, 2012c; Osterman, 2000; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994; Sanders, Wright, & Horn, 1997). Research shows that teachers’ judgments can be affected by a student’s ethnicity, and that teacher-student interactions are essential for a sense of school belonging. Therefore, it is crucial, both for theoretical and policy purposes, to determine if teachers’

shared ideas about ethnic minorities are related to the sense of school belonging in ethnic minority students.

### **Background and schooling of ethnic minority students in Flanders**

The research tradition on racism and ethnic discrimination has focused primarily on the United States. Therefore, it would be useful to explore the impact of teachers' ethnic prejudices for different groups of ethnic minority students in a different national context (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006). The three largest groups of people with non-Western European backgrounds living in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking, northern part of Belgium) are of Moroccan, Eastern European, and Turkish descent (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013).

The migration of Moroccans and Turks started during the “Golden Sixties,” when Belgian industry was in need of extra workers. Because of the economic crisis in the early 1970s, the Belgian government decided to allow migration only for family reunification or political reasons. In 2011, 4.0% of the inhabitants of Flanders were of Turkish or Moroccan descent (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013).

The influx of Eastern Europeans increased rapidly during the last decade (Wets & Pauwels, 2011). Since 2004, different Eastern European countries have joined the European Union. After a few years of transitional measures, there is now free movement of workers and people. More job opportunities and higher wages are important pull factors for migration to Belgium (Touquet & Wets, 2013). In 2011, 2.2% of the inhabitants of Flanders were of Eastern European descent (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013).

In Flanders, schools are considered the perfect medium for resolving ethnic tensions and ethnic inequalities in wider society. However, a first step toward emancipating and integrating ethnic minorities through education is the elimination of ethnic tensions and inequalities within that system. Ethnic minority students underachieve compared to the ethnic majority students. The



Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) PISA study (2012) found that Flanders has the largest difference in mathematics scores between the children of immigrants and native students of all OECD countries. This is true even when controlled for socioeconomic status. The underachievement of minority students in Belgium is not only shown in the test results of the PISA 2012 data, but also in their overrepresentation in less-esteemed educational tracks, higher dropout rates, and higher levels of grade retention, as well as in their underrepresentation in higher education (Duquet, Glorieux, Laurijssen, & Van Dorsselaer, 2006; Heath, Rothon, & Kilpi, 2008).

Flanders has educational policies that focus on the elimination of ethnic inequalities and the integration of ethnic minorities in schools, but the process of realizing these goals has been difficult (Sierens, 2006). The first real educational policy focusing on the integration of ethnic minorities was only developed in the early 1990s. Implementation of these policies sometimes failed due to lack of financial and practical support. The nature of Belgium immigration changes constantly and there is often a delay in the development of educational policy (as in the case of Eastern European countries joining the European Union). There is a strong belief that learning Dutch is the key to resolving all problems, so the native languages and ethnic identities of minority students are virtually ignored. Although there is a willingness to support the integration of ethnic minority students into Belgian schools, the daily reality is often very different, for the aforementioned reasons.

In sum, the goal of the current study is to verify if (1) teachers' shared self-reported attitudes toward ethnic minorities are related to ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging, and (2) teachers' shared implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities are related to ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging.

## Data and methods

### Participants

We used data from 3,003 students (average of 81 students per school,  $SD = 58.17$ ; 50.2% male;  $M_{age} = 15.5$  years) and 357 teachers (average of 10 teachers per school,  $SD = 4.05$ ; 35.9% male; average of 12 years of teaching experience). All students were in Grade 3 (comparable to Grade 9 in the United States) at 37 secondary schools in Flanders. The ethnic composition of the students was as follows: 60.9% Belgian descent, 3.8% Western European descent, 11.8% Moroccan descent, 7.9% Turkish descent, 5.6% Eastern European descent, and 10.0% other descent.

### Procedure

This data set was a selection from a broader sample of 4,322 students, 645 teachers and 55 schools. The data were collected during the school year 2011/2012 as part of Racism and Discrimination in Secondary Schools (RaDiSS). A multistage sampling frame was employed to ensure sufficient variability and cases, in terms of the schools' ethnic composition and the level of urbanization of the school environment. First, four large, multicultural Flemish districts were selected for sampling (Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt, and Sint-Niklaas). Second, all the secondary schools (except those offering only arts education, because of the small number of students) in these areas were divided into three categories: those that were situated in a city center, a suburban area, or a rural area. We then selected a group in which two thirds of the schools were from an urban area and one third from a suburban or rural area. Within these categories, we further selected a group in which one third of the schools had a low concentration of ethnic minority students (less than 15%), one third had a medium concentration (15%–49.9%) and one third had a high concentration (50%–100%) (Flemish Educational Department 2011). In total, 104 schools were contacted, of which 55 were willing to participate (a response rate of 53%). We

did not explain the true purpose of the data collection (i.e., collecting data about racism and discrimination in secondary education). Rather, we told the principals the survey was about how interactions between students, and between students and teachers, influence student well-being and academic achievement. Furthermore, since schools are swamped with requests to participate in academic research, they often accept requests on a “first come, first served” basis. Consequently, refusal to participate in this study was more likely due to a prior commitment to another study than any systematic bias based on the content of the survey. In the sample, 33 schools are located in a city center, 15 in a suburban area, and 7 in a rural location. Further, 17 schools had a low concentration of ethnic minorities, 16 a medium concentration, and 22 a high concentration. As a result, the participating schools covered the entire range of ethnic minority composition from 0% to 100%. Within these schools, the researcher asked all participating Grade 3 students (approximately 15 years old) to complete a written questionnaire. A total of 4,322 students completed the questionnaires (a response rate of 92.5%). Students carried this out in the presence of the researcher and one or more teachers. The teachers were only present to maintain silence. They did not answer any questions about the content of the survey; neither did they collect the surveys. The questionnaires were not anonymous; this was so the data could be coupled with other data, such as academic results provided by the schools. All the students were informed that their names would be removed once the database was complete, making the final database anonymous and confidential.

All Grade 3 teachers in the study received a letter with some broad information about the research project, a link to the online survey, and a code specific to that school. In total, 645 of 1,613 teachers completed the questionnaire (a response rate of 40%). Since each school was given a unique code, anonymity was guaranteed. Once the teachers finished the online survey, they were automatically directed to the SC-IAT measure. Unfortunately, since

the experiment ran only on computers running Windows, some teachers did not want to install the software for the experiment; this resulted in a loss of 258 cases. Therefore, 387 teachers completed the SC-IAT. Given the research questions, we used only schools from which at least 5 teachers completed both the questionnaire and the SC-IAT, as is common practice in school effects research (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000; Kallestad, Olweus & Alsaker, 1998). This selection criterion was imposed to obtain a critical mass of respondents within each school, making generalizations about teachers and staff more stable. This created a loss of 30 teachers. The final totals were 37 schools, 3,003 students, and 357 teachers; 10 schools had a low ethnic concentration, 11 a medium concentration, and 16 a high concentration. There was still sufficient variety in the ethnic minority composition of students within selected schools, which varied from 4% to 100%.

## Measures

**Sense of school belonging.** Sense of school belonging was measured using the 18-item Psychological Sense of School Membership scale of Goodenow (1993). This measure has demonstrated acceptable reliability, and theoretically predicted associations with other measures in other studies (e.g., McMahon, Parnes, Keys & Viola, 2008; Shochet, Dadds, Ham, Montague, 2006; Vas, 2014). Sample items are “I feel like a real part of this school,” “There is at least one adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem,” and “Other students in this school take my opinion seriously.” A 5-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 (*absolutely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). This scale was constructed using a mean sum of scores. The internal consistency was found to be good (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .85$ ). On average, the students rated themselves 3.52 on this scale ( $SD = 0.53$ ). The higher the students scored, the more they endorsed a sense of school belonging.

**Explicit attitudes.** Explicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities is an adaptation of the ethnocentrism scale developed by Billiet, Carton, and Huys (1990) that focused mainly on ethnic minorities as a threat to the Belgian economy and culture. Different adaptations of the original scale have been used in different Flemish studies focusing on adolescents and adults (e.g., Spruyt & Vanhoutte, 2009; Vettenburg, Deklerck, Siongers, 2010). The scale has 18 items concerning the three main immigrant groups in Belgium—Turks, Moroccans, and Eastern Europeans—such as “Turkish people are a threat to our culture and habits” and “Moroccans take advantage of the support from welfare.” A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from 1 (*absolutely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). This scale was constructed using a mean sum of scores. In terms of validity, it showed a strong correlation ( $r = -0.44$  and  $r = -0.47$ , respectively) with two items in the survey under “Indicate on the scale below how you feel about immigrants”: a 7-point scale (-3 to +3) anchored *cold–warm*, and a 7-point scale (-3 to +3) anchored *positive–negative*. The internal consistency was found to be good (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .94$ ). On average, the teachers scored 2.74 ( $SD = 0.57$ ). The higher the teacher’s score, the more negative their attitudes were toward ethnic minorities.

As we wanted to obtain a school culture feature that might be related to student outcomes, the aggregation of this scale was a necessary next step (Van Houtte, 2011). A customary aggregation strategy is to calculate the mean of the scores of the individual members of the group or organization (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990). However, in line with the school culture literature, we only aggregated by calculating the mean if these attitudes were shared at the school level. In other words, we had to examine whether the aggregated measure was reliable and the “average attitude” represented something actually shared at the school level (Glick, 1985). To test this, we used the mean-rater reliability, calculated with the Spearman-Brown prediction formula based on the intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) of a one-way

analysis of variance:  $ICC(1, k) = (\text{between mean square} - \text{within mean square}) / \text{between mean square}$  (where  $k$  = number of raters in each group) (Glick, 1985). Strictly speaking, the result must be .600 to allow an aggregation at the group level. We obtained an ICC score of .544, which is a bit on the low side. However, due to the socially sensitive character of the variable in combination with a one-way analysis of variance showing that the attitudes of the teachers differed significantly between schools ( $p < 0.001$ ), we decided to aggregate. We named this school variable *teachers' shared explicit beliefs* about ethnic minorities.

**Implicit attitudes.** The SC-IAT was used for the measurement of the implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities, using Inquisit by Millisecond Software (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006). The procedure we used was similar to Karpinski and Steinman (2006); differences were minor and are all mentioned below. In the SC-IAT words are presented one by one on the computer screen and they have to be categorized in one of three categories, each category representing a particular concept. The concept of ethnic minorities was represented by foreign names, namely typical Turkish and Moroccan names (e.g. Fatma and Youssef; 4 boys names and 4 girls names in total). The other concepts are 'good' and 'bad', which form a dimension of evaluation. They were represented by words like 'fantastic' and 'tragic'. We selected good and bad words in order to make them as equal as possible in terms of the length of the words and the number of syllables. Participants were asked to categorize good words, bad words, and Turkish and Moroccan names in the correct category. An implicit evaluation of Turkish/Moroccan names is deduced from different response latencies when the Turkish/Moroccan names shared the same response key with either good or bad words. In the second and third block there were 14 and 49 compatible trials, respectively. In this part of the test, foreign names and bad words had to be categorized using the 'i'-key, while good words had to be categorized under the 'e'-key. The second block was a practice block

with 6 good words, 4 bad words, and 4 foreign names. The third block was the compatible test block and had 21 good words, 14 bad words, and 14 foreign names. This unequal distribution is a compromise between having an equal number of 'e' and 'I' responses, and having an equal number of good and bad words (see Karpinski & Steinman, 2006). Foreign names, good words, and bad words were presented in a randomized order that was fixed between participants. The fourth and fifth blocks consisted of incompatible trials. Bad words were still categorized on the 'i'-key, but the foreign names were now categorized together with the good words on the 'e'- key. Block four was a practice block and had 14 trials. Block five was the incompatible test block and contained 49 trials (14 good words, 21 bad words, and 14 foreign names). The order was again randomized but fixed between participants. Each block was preceded by a set of instructions to familiarize the respondent with the task and the last block was also followed by a text to thank the respondent for his/her participation and an e-mail address to obtain more information. Each target or attribution word appeared centred on the screen. Category reminder labels were positioned on the left and right side of the screen. If the respondent gave an incorrect response, a red X popped up in the centre of the screen. After this sign, the respondent had to correct himself/ herself to proceed with the task.

The SC-IAT scores were computed based on the D-scoring algorithm for IAT data ( Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003). All practice trials were omitted from the analysis, since the only goal of these trials was to practice. Two participants with a high percentage of response latencies below 300 milliseconds (32 and 90 per cent) were eliminated. The average response latencies of the compatible block (foreign names + bad) were subtracted from the average response latencies of the incompatible block (foreign names + good). This quantity was divided by the standard deviation of all response times of both test blocks. If a respondent obtains a positive score, it means that this person responded faster when foreign names shared a response key with bad

rather than good words. This is often interpreted as evidence for having more negative than positive associations with foreign names. If the respondent obtains a negative score it is the other way around.

As with the explicit attitudes, we calculated an ICC score to test if the implicit attitudes were shared at the school level. In other words, it was necessary to determine whether the “average implicit attitude” represented something actually shared at the school level (Glick, 1985). Aggregation based on the mean score of the individual members of the group was not allowed, since we obtained an ICC score of  $-.03$ . Hence, since implicit attitudes were not shared by teachers of the same school, it would be incorrect to treat this variable as a feature of the school culture.

Instead, we calculated a proportion to obtain a school composition variable (cf. percentage of free lunch or percentage of ethnic minority students). We calculated for each school the proportion of teachers who obtained a positive score on the SC-IAT (i.e., those who had more negative than positive associations with foreign names). For example, by adding the ethnic student composition, we would be able to confirm the influence of the number of students in a school with a specific ethnic background. We could then verify the influence of the number of teachers who hold more negative than positive associations with foreign names. We named this school variable *proportion of teachers with implicit negative associations*.

**Socioeconomic background of students.** The socioeconomic background of students was measured 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). The higher score of the two parents was included in the analysis to control for the socioeconomic background of the students. This metric variable has a range from 16 to 90.



Table 7.1. Descriptive Statistics for Sense of School Belonging, Teachers' Shared Explicit Beliefs, Proportion Teachers with Negative Implicit Associations and Student-Level and School-Level Control Variables: Frequencies (%) for the Categorical Variables, Means and Standard Deviations for the Continuous Variables (N= 3003 students and 37 schools)

Student-level variables			
	M	SD	Frequencies
Sense of school belonging	3.52	0.53	
Socio-economic status	48.21	16.90	
Gender: male			50.2%
Track: vocational			33.1%
Prior academic attainment: repeat grade			36.0%
Nationality: Turkish or Moroccan descent			19.7%
Nationality: Belgian or West European descent			64.7%
Nationality: East European descent			5.6%
Nationality: other descent			9.9%
School-level variables			
	M	SD	
Teachers' shared explicit beliefs	2.73	0.23	
Proportion teachers with negative implicit associations	0.61	0.18	
Ethnic school composition	0.36	0.30	
School size	683.17	276.13	

*Note.* Teachers' Shared Explicit Beliefs = Aggregation of Individual Teacher Scores on Ethnocentrism-scale (Billiet, et al., 1990), Proportion Teachers with Negative Implicit Associations = Proportion of Individual Teacher Scores on SC-IAT (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006)

**Gender.** Gender is a dummy variable with male as reference category (male = 0, female = 1).

**Vocational Track.** We also controlled for whether students were in a vocational track. The Flemish school system differentiates between academic, technical, vocational, and artistic educational tracks. No students following the artistic track were in this sample. The diminishing focus on cognition from the academic to the vocational track creates a strong hierarchical classification. As a result, the vocational track is at the bottom of the educational and social ladder (Van Houtte & Stevens, 2008, 2010). Vocational students' awareness of this low status yields negative results such as anti-school attitudes, more school misconduct, and a lower sense of school belonging (Van Houtte & Stevens, 2008, 2010; Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2012). Furthermore, ethnic minority students are overrepresented in the vocational track. As a result, it was necessary to account for educational track in the analyses. It is a dummy variable with non-vocational track as reference category (0 = non-vocational track, 1 = vocational track).

**Prior academic attainment.** We measured prior academic attainment by previous year retention. A dummy variable was constructed based on whether students had to repeat a year during their school career (never = 0, at least once = 1).

**Ethnicity.** The ethnicity of the students was assessed primarily by the birthplace of the student's maternal grandmother. This is common practice in Belgium, as many students of immigrant descent are second or third generation and have Belgian nationality (OECD, 2008). If this data was not available, we used the mother's nationality. In the event that all this data was missing, we used the birth country of the student. Based on these criteria, we were able to categorize the ethnicity of 99.3% of all the students in the data set. Ethnicity is a categorical variable with four categories: 0 = Turkish or Moroccan descent, 1 = Belgian or Western European descent, 2 = Eastern European descent, and 3 =

other descent. As is common practice, and in line with the official Flemish definition of non-native groups, students with Western European birthplaces and nationalities were grouped with students of Belgian descent (Timmerman, Vanderwaeren, & Crul, 2003). Belgian society generally appears to group students of Turkish and Moroccan descent together. This is due in part to those groups' similar migration history, appearance, and religion. For this reason, we grouped these students in a single category and those of East European descent in another (IPSOS, 2009). Of the students, 64.7% were of Belgian or Western European descent, 19.7% were of Turkish or Moroccan descent, 5.6% of Eastern European descent, and 10% of other descent.

**Ethnic composition of the school.** The ethnic school composition was calculated based on the concentration of ethnic minority students in the school (i.e., students of non-Western European descent).

**School size.** School size referred to the total number of students enrolled in the school. The data was obtained from the Flemish Educational Department. The smallest school in the sample had 200 students and the largest 1,170, with a mean school size of 683.17 ( $SD = 276.13$ ).

### Strategy of analysis

In order to determine the association between teachers' shared beliefs toward ethnic minorities and ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging, we conducted a multilevel regression analysis. Multilevel analysis was the most appropriate method, because of the hierarchical structure of the data. Students are nested within schools, so we had variables both at the student level and at the school level. We performed the multilevel analyses in MLWIN 2.26, using Iterative Generalized Least Squares algorithm for the estimation of the parameters. All assumptions for linear regression models were tested and verified in the analysis. We also tested for the inclusion of a random slope for ethnicity, since the other level-1 variables were control variables and

level-2 variables were not eligible for random slopes in a two-level model. However, since this provided non-significant improvement of the model, no random slope was modelled for ethnicity. Hence, we used random intercept models in which the coefficient for the intercept was allowed to vary across schools, while regression slopes were fixed across schools. All the continuous student-level and school-level variables were standardized to allow for comparison of the effect sizes, and the outcome variable was left as unstandardized raw-score coefficients for ease of interpretation. Although the focus was on ethnic minority students, ethnic majority students were also considered in the analysis. This provided better insight into the specific situation of ethnic minority students.

The first estimated model was an unconditional model to determine the amount of variance in the outcome, sense of school belonging, within and between schools. Second, the regression model estimated the relations between teachers' shared beliefs—measured in an implicit and explicit manner—and the outcome, sense of school:

The level-1 (student-level) equation:

$$SOB_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_1 Ethnicity_{ij} + \lambda_1 ControlVariables_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

The level-2 (school-level) equation:

$$\begin{aligned} \beta_{0j} = & \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} Teachers' Shared Explicit Beliefs_j \\ & + \gamma_{02} Proportion Negative Implicit Associations_j \\ & + \lambda_2 ControlVariables_j + \mu_{0j} \end{aligned}$$

The combined equation:

$$\begin{aligned} SOB_{ij} = & \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} Teachers' Shared Explicit Beliefs_j \\ & + \gamma_{02} Proportion Negative Implicit Associations_j \\ & + \beta_1 Ethnicity_{ij} + \lambda_1 ControlVariables_{ij} \\ & + \lambda_2 ControlVariables_j + \varepsilon_{ij} + \mu_{0j} \end{aligned}$$

In the above combined equation,  $\gamma_{00}$  is the overall intercept. For the school-level variables,  $\gamma_{01}$  is the main effect of teachers' shared explicit beliefs toward ethnic minorities in school  $j$  on sense of school belonging for student  $i$ , and  $\gamma_{02}$  is the main effect of the proportion of teachers' negative implicit associations toward ethnic minorities on sense of school belonging. To examine ethnic differences,  $\beta_1$  represents the main effect of student  $i$ 's ethnicity (0 = Turkish or Moroccan descent, 1 = Belgian or Western European descent), 2 = Eastern European descent, 3 = other descent) on sense of school belonging.  $\lambda_1$  represents the vector of parameters for the effect of all student-level control variables included in the analyses. These variables were socioeconomic status, gender, attending vocational track, prior academic attainment, and ethnicity (Demagnet & Van Houtte, 2012b; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Osterman, 2000; Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2012).  $\lambda_2$  represents the vector of parameters for the effect of all school-level control variables included in the analyses: school size and school ethnic composition (Cotton, 1996; Ma, 2003; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009). The residual  $\varepsilon_{ij}$  represents the random effect of student  $i$  in school  $j$ . The residual  $\mu_{0j}$  represents the random intercept for school  $j$ .

After testing the main effects model, two cross-level interaction terms were separately included in the analysis to test how two associations differed according to the ethnicity of the student: (1) the association between teachers' shared explicit beliefs and students' sense of school belonging, and (2) the proportion of teachers' negative implicit associations and the students' sense of school belonging. Significant regression coefficients for the interaction terms indicated that the association between teachers' shared implicit and explicit beliefs and sense of school belonging differed according to students' ethnicity.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

First, we discuss the descriptive statistics of the implicit and explicit attitudes of the individual teachers. The averages of teachers' individual scores were 2.74 ( $SD = 0.57$ ) on the explicit ethnocentrism scale, and 0.07 ( $SD = 0.35$ ) on the implicit SC-IAT. The average score on the ethnocentrism scale corresponds with moderately non-ethnocentric, while the average score on the SC-IAT corresponds with slightly more negative than positive associations with foreign names. The correlation between the explicit and implicit measure of teachers' attitudes was .196 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Hence, teachers who showed more negative attitudes toward ethnic minorities on the explicit measure also showed more negative attitudes on the implicit measure.

Table 7.1 shows the descriptive statistics of the student-level and school-level variables included in the analysis. On average, students scored 3.52 out of 5 on the sense of school belonging scale. This implies that students more often responded positively (3 = "in between" and 4 = "agree") than negatively to the items on the sense of school belonging scale.

### Associations between teachers' shared attitudes and students' sense of school belonging

We started with an unconditional model. From that we computed an intra-class correlation ( $\sigma^2_u = 0.012$ ,  $\sigma^2_e = 0.262$ ). This indicated that 4.4% of the variance in sense of school belonging occurred at the school level, and 95.6% occurred at the student level. We expected to find a higher level of variance at the school level, since we would expect that two students in the same school would have a more similar sense of school belonging than two students in different schools. However, other studies have found similar results (Ma, 2003; Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2012). As presented in Table 7.2, we entered explanatory variables, control variables, and two cross-level interactions in the

next three models. The comparison of subsequent models to the unconditional model shows how much of the variance in sense of school belonging is explained by the added variables. In addition to the explained variance, Table 7.2 shows the standardized regression coefficients, their standards errors, levels of significance, and random variance components.

In the next step (Table 7.2, Model 2), the two explanatory school-level variables—teachers' shared explicit beliefs about ethnic minorities and the proportion of teachers with implicit negative associations—were added to the model together with the student-level and school-level control variables. The variance at the school level dropped from .0124 to .0056. This indicates that 54.8% of the school-level variance in sense of school belonging is explained by this set of variables. However, it should be noted that only 4.4% of the variance was situated at the school level. The main effect of teachers' shared explicit beliefs about ethnic minorities proved to be insignificant. The main effect of proportion of teachers with implicit negative associations also proved to be insignificant. The control variables gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnic school composition did not reach statistically significant levels. Prior academic attainment, vocational track, ethnicity, and school size, however, had statistically significant associations with students' sense of school belonging. Students who had to repeat a year in school had a lower sense of school belonging than students who had no school delay. Students in the vocational track had a lower sense of school belonging than students in the academic or technical tracks. Students in the category "other descent" showed lower levels of sense of school belonging than students in the category "Turkish and Moroccan descent." Students in larger schools had a lower sense of school belonging than students in smaller schools.

In a third step, we added a cross-level interaction between teachers' shared explicit beliefs toward ethnic minorities and students' ethnicity, with students of Turkish and Moroccan descent as reference category (Table 7.2,

Model 2). The  $R^2$  indicates that adding the cross-level interaction explained an additional 2.5% of the school-level variance in sense of school belonging and an additional 0.2% of the student-level variance. The cross-level interaction, explicit beliefs x Turkish and Moroccan descent, proved to be statistically significant. That is, in schools where teachers shared more negative attitudes toward ethnic minorities, students of Turkish and Moroccan descent had a lower sense of school belonging. The regression coefficients for the interaction terms explicit beliefs x Belgian and Western European descent, and explicit beliefs x other descent did not differ significantly from explicit beliefs x Turkish and Moroccan descent. Normally, this would indicate that the same negative relationship between teachers' shared explicit beliefs and students' sense of school belonging can be expected for students of Belgian, Western European and other descent. However, we noted that the effect sizes approach 0, especially for students of other descent. In contrast, the regression coefficient for the interaction term "explicit beliefs x Eastern European descent" differed in a statistically significant manner from "explicit beliefs x Turkish and Moroccan descent." However, additional analyses showed that there was no significant association between teachers' shared explicit beliefs and the sense of school belonging of students of Eastern European descent.

In a final step, a cross-level interaction between the proportion of teachers with implicit negative associations toward ethnic minorities and students' ethnicity was entered into the model. This cross-level interaction did not yield statistically significant levels. Hence, the proportion of teachers with implicit negative association was not related to students' sense of school belonging, irrespective of their ethnicity.



Table 7.2. Teachers' explicit and implicit attitudes towards ethnic minorities on students' sense of school belonging. Results of a step-wise multilevel analysis, standard errors between parentheses (N= 3003 students and 37 schools).

	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
<b>Independent Variables</b>				
Teachers' shared explicit beliefs		-0.023 (0.017)	-0.050* (0.022)	-0.022 (0.016)
Proportion negative implicit associations		0.012 (0.016)	0.013 (0.016)	-0.005 (0.022)
Teachers' shared explicit beliefs * Belgian or W. European descent		-	0.029 (0.022)	-
Teachers' shared explicit beliefs * Eastern European descent		-	0.107* (0.043)	-
Teachers' shared explicit beliefs * Other descent		-	0.049 (0.030)	-
Proportion negative implicit associations * Belgian or W. European descent		-	-	0.031 (0.025)
Proportion negative implicit associations * Eastern European descent		-	-	0.016 (0.037)
Proportion negative implicit associations * Other descent		-	-	0.003 (0.032)
<i>Individual level Control Variables</i>				

Gender ( <i>ref: male</i> )	0.004 (0.020)	0.004 (0.020)	0.003 (0.020)
Prior academic attainment ( <i>ref: no past failure</i> )	-0.094*** (0.022)	-0.092*** (0.022)	-0.094*** (0.022)
Socio-economic status	0.005 (0.011)	0.006 (0.011)	0.005 (0.011)
Vocational track ( <i>ref: non-vocational track</i> )	-0.070** (0.025)	-0.070** (0.025)	-0.069** (0.025)
Belgian & W- European descent ( <i>ref: Turkish &amp; Moroccan descent</i> )	-0.034 (0,031)	-0.029 (0,031)	-0.032 (0.031)
Eastern European descent ( <i>ref: Turkish &amp; Moroccan descent</i> )	-0.011 (0.046)	0.021 (0.048)	-0.012 (0.046)
Other descent ( <i>ref: Turkish &amp; Moroccan descent</i> )	-0.094* (0.038)	-0.091* (0.038)	-0.095* (0.038)
<i>School level Control Variables</i>			
Ethnic school composition	-0.024 (0.020)	-0.025 (0.020)	-0.024 (0.019)
School size	-0.038* (0.018)	-0.037* (0.018)	-0.040* (0.017)
Constant	3.512	3.602	3.596
<i>Individual level variance</i>	0.262	0.260	0.259
<i>School level variance</i>	0.012	0.006	0.006

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001

## Discussion

This study examined whether teachers' attitudes toward ethnic minorities, both explicit and implicit, were related to students' sense of school belonging, with a focus on the ethnic background of the students. Several findings merit further discussion.

First, test results showed that teachers' explicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities are shared among the teaching staff of a specific school, while teachers' implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities are not shared. That is, if we compare the responses of teachers between schools, we will find patterns in the responses on the explicit measure, but not on the implicit measure. This seems to suggest that teachers express their explicit attitudes and, consequently, influence each other in developing common ideas. In contrast, implicit attitudes are not and cannot be shared, and as a result remain very individual. For future research, it would be interesting to follow teachers who are teaching for the first time. By testing their explicit and implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities before they arrive at a school, and again after teaching at that school for a while, we could get a better understanding of whether and how group processes influence a teacher's implicit and explicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities.

Second, we considered the impact of the associations of the proportion of teachers with implicit negative with ethnic minorities in a school. This proportion does not seem to influence either ethnic majority or ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging.

The implicitly measured attitudes toward ethnic minorities have received ample research attention. However, few non-experimental studies offer insight into the impact of implicit attitudes on other actors. The current data set presented a unique opportunity to relate teachers' implicit attitudes to students' sense of school belonging in a non-experimental study context; however, there are

some methodological issues to be considered when interpreting the results. First, the SC-IAT contains only names of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent. This may explain the non-significant effect for students of Belgian, Eastern European and other descent. Nevertheless, it does not explain the non-significant effect for students of Turkish and Moroccan descent. Second, since the implicit attitudes are not shared among the teaching staff of a school, it would be incorrect to consider it a feature of the school culture (average score); therefore, we treated it as a compositional variable (proportion). We are convinced that entering a proportion instead of an average score provides a more correct reflection of reality. However, this also changes the meaning of this variable. For the explicit attitudes, we related the average attitude of the teaching staff to students' sense of school belonging. For the implicit attitudes, we related the proportion of teachers with a specific idea to students' sense of school belonging. Apparently, this proportion had no impact on the students' sense of school belonging, either because we based our measurement on a limited number of teachers (see Limitations), or because teachers do not express these implicit ideas.

In addition to methodology, there is also a substantive reason that may explain why we could not find a relationship between the proportion of teachers in a school with implicit negative associations about ethnic minorities and students' sense of school belonging. The study by Van den Bergh et al. (2010) did find a significant impact of teachers' implicit attitudes. That study found that the achievement gap between students of Dutch origin and ethnic minority students is larger in classrooms in which teachers hold more negative attitudes toward ethnic minorities. However, that study differs from ours in the age of the students (7-12 years old versus an average of 15.5 years old in our study), in the measurement of the attitudes (individual teacher attitudes versus proportion of implicit negative associations), and in the outcome variable (achievement versus school belonging).

The study by Van den Bergh et al. showed that the relationship between teachers' implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities and students' achievement is mediated by the expectations of the students. A study by Hallinan (2008) found only a negligible effect of teachers' expectations on students' sense of school belonging. Hence, it is possible that implicit teacher attitudes do not influence students' sense of school belonging because the communication of those attitudes is filtered through expectations toward the students, and these expectations do not influence students' sense of school belonging.

Third, with regard to teachers' shared explicit beliefs toward ethnic minorities, we came to the conclusion that while the shared beliefs of teachers are not related to the sense of school belonging of students of Eastern European descent, they *are* related to the sense of school belonging of other minority students. However, we found only a negligible effect on students of Belgian and other descents. We also found that students of Turkish and Moroccan descent felt less belonging to school if they were part of a school where teachers shared more negative explicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities. Since the main contrast lies between students of Eastern European descent and students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, we considered two possible explanations regarding those two groups.

One possible explanation is the difference in the ways in which these two groups interpret ethnic discrimination and other experiences of ethnic inequality. Several theoretical and empirical studies show that the process of immigration and acculturation follows a different path for different ethnic groups and generations (Berry, 1997; Ogbu, 2008; Portes, Parker, & Cobas, 1980; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2005; Safi, 2010). In our study, ethnicity and generational status were closely intertwined. Of the students of Eastern European descent,

71.6% were first generation immigrants. Of the students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, 18.5% were first generation immigrants.

Both immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan descent, and those of Eastern European descent, have a higher chance of living in precarious circumstances than inhabitants of Belgian descent. Of the inhabitants of Belgian descent, 10.16% live at risk of poverty (i.e., earn less than 60% of the median equalized income) (Van Robaeys, Perrin, Vranken, & Martiniello, 2006). The risk of poverty is 55.56% and 58.94% for inhabitants of Turkish and Moroccan descent, respectively. For inhabitants of Eastern European descent, the risk is 36.0% (Van Haarlem, Coene, & Lusyne, 2011). However, we have to be careful with the latter percentage. Due to the recent migration history of Eastern Europeans and the free movement of workers and persons in the European Union, it is very difficult to find detailed information. This illustrates that both immigrant groups of Turkish and Moroccan and East European descent have trouble in society. The question remains, though, whether they attach similar meaning to these difficulties.

The influx of Eastern European immigrants to Belgium started in the early 1990s, but increased drastically in 2004 with the expansion of the European Union. First-generation students from these countries and their parents face challenges intrinsic to migration, such as limited knowledge of the language and the school system, and limited help and support networks (Verhaeghe, Van der Bracht, & Van de Putte, 2012). However, as noted by Ogbu (2008), it is likely that Eastern Europeans, who migrated voluntarily, see these difficulties as obstacles they have to overcome. They are still more optimistic about their futures than Turkish and Moroccan immigrants are and have more faith that these adjustments will be temporary (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ogbu, 2008).

Immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan descent first came to Belgium in the 1960s, yet more than 50% live at risk for poverty. They experience ethnic

discrimination in the labor and housing markets (Baert et al., 2013; Van der Bracht et al., 2014). They are almost four times as likely to be unemployed as people of Belgian descent—a gap that has remained constant since the early 1980s (OECD, 2008). They are confronted with electoral successes of an extreme right-wing party with an anti-Islam agenda focused on people of Turkish and Moroccan descent. In line with the conflict/consciousness hypothesis of Porter, Parker, and Cobas (1980), we assume that greater familiarity with the language, the culture, and economic dynamics leads to a greater consciousness of the reality of discrimination and a more critical appraisal of the host society. As a result, it is possible that for students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, the experience of negative teacher attitudes toward ethnic minorities is not an obstacle that they have to overcome, but another sign that they still do not belong.

We would have explored this idea further by comparing first-generation students with second- and third-generation students, but our sample was too small and the distribution too unequal to differentiate the dynamics caused by ethnicity from those caused by generation. For example, there were 71.6% first-generation students of Eastern European descent and 18.5% of Turkish or Moroccan descent. We believe more research is necessary to explore the underlying mechanism of these findings.

A second possible explanation for the difference in sense of school belonging between students of Eastern European descent and students of Turkish and Moroccan descent is the differences in ethnic visibility. In Flemish qualitative research, students of Turkish and Moroccan descent mention that they are more easily identified as immigrants than students of Eastern European descent (e.g., by physical traits) (p.189, Van Praag, 2013). Eastern European students can blend in more easily than students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, since they show share more physical similarities with native Belgians. This “blending in” is

enhanced by the composition of the student population. In our sample, students of Eastern European descent made up 10% or less of the student population in 22 of 34 schools. For students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, this is the case in only 9 of 34 schools. Blau's (1977) structural theory holds that people prefer "in-group" associations over "out-group" associations, but prefer associating with out-group members over not associating at all. Based on this theory, we can assume that Eastern European students will associate more frequently with native Belgian students than with students of Turkish and Moroccan descent. Previous research also confirms that inter-ethnic friendships are more common in schools with higher ethnic heterogeneity (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder Jr, 2001; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009). Similarly, it is possible that teachers express their ethnically based prejudiced attitudes toward students of Eastern European descent less often than toward students of Turkish and Moroccan descent. Since students of Eastern European descent can blend in more easily, teachers may sometimes "forget" that they are of immigrant descent.

### **Limitations**

Finally, we note some limitations to keep in mind when interpreting our results, which may help researchers in developing research designs to build on this study. First, the data does not allow us to run a three-level multilevel model in which students are nested in classrooms and classrooms are nested in schools. A three-level multilevel model could refine the models tested in the current study, since student-teacher interactions mainly take place in the classroom. This would allow the researcher to model the influence of a group of teachers' shared explicit and implicit beliefs on a class of students taught specifically by that particular group, instead of the influence of teachers' shared attitudes at the school level. We expect the results of such a study would show stronger effects.



Second, having teachers present during administration of the student survey, as well as the lack of anonymity of the student surveys, may have influenced the students' answers (e.g., social desirability). However, we did our best to minimize such potential influence. First, the researcher was the only person who answered student questions and collected the surveys. Teachers were instructed to interfere only to maintain silence during the survey administration. Additionally, before the start of the survey, the researcher carefully explained why the student name was requested, how the data would be treated to guarantee anonymity, and that no student was obliged to give his or her name.

Third, the present results should not be generalized to all teachers working in secondary education in Flanders due to the possibility of a sample selection bias. Participation was voluntary, and only 40% of the teachers chose to participate. We kept the subject of the survey vague (e.g., how do student-student and student-teacher interactions influence the well-being and academic achievement of students), and the survey was anonymous. However, it is likely that teachers discussed the content of the survey with each other, which could have discouraged teachers with greater negative attitudes toward ethnic minorities from participating. If this was the case, the sample is less than completely representative of all teachers in secondary education in Flanders. This could also indicate that the relation between teachers' shared explicit attitudes and the sense of school belonging of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent is stronger than indicated in this study.

Fourth, of the teachers who did choose to participate, another 40% did not complete the SC-IAT. It is possible that teachers with greater negative attitudes were more apt to drop out of the survey than other teachers. However, additional tests showed that the average score on the explicit attitudes scale toward ethnic minorities did not differ significantly between teachers who completed both the

survey and the SC-IAT, and teachers who only completed the survey. Hence, while this test indicated there is no reason to assume teachers who did not complete the SC-IAT had biased attitudes toward ethnic minorities, it is unfortunate that technical issues probably decreased the number of participants (for example, the experiment ran only on computers with Windows).

## Conclusion

The current study makes a unique contribution to the field by showing that the proportion of teachers in a school holding negative *implicit* associations regarding ethnic minority students—as measured by the SC-IAT—is not related to those students' sense of school belonging, while teachers' shared negative *explicit* beliefs are. The results of this study, together with the results of the study of van den Bergh et al. (2010), indicate the importance of relating teachers' implicit and explicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities to different student outcomes.

While future research on this subject would be useful on a theoretical level, it would also have practical applications. In Flanders, the United States, and many other Western countries, immigrants and their offspring form a substantial component of the population (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013; Portes & Rumbaut, 2005). In Flanders, 25.3% of the children aged 0-5 years have non-Belgian roots. Underachievement in education, ethnic discrimination in the labor and housing markets, and ethnic tensions in society mean these children's' futures are not bright. Effort on many different levels needs to be made to improve their chances at a better life.

The lesson to take from this study is that teachers have to be aware that their beliefs about ethnic minorities can make a difference in how ethnic minority students' feel at school. Teacher awareness can be raised with lectures, specific coaching programs, and class observations. There should be a clear message to

teachers that “what you think matters.” However, it is not only the attitudes of individual teachers that make a difference; this study also found that teachers share explicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities and, consequently, this shared attitude is part of a school’s organizational culture. Hence, principals have an important role in monitoring and potentially adjusting this aspect of the school culture.

## Chapter 8: The influence of perceived ethnic discrimination by teachers and parents' ethnic socialization practices on ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility in Flanders, Belgium

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This study focuses on the interplay of ethnic discrimination by teachers, parents' ethnic socialization practices, and ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility. Feelings of academic futility are detrimental for students' motivation and academic achievement. Since ethnic discrimination creates barriers beyond the control of the individual, the goal is to gain information on the association of ethnic teacher discrimination with ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility. Furthermore, we focus on the role of parental socialization practices to understand family level protective factors that might attenuate the negative consequences of ethnic teacher discrimination. The results of a multilevel analysis on 1181 ethnic minority students in 53 schools in Flanders (Belgium) show that frequent ethnic teacher discrimination is associated with a higher sense of futility for ethnic minority students and if these students have also received high levels of parental ethnic socialization, they have even a higher sense of futility.

Adolescents of non-West-European descent growing up in Flanders (the northern Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) are likely to be confronted with ethnic discrimination and inequality at different and essential moments in their lives. They face unemployment rates up to five times as high as people of ethnic Belgian descent (OECD, 2008, 2013). Field experiments with correspondence tests give evidence of ethnic discrimination on the labour market and the housing market (Baert, Cockx, Gheyle, & Vandamme, 2013; Van der Bracht, Coenen, & Van de Putte, 2014). A Flemish study indicates that at least one out of four of the adolescents of non-West-European descent in their study experienced ethnic victimization by peers and/or teachers (D'hondt, Van Houtte, & Stevens, 2014).

Research shows that the experience of ethnic discrimination has detrimental consequences on a wide range of outcomes, such as adolescents' academic achievement, self-esteem, psychological resilience or depressive symptoms (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Thomas, Caldwell, Faison, & Jackson, 2009; van Dijk, Agyemang, de Wit, & Hosper, 2011; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Ethnic discrimination creates barriers and challenges beyond the control of the individual. Adolescents who have the feeling that they cannot realize their desired outcomes, in an academic perspective or in a broader life perspective, will develop feelings of futility (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2001; Ross & Broh, 2000; Ross & Mirowsky, 1989; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010). Adolescents with a strong sense of futility will be less motivated to succeed in school, will put less effort in school and consequently, have lower achievement scores (Agirdag, Van Avermaet, & Van Houtte, 2013; Agirdag et al., 2012; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010). Overcoming feelings of futility is key, especially because ethnic minority students tend to underachieve compared to their ethnic majority peers (Stevens & Dworkin, 2014). In order to do that, it is important to know the factors that are associated with ethnic minority students'

sense of academic futility. However, there is very little research that investigates the influence of ethnic discrimination on ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility. So, the first goal of the current study is to assess if ethnic discrimination by teachers enhances ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility.

We focus specifically on ethnic discrimination by teachers for two reasons. First, sense of academic futility is about having the feeling that educational outcomes are not contingent on students' own behaviour. Teachers are the 'front office' of the educational system, especially in Flanders (northern part of Belgium), where they have considerable power over the educational career of students (Stevens, 2007). In contrast to many other countries, such as the UK or the USA, there are no centrally-organized standardized tests in Flanders. Teachers devise and correct the exams and have an important voice in deciding if a student can continue to the next year. Consequently, teachers' independent position in the Flemish educational system makes it important to verify if ethnic discrimination by teachers will be related to stronger feelings of academic futility amongst this group of students. Second, teachers and students interact for many hours a week, both verbally and non-verbally. The literature shows that if these interactions are warm and supportive, there are positive consequences for the academic and overall well-being of the students (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009; Klem & Connell, 2004; Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2003). However, few studies focus specifically on the impact of ethnic discrimination by teachers, so there is little insight in the possible consequences of this kind of negative teacher-student interactions.

The second goal is to investigate the direct and moderating effects of parental socialization practices on students' sense of academic futility. Sense of academic futility is developed through different socialization experiences, making

it important to explore whether parents' ethnic socialization can counterbalance the potentially negative impact of teacher discrimination on their adolescent children's academic futility. Furthermore, the research literature shows that parents' racial socialization practices can be an important moderating factor in the relation between perceived discrimination and mental health outcomes. However, findings in this line of research are not always conclusive, with some studies showing a positive, buffering effect, and other studies showing no such effect (For a review: Hughes et al., 2006). This is mainly a consequence of the use of different measures for parents' ethnic socialization and different outcome variables.

Hence, in the current study, we focus on the interplay of ethnic discrimination by teachers, parents' ethnic socialization practices, and ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility to help fill two major gaps in the literature. First, the need for basic information on the association of ethnic discrimination by teachers with ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility and second, the need to understand family level protective factors that might attenuate the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination by teachers for adolescents.

## Theoretical Background

### Sense of academic futility

The concept of *sense of academic futility*, first introduced by Brookover and colleagues (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Brookover et al., 1978), fits into a broader research tradition on sense of control. Sense of control is the expectation a person has about the degree to which s/he can control their own his/her outcomes (Ross & Broh, 2000; Ross & Mirowsky, 1989; Rotter, 1966). Applied to educational processes, a high sense of academic futility indicates

that a student feels s/he has little or no control over her/his educational success or failure (Brookover et al., 1979; Brookover et al., 1978). Having a sense of control over desired outcomes has a strong positive influence on a person's well-being and mental health (Guinote, Brown, & Fiske, 2006; Lachman & Weaver, 1998; Ross & Mirowsky, 1989), as well as a person's motivation to succeed. Students' who feel that they can master the system will put more effort into school and will be more motivated to perform, which in turn leads to higher levels of engagement in learning activities and, subsequently, higher achievement (Agirdag et al., 2012; Ross & Broh, 2000; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010).

At the societal level, sense of academic futility can be seen as a reflection of the ethnic and social stratification in society because the likelihood of reaching desired outcomes is not random. The school as an institution is constructed with a strong focus on the middle-class ethnic majority student, what can create, unwittingly, institutional barriers for ethnic minority students (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Hence, 'perceived control is the subjective reflection of objective conditions of control and power in the stratification system' (p. 273, Ross & Broh, 2000). Consequently, ethnic minority students should be more at risk for developing a high sense of academic futility. However, Van Houtte and Stevens (2010) did not confirm this prediction in their Flemish population; instead they found that Flemish students with lower socio-economic status, had a higher sense of academic futility.

On a more proximal level, sense of academic futility can be seen as a learned expectation developed through different social experiences (Wheaton, 1980). If an adolescent encounters countless situations in school in which he/she has little control over the desired outcomes, the adolescent is likely to develop a high sense of academic futility (Ross & Broh, 2000). Both teachers and parents are important actors in the social lives of adolescents. In the next section, we discuss the impact



of discrimination by teachers on sense of academic futility, followed by a discussion of parental ethnic socialization practices.

### **Ethnic discrimination by teachers and sense of academic futility**

Ethnic discrimination can be defined as the differential treatment on the basis of ethnicity that disadvantages (a member of) an ethnic group (Quillian, 1995). The asymmetric power relationship between teachers and their students makes differential treatment across groups of students fairly easy (Ng, 2010). This asymmetric power relationship is expressed in the day-to-day interactions between teachers and their students (e.g., the teachers speaks in the front of the class and the students listen) and in the process of examination. Considering teachers' independent position in the Flemish educational system (see above), they can have a tremendous impact on the educational careers of their students.

Teachers can use this asymmetric power over their students in a very positive, supportive way, or in a destructive, controlling way. Many studies have focused on the role of teachers in ethnic inequalities in education, but few studies have focused specifically on the impact of ethnic discrimination by teachers (Stevens & Dworkin, 2014). The studies that did, show that more experiences with ethnic teacher discrimination are related with a lower self-esteem, lower academic achievement and more conduct problems (Fisher et al., 2000; Thomas et al., 2009; Wong et al., 2003). In the search for empirical studies that could give insight in the relation between ethnic discrimination and sense of futility, we came across only one longitudinal study by Lambert and colleagues (2009) showing that experiences of racism decrease the feelings of academic, but not social, control of African American adolescents. They discuss the idea that this could relate to the source of the racism. Academic control would be more affected by discrimination

by teachers, while social control would be more affected by discrimination by peers. However, with the data available, they were not able to confirm this idea.

### **Parents' ethnic socialization and sense of futility**

Parents' ethnic socialization is about the transmission of parents' ideas about ethnicity by way of subtle, overt, deliberate, and unintended mechanisms with the central goal to protect children against the negative effects of ethnic discrimination and ethnic inequalities (Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006). It can be considered as an antecedent coping resource (Harrell, 2000). Parents transmit their ideas throughout the life span of their children and these ideas then influence how their children perceive their cultural and ethnic background, give meaning to the world and cope with the ethnic discrimination and ethnic inequalities in life (Harrell, 2000; Pearlin, 1989). Although the goal is the same for every parent, the mode of transmission, the content of the message, and the frequency differs widely (Coard & Sellers, 2005). As a result, different scholars developed different classifications to gain insight in parental ethnic socialization messages. The current study looks at two different types of socialization messages: cultural socialization and preparation for bias, in line with the typology of Hughes and colleagues (2006). The focus of cultural socialization is on promoting ethnic pride. These parents try to counterbalance the negative experiences by teaching their children to be proud of their ethnic background and by teaching them about their cultural heritage, their history or customs. The goal of preparation for bias is to prepare children to cope with ethnic discrimination. These parents want to make their children aware of ethnic barriers and hand them tools to overcome these obstacles.

In line with the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), we expect that cultural socialization will protect the individual against the negative consequences of

ethnic discrimination. Cultural socialization will help adolescents to maintain a positive image of their ethnic group and to focus on the positive aspects of their in-group. This will help to strengthen their self-esteem, which helps to maintain a positive self-image, even when they experience ethnic discrimination.

Preparation for bias can also play a protective role for ethnic minority adolescents who experience ethnic discrimination. If parents teach their children how to use adaptive specific coping responses, it is to be expected that preparation for bias will be a protective resource that helps adolescents who experience ethnic discrimination to cope.

However, it is also possible that cultural socialization and preparation for bias will worsen the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination. Not everybody perceives and reacts to rejection in the same way (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). Cultural socialization can raise the awareness of the adolescent for the presence of rejection cues because of one's ethnic cultural background. Preparation for bias can lead to the development of anxious rejection expectations. Hence, instead of helping adolescents to cope with ethnic discrimination, it is possible that it raises the sensitivity of the adolescent and installs an idea that there is no way to escape the negative experience of ethnic discrimination, which can lead to more intense reactions to ethnic discrimination (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002).

The empirical evidence on parents' ethnic socialization and ethnic discrimination yield a mixed picture. Some studies find that parents' socialization practices act as a protective factor between ethnic discrimination and African American students' resilience, well-being or psychological distress (Brown & Tylka, 2011; Fischer & Shaw, 1999); others find no such evidence for African American students' academic achievement and school involvement (Miller &

MacIntosh, 1999). Some studies find that only specific ethnic socialization messages buffer. For example, the study of Bynum and colleagues (2007) showed that messages of being proud of your ethnicity did not buffer the impact of experiencing ethnic discrimination; in contrast, parents' messages emphasizing the importance of religion, Black history, and kinships did protect African American adolescents against psychological stress. Other studies find evidence that parents' ethnic socialization contributes to more ethnic discrimination distress by raising the awareness of ethnic discrimination (Brega & Coleman, 1999; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999).

It is important to explore the moderating role of parents' ethnic socialization as it gives insight in how ethnic socialization might help ethnic minority students to maintain their well-being despite the negative experience of ethnic discrimination. However, it is clear that the interplay between ethnic discrimination, parents' ethnic socialization, and different outcomes is complex.

### **Schooling of ethnic minority students in Flanders**

The research tradition on racism and ethnic discrimination is mainly focused on the USA context, so it is important to explore the role of teachers' ethnic prejudices for different groups of ethnic minority students in a different national setting (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006). In 2012, 12.7% of the adolescents in Flanders aged between 12 and 17 were of non-Western European descent (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013). Hence, Flemish schools are confronted with a multicultural school population. However, ethnic minority students underachieve compared to the ethnic majority students. The OECD PISA study (2012) shows that Flanders has the largest difference in mathematics scores between the children of immigrants and native students of all OECD countries, even with socio-economic

status controlled. The underachievement of minority students in Flanders is not only shown in the test results of the PISA 2012 data, but also in their overrepresentation in less-esteemed educational tracks, higher dropout rates, and higher levels of grade retention, as well as in their underrepresentation in higher education (Duquet, Glorieux, Laurijssen, & Van Dorsselaer, 2006; Heath, Rethon, & Kilpi, 2008; Lacante et al., 2007; Van Praag, Stevens, & Van Houtte, 2014).

In sum, the goal of the current study is to formulate an answer to the following research questions: 1) Is the perceived experience of ethnic discrimination by teachers associated with a higher sense of academic futility for ethnic minority students in Flanders? If this is the case, 2) Does parental ethnic socialization moderate the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination by teachers and sense of academic futility?

## Data and methods

### Sampling strategy

The data used in the current study is a selection from a broader sample of 4322 students and 55 schools. The data were collected during the school year 2011-2012 as part of RaDiSS (Racism and Discrimination in Secondary Schools). A multistage sampling frame was employed to ensure sufficient variability and cases, in terms of students' ethnicity and the level of urbanization of the school environment. First, four large, multi-cultural Flemish districts were selected for sampling (Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt, and Sint-Niklaas). Second, all the secondary schools (except those schools that offer exclusively artistic education, because of the small number of students) in these areas were divided into three categories: situated in a city centre, a suburban area, or a rural area. The aim was to select two thirds of the schools from an urban area and one third from a suburban or rural

area. Within these districts, a further selection was made of one third of schools with a low proportion of ethnic minority students (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, 104 schools were contacted, out of which 55 were willing to participate (a response rate of 53%). Since schools are swamped with requests to participate in academic research, they often accept requests on a “first come, first served” basis. Consequently, refusal to participate in this study was more likely due to a prior commitment to another study than any systematic bias based on the content of the survey. In the sample, 33 schools are located in a city centre, 15 in a suburban area and 7 in a rural location. Further, 17 schools have a low proportion of ethnic minorities, 16 a medium proportion, and 22 a high proportion. As a result, the participating schools cover the entire range of ethnic minority composition from 0% to 100%. Within these schools, the researcher asked all participating third-grade students to complete a written questionnaire. A total of 4322 students completed the questionnaires (a response rate of 92.5%). Students carried this out in the presence of the researcher and one or more teachers. The questionnaires were not anonymous, in order for the data to be coupled with other data, such as academic results provided by the schools. All the students were informed that their names would be removed once the database was complete, making the final database anonymous and confidential.

Given the research question at hand, we selected from the sample of 4322 students all the students with non-West European background living in Flanders. The ethnicity of the students was assessed primarily by the birthplace of the student’s maternal grandmother. This is common practice in Belgium, as most students of immigrant descent are second or third generation and have Belgian nationality (OECD, 2008; Timmerman, Vanderwaeren, & Crul, 2003). If this data

was not available, we used their mother's nationality. In the event that all this data was missing, we used the birth country of the student. Based on these criteria, we were able to categorize the ethnicity of 99.3% of all the students in the dataset. This resulted in a sample of 1181 ethnic minority students in Grade 3 (comparable with Grade 9 in the American system) in 53 secondary schools in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking, northern part of Belgium.

## Measures

### *Dependent variable*

*Sense of academic futility* was measured using the scale of Brookover and colleagues (1979) consisting of 5 items. The 5 items used to capture students' sense of futility are 'People like me will not have much of a chance to do what we want to in life', 'People like me will never do well in school even though we try hard', 'I can do well in school if I work hard', 'At school, students like me don't have any luck', and 'There is no use in working hard at school; a good job is not reserved for people like me'. Item 3 was reverse coded. A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from 'absolutely disagree' to 'completely agree'. We obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .77. The higher the students scored, the stronger their feelings of academic futility. The mean score was 1.90 (SD = 0.72) (see Table 8.1). The distribution of sense of academic futility is skewed to the right. As a check, we performed a log-transformation on sense of academic futility and re-tested all the models. The same basic picture appeared as with the non-transformed school deviance variable, so for ease of interpretation we work with the non-transformed variable.

### *Independent variables*

To record students' perceived experience of *ethnic teacher discrimination*, they were first presented with six potential experiences of discrimination by teachers,

e.g. you are called less in class. This question was inspired by the work of Pachter et al. (2010). If students reported they experienced one of the situations of discrimination since the beginning of secondary school, they were subsequently asked to indicate how often they were discriminated and why they thought they were discriminated. First, the students could choose from six different frequency categories: once, a few times, sometimes, often, very often, or all the time. Second, ten perceived underlying reasons were presented, as well as an additional possibility to record a reason in full text, under the category 'other'. If students reported victimization due to nationality/ethnicity or skin colour, we considered them to be victimized based on ethnical grounds. This results in a variable with three categories: *no teacher discrimination* (= 0), *non-frequent ethnic teacher discrimination*: the student perceived that he/she experienced once, a few times or sometimes ethnic discrimination by teachers (= 1), and *frequent ethnic teacher discrimination*: the student perceived that he/she experienced often, very often or all the time ethnic teacher discrimination (= 2). Ethnic teacher discrimination was experienced at least once by 27.1% of the students.

*Cultural socialization* was measured by the following two items 'My parents taught me a lot about the culture of my ethnic group' and 'My parents taught me to be proud that I originate from this ethnic group'. *Preparation for bias* was measured by 'My parents taught me how to cope in a multicultural society' and 'My parents taught me how to cope with ethnic discrimination'. A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from 'absolutely disagree' to 'completely agree'. We obtained respectively a Cronbach's alpha of .66 and .74 and a mean score of 4.00 (SD = 0.95) and 3.98 (SD = 0.95). Both variables are skewed to the left. Only a very small percentage completely disagreed with the items, most of the students agreed to a certain extent that they received cultural socialization and preparation for bias from their parents. The correlation between both variables is 0.309.



Table 8.1. Descriptive statistics: frequencies (%), means, and standard deviations (SD) (*observations N = 1,181, groups N = 53*)

<i>Individual Variables</i>		
<i>Variable Name:</i>	Mean or %	SD
Sense of Academic Futility	1.90	0.72
No Ethnic Discrimination	72.90%	
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	21.30%	
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination	5.8%	
Cultural Socialization	4.00	0.95
Preparation for Bias	3.98	0.95
Gender (Male)	49.40%	
Socio-Economic Status	39.43	14.46
Academic Track	24.80%	
Technical Track	27.70%	
Vocational Track	47.50%	
Prior Academic Attainment: Repeat Grade	55.40%	
<i>School Variable</i>		
Ethnic school composition	42.4%	31.10

*Individual-level control variables*

The *socioeconomic status* of students was measured using the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and 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 is used to measure the students' socioeconomic background. The mean score is 39.43 (SD = 14.46). Of the sample, 49.4% are *male* (male = 0, female = 1). We also controlled for *track*. Of all the

students, 24.8% followed an academic track (= 0), 27.7% a technical track (= 1) and 47.5% a vocational track (= 2). We measured *prior academic attainment* by previous year retention. A dichotomous variable was constructed based on whether the student had to repeat a year during his/her school career (never = 0, at least once = 1); 55.4% of the students had repeated at least a year during their school career.

#### *School-level control variables*

The *ethnic school composition* is calculated based on the proportion of ethnic minority students in the school. The mean ethnic school composition is 42.4% (SD = 31.10). The ethnic composition of the schools in this sample varies from 3% ethnic minority students to 100% ethnic minority students.

#### **Strategy of analysis**

Multilevel analysis (MLwiN 2.26) is the most appropriate method for this study, given we are dealing with a clustered sample of students nested within schools. All metric variables were standardized for the comparison of effect sizes. In a first step (see Table 8.2), the unconditional model was estimated to determine the amount of variance that occurred on the individual and school level. In a second step, the individual and school control variables were added to the model together with perceived ethnic discrimination by teachers. The control variables have been demonstrated to relate to sense of academic futility or be important in relation to ethnic discrimination. At the individual level, these variables were socioeconomic status, gender, educational track, ethnicity and prior academic attainment (Van Houtte & Stevens, 2008, 2010). At the school level, this was ethnic school composition (Bellmore, Witkow, Graham, & Juvonen, 2004; Hoglund & Hosan, 2013). This allowed us to verify the net effect of perceived

ethnic teacher discrimination. In a third step, we added cultural socialization and preparation for bias to the model. This gave us the opportunity to verify the direct impact of cultural socialization and preparation for bias on sense of academic futility. In a final step (see Table 8.2, Model 3 and 4), we explored if parental ethnic socialization would act as a protective or exacerbating factor for perceived ethnic teacher discrimination by adding interaction-terms respectively between perceived ethnic teacher discrimination and cultural socialization and perceived ethnic teacher discrimination and preparation for bias.

### Findings

We started the multilevel regression analysis, presented in Table 8.2, with an unconditional model. This model indicated that 8.0% ( $\sigma^2_u = 0.042$ ,  $\sigma^2_e = 0.484$ ) of the variance in school belongingness was situated at the school level. The results in Model 1 showed that the sense of academic futility did not differ between students who perceived no ethnic discrimination and the students who perceived ethnic teacher discrimination only non-frequently, while the students who perceived ethnic discrimination frequently had a higher sense of academic futility than the students who did not perceive ethnic discrimination.

Subsequently, we focused on the direct impact of cultural socialization and preparation for bias. Both higher cultural socialization and higher preparation for bias were associated with a lower sense of academic futility. However, this was only the case when cultural socialization and preparation for bias were added separately to the model<sup>1</sup>. If both were added at the same time, only preparation for bias had a positive influence on the sense of academic futility. Students who felt more prepared by their parents for ethnic inequality had a lower sense of academic futility. In the last step, the moderating role of cultural socialization and

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<sup>1</sup> These analyses are not shown here, but can be obtained upon request.

preparation for bias was tested. For ethnic minority students, who experienced no or non-frequent teacher discrimination, cultural socialization played a small protective role, while for students who experienced frequent teacher discrimination it played an exacerbating role (See Figure 8.1). Hence, if we focused on the group of students who experienced frequent teacher discrimination, then we saw that their sense of academic futility was higher when they received high cultural socialization than when they received low cultural socialization. The interaction-terms of preparation for bias and ethnic teacher discrimination did not yield significance.

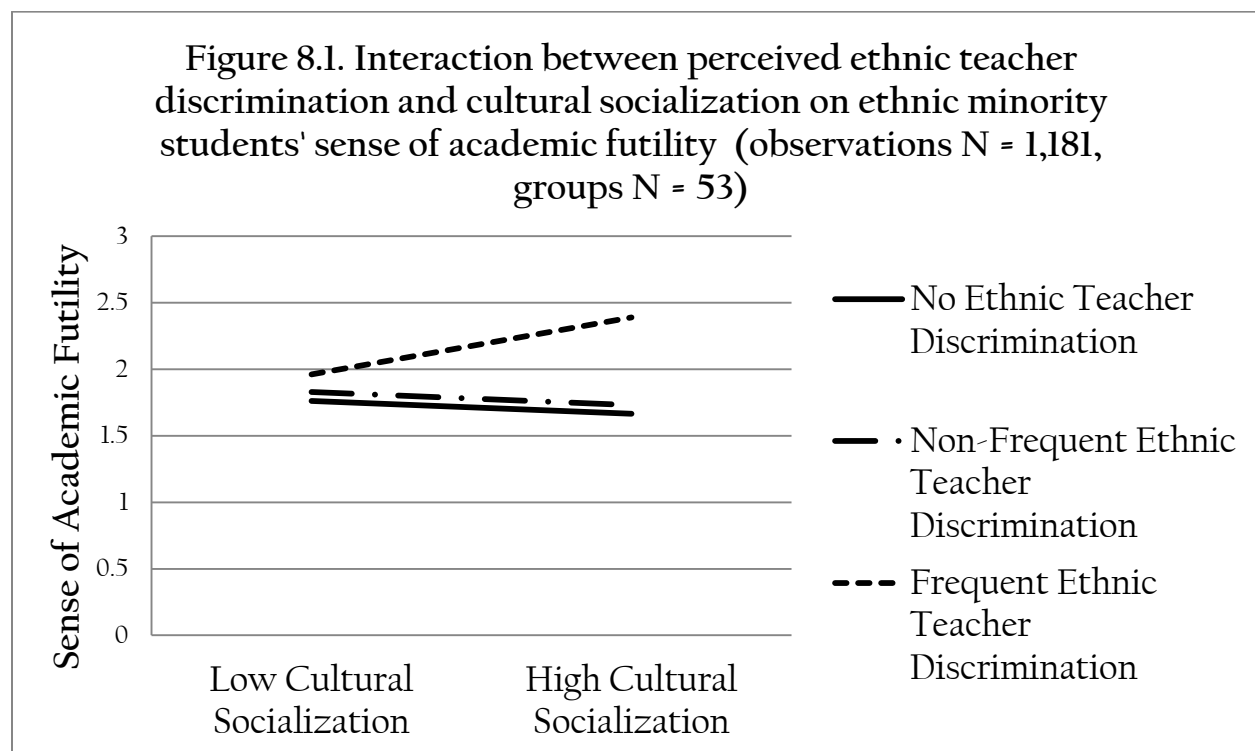


Table 8.2. Ethnic discrimination by teachers and parental ethnic socialization on ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility. Results of stepwise multilevel analysis. (*observations N = 1,181, groups N = 53*)

	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
<i>Individual level</i>					
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination ( <i>ref: no ethnic discrimination</i> )		0.042 (0.049)	0.061 (0.049)	0.066 (0.050)	0.057 (0.049)
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination ( <i>ref: no ethnic discrimination</i> )		0.470*** (0.88)	0.489*** (0.087)	0.462*** (0.087)	0.479*** (0.088)
Cultural Socialization		-	-0.033 (0.021)	-0.048* (0.024)	-0.031 (0.021)
Preparation for Bias		-	-0.072*** (0.021)	-0.073*** (0.021)	-0.093*** (0.025)
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination *Cultural Socialization		-	-	-0.001 (0.053)	-
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination *Cultural Socialization		-	-	0.262** (0.083)	-
Non-Frequent Ethnic Discrimination *Preparation for Bias		-	-	-	0.067 (0.049)
Frequent Ethnic Discrimination *Preparation for Bias		-	-	-	0.081 (0.078)

Gender (ref: male)	-0.137** (0.043)	-0.140** (0.043)	-0.138** (0.043)	-0.141** (0.043)
Prior Academic Attainment (ref: no past failure)	0.021 (0.042)	0.017 (0.042)	0.012 (0.042)	0.014 (0.042)
Socio-Economic Status	-0.004 (0.021)	-0.001 (0.021)	-0.004 (0.021)	-0.002 (0.021)
Technical Track (ref: academic track)	0.124* (0.062)	0.119 (0.062)	0.119 (0.061)	0.122* (0.062)
Vocational Track (ref: academic track)	0.372*** (0.060)	0.371*** (0.060)	0.376*** (0.060)	0.375*** (0.060)

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*School level*

Ethnic School Composition	-0.047 (0.026)	-0.033 (0.026)	-0.034 (0.026)	-0.034 (0.026)
<i>Constant</i>	1.902	1.715	1.715	1.713
<i>Individual level variance</i>	0.484	0.463	0.456	0.452
<i>School level variance</i>	0.042	0.011	0.011	0.010

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\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001

## Discussion

Ethnic minority adolescents living in Flanders cannot escape the confrontation with ethnic discrimination (Baert et al., 2013; OECD, 2008; Van der Bracht et al., 2014). Ethnic discrimination is present in their lives in a direct or indirect way, in the present or in the future. However, there is still a need for studies that focus on the consequences of ethnic discrimination on the academic and overall well-being of adolescents (Wong et al., 2003). In the current study, the focus is on the interplay of ethnic discrimination by teachers, parents' ethnic socialization practices, and ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility. Feelings of academic futility are detrimental for a students' motivation to succeed and academic achievement (Agirdag et al., 2012; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010). Since ethnic discrimination creates barriers and challenges beyond the control of the individual, we wanted to gain information on the association of ethnic discrimination by teachers with ethnic minority students' sense of academic futility. Furthermore, we wanted to meet the need to understand family level protective factors that might attenuate the negative consequences of ethnic teacher discrimination by focusing on the role of parental socialization practices. Several findings merit further discussion.

First, based on other studies that focus on ethnic teacher discrimination (Fisher et al., 2000; Lambert et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2009; Wong et al., 2003), we expected that every experience with ethnic teacher discrimination would be related with a stronger sense of academic futility, however, this is not the case. The perceived experience of ethnic teacher discrimination is only negatively related with sense of futility for ethnic minority students who perceive frequent discrimination by their teachers. We could not find a difference between students

who did not experience ethnic teacher discrimination and students who did experience ethnic teacher discrimination but only once or a few times.

A possible explanation for this lack of difference between no discrimination and non-frequent discrimination is that some students may hold the idea of academic futility, regardless of the experience of ethnic teacher discrimination, because the institutional context of a school can be seen as an 'ideal' context for the development of academic futility, especially for ethnic minority students. The institutional context of a school reflects the ethnic and social stratification that exist in wider society in the strong focus on the middle class ethnic majority student (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This expresses itself in the stereotypes hidden in school books, the elaborated vocabulary of teachers, the overrepresentation of ethnic minority students and low SES students in the least esteemed tracks, or in the preferred kind of student (Dworkin, 2014p. 588-590; Herzog-Punzenberger & Schnell, 2014p. 90-94; Ichou & van Zanten, 2014p. 348-350). In relation to the latter, in general, teachers value more those characteristics that are typical for the middle-class and ethnic majority student (e.g. punctual, quiet) – characteristics that will lead to more positive and supportive interactions with these students (Dworkin, 2014p. 589). Hence, even if they did not had real conflicts with their teachers, this can create a school climate where some ethnic minority students develop the impression that their academic achievement is not contingent on their own behaviour, especially if this school climate is accompanied with real and long-term experiences of doing poorly at school. These findings are in line with the idea that sense of academic futility is developed through different socialization experiences (Wheaton, 1980). Hence, only if students experience ethnic teacher discrimination on a frequent basis, they learn to expect that their academic outcomes are not contingent on their own behaviour.



Second, either the message of cultural pride or preparation for bias separately is associated with a lower sense of academic futility, but when both are included in the equation only the preparation for bias has a net significant effect, suggesting that this type of ethnic socialization is most helpful. This is probably a consequence of a difference in content between both socialization practices. Cultural socialization is focused on installing pride about one's cultural-ethnic background, while preparation for bias is really focused on learning how to cope with ethnic discrimination in the school setting. Consequently, one can expect that these coping mechanisms would be particularly helpful because they are so directly related to the students' experiences at school.

Third, parental ethnic socialization does not play a protective moderating role for the students who perceived ethnic teacher discrimination. In fact, preparation for bias does not have any moderating effect and for those students who report high frequencies of teacher discrimination, living in homes where they receive more rather than less cultural socialization is linked to greater not lower feelings of academic futility. Hence, this finding is in line with the idea that cultural socialization can raise the awareness of the adolescent for the presence of rejection cues because of one's ethnic cultural background, which leads to more intense reactions (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Matsueda, 1982).

Finally, we discuss some limitations of this study. First, parental ethnic socialization is an intricate phenomenon that is difficult to describe in terms of its key characteristics and relationships to various outcomes. The current study was able to add to the existing knowledge about the moderating role of parental ethnic socialization, but to fully capture the functioning of parental ethnic socialization, this field needs more standardized measures that is specifically developed to capture its complexity (Hughes et al., 2006). Second, because this is a cross-sectional study, we cannot state that the frequent experience of ethnic teacher

discrimination causes a higher sense of academic futility. However, based on studies that focus on the profile of children/adolescents at risk for teacher discrimination, we can expect that the relation between ethnic teacher discrimination and sense of academic futility is reciprocal, rather than one-directional (Brendgen, Wanner, & Vitaro, 2006; Delfabbro et al., 2006). The group of students that perceived frequent ethnic teacher discrimination is only a small group (68 out of 1181 students), but based on the literature, we can expect that this is a group at risk. Children or adolescent who are most at risk for teacher discrimination are also the ones who do significantly less well in school, have reduced intention to complete school or have adjustment problems (Brendgen et al., 2006; Delfabbro et al., 2006). Hence, it is likely that students, who already have a sense of academic futility, perhaps due to earlier school failures, experience the most ethnic teacher discrimination, which, in turn, strengthens their feelings of academic futility, particularly if their parents have warned them about teacher discrimination or have attributed their prior academic difficulties to teacher discrimination. However, we need longitudinal data to explore this further.

In sum, this study shows that frequent ethnic teacher discrimination is associated with a higher sense of academic futility for ethnic minority students in Flanders (Belgium) and if these students have also received high levels of cultural socialization, they have even a higher sense of academic futility.



## Chapter 9: The relationships of teacher ethnic discrimination, ethnic identification and host national identification to school deviance of Turkish and Moroccan immigrant adolescents in Belgium

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Despite the high number of immigrant adolescents living in European countries, we know little about the factors that might be associated with immigrant adolescents' non-cognitive behavioural and emotional outcomes. In this study, we focus on school delinquency and how ethnic teacher discrimination, ethnic identification and host national identification might be directly associated with the school deviance of male and female immigrant adolescents. Additionally, we verify the buffering role of ethnic identification and host national identification. The results of a multilevel analysis on 553 students of Turkish and Moroccan descent in 45 secondary schools in Flanders (Belgium) show that ethnic teacher discrimination and host national identification are two factors that are related with the school deviance of immigrant adolescents of Turkish and Moroccan descent. Ethnic identification does not seem to have an influence. While the relationship between ethnic teacher discrimination and school deviance differs for male and female adolescents, this is not the case for host national identification and ethnic identification. Ethnic identification and host national identification do not seem to moderate the relationship of ethnic teacher discrimination and school delinquency for either male or female adolescents, except for girls who experienced ethnic teacher discrimination on a frequent basis.

The increasing number of immigrant inhabitants in many European countries has transformed European societies into multicultural societies. In Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, 12.7% of the adolescents aged 12 to 17 are immigrants or children of immigrants, coming from non-Western-European countries (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013). Despite the high number of immigrant adolescents living in Belgium and in other European countries, there is only limited knowledge about the school experiences of these adolescents and about the factors that influence their school experiences (Stevens, Vollebergh, Pels, & Crijnen, 2005). Many researchers have focused on the factors that explain the underachievement of immigrant adolescents compared to their ethnic majority peers (Duquet, Glorieux, Laurijssen, & Van Dorsselaer, 2006; Heath, Rethon, & Kilpi, 2008), but we know little about the factors that might be associated with immigrant adolescents' non-cognitive behavioural and emotional outcomes.

In the current study, we focus on school deviance. School deviance can be defined as behaviour that disrespects the school rules (Demant, 2013). Research shows that school deviance co-occurs with school drop-out, grade retention and lower academic achievement (Bryant, Schulenberg, Bachman, O'Malley, & Johnston, 2000; Finn, 1989; Jimerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egeland, & Sroufe, 1997). However, school deviance is not only problematic for the misbehaving adolescent, but also for the environment (e.g., peers and teachers), since it diverts attention away from the academic orientation.

Since school deviance can be problematic both for the misbehaving adolescent and the school environment, many researchers have examined why some students act deviant and other do not. Guided by two dominant theories in the field of deviance, social control theory (Hirschi, 2002) and general strain theory (Agnew, 1992), many researchers have explored the influence of bonding with different actors (e.g., peers, family, school) and the influence of different

kinds of strain. In the current study, we follow this line of research, but focus on three factors that are distinctive for the lives of immigrant adolescents: ethnic and host national identification (i.e. identification with the country of destination), and ethnic discrimination by teachers. Since these three factors are inextricably linked with the position of immigrant adolescents in the host society, this can give insight in the factors that contribute specifically to the school deviance of immigrant adolescents.

There is empirical evidence that ethnic discrimination is related with more delinquency among adolescents (Simons, Chen, Stewart, & Brody, 2003; Stevens, et. al, 2005; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Other studies show that a strong connection to the ethnic community is related with less involvement in delinquent behaviour (Arbona, Jackson, McCoy, & Blakely, 1999; Ma, 2003; McMahon & Watts, 2002). However, to the best of our knowledge, there are no studies that link host national identification with adolescents' delinquency. Furthermore, most of the studies on ethnic discrimination or ethnic identification focus on the USA and on African American adolescents. Because of the high number of immigrant adolescents living in Flemish Belgium and in other European countries, it is important, both for theoretical and policy purposes, to explore if similar processes can be found in other national contexts and in relation to other ethnic groups. Hence, the first goal of this study is to determine how ethnic discrimination, ethnic identification and host national identification are directly related to school deviance of immigrant adolescents in Flemish Belgium.

However, not only do we want to comprehend how these three factors are directly related to school deviance, we also want to know if ethnic identification and host national identification moderate the relationship between ethnic discrimination and school deviance. A high connection to the ethnic group has been identified as one of the factors that can attenuate the negative consequences

of ethnic discrimination on deviant behaviour (Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2004; Wong et al., 2003). However, the empirical evidence is mixed (Caldwell et al., 2004; Maes, Stevens, & Verkuyten, 2013). Moreover, the knowledge on the buffering role of host national identification is very limited. Hence, the second goal of this article is to determine if and how ethnic and host national identification moderate the relationship between ethnic discrimination and school deviance.

Gender plays, and has always played, an important role in the discussions about delinquency and disruptive behaviour in school, since male students are more often involved in school delinquency than girls (For an overview, see: Demanet, 2013, p. 7). Furthermore, different empirical studies indicate that the factors that influence and/or moderate the relationship between ethnic discrimination and delinquency are different for male and female minority adolescents (Caldwell et al., 2004; Maes et al., 2013; Simons et al., 2003). Consequently, the third goal is to focus on potential differences according to gender.

## **Ethnic discrimination, strain and school deviance**

### **Ethnic discrimination**

Ethnic discrimination can be defined as the differential treatment on the basis of ethnicity that disadvantages (a member of) an ethnic group (Quillian, 1995). Research shows that the experience of ethnic discrimination has negative repercussions on a wide range of outcomes, such as adolescents' academic achievement or self-esteem (Thomas, Caldwell, Faison, & Jackson, 2009; Wong et al., 2003) and also on delinquency (Simons et al., 2003; Stevens et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2003).

In this study, we focus on personal experience of ethnic discrimination by teachers. Teachers and students interact for many hours a week, both verbally and non-verbally. The literature shows that if these interactions are warm and supportive, this has positive consequences on the academic and overall well-being of the students (Klem & Connell, 2004; Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2003). However, few studies focus on the impact of ethnic discrimination by teachers, so there is little insight in the possible consequences of this kind of negative teacher-student interactions.

### **General strain theory and ethnic discrimination**

According to general strain theory, a positive relationship between ethnic discrimination and delinquency is to be expected (Agnew, 1992). This theory is much inspired by the stress literature (Pearlin, 1989) and discusses the idea that delinquency is caused by stressors or strain. Strain increases the chance of experiencing negative emotional states (e.g., anger and frustration) (Agnew, 1992, 2001). On their turn, these negative emotional states will pressure people into deviant acts because deviance is a way to manage these negative emotional states. In a broad sense, strain is caused by negative relationships with others, which means that you are not treated the way you want to be treated. More specific, general strain theory distinguishes between three types of negative relationships: 'relationships in which 1) another individual prevents you from achieving positively valued goals, 2) another person removes or threatens to remove positively valued stimuli that one possesses, and 3) another person presents or threatens to present a person with noxious or negatively valued stimuli' (Agnew, 1992, p. 50). Since ethnic discrimination is about differential treatment that disadvantages (a member of) an ethnic group (Quillian, 1995) and ethnic



discrimination is a negative, detrimental, stressful experience (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999), it can definitely be defined as a source of strain.

However, the experience of strain can activate different coping strategies, for example, by looking for social support or avoidance. Hence, deviance is just one coping strategy. To accommodate this observation, Agnew (2001, p. 319) developed four conditions that influence the likelihood of strain being answered with delinquency. These conditions are '1) the negative interaction is seen as unjust, 2) the strain is seen as high in magnitude, 3) the strain is associated with low social control, and 4) the strain creates some pressure or incentive to engage in delinquent behaviour'.

Ethnic discrimination by teachers ticks off all four boxes. Being discriminated against because of your ethnicity is about being treated differently because of a stable, central characteristic that should have no influence on teachers' behaviour according to social norms and regulations. Teachers are expected to be role models, particularly in relationship to treating students in a fair way (Stevens, 2009). Hence, ethnic discrimination by teachers is considered by the students as unjust. Furthermore, since teachers have power and control over their students, ethnic discrimination is something that students cannot control, but that can have serious consequences for their school career. As a result of this, and in line with classic ethnographic studies in schools (Furlong, 1984; Gillborn, 2003; Mac an Ghail, 1988), ethnic minority students can respond to ethnic discrimination with resistance towards school.

Hence, based on general strain theory, we expect that *the more ethnic minority students experience ethnic discrimination by their teachers, the more they will report to be involved in school deviance (hypothesis 1).*

## Ethnic identification, host national identification, social control and deviance

### Ethnic identification and host national identification

Adolescents with an immigrant background are connected to their country of origin and to their country of settlement. These adolescents' social identification contains often both an ethnic identification and a host national identification. Tajfel (2010, p. 2) defines social identification as follows: "social identification must be understood as that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." Hence, ethnic identification and host national identification are not interchangeable with ascribed ethnicity or nationality (e.g., based on people's country of birth, or passports). The latter are social facts, while the former contain different subjective elements (e.g., self-identification, emotional significance) that combine into an individual sense of ethnic or host national identification.

### Social Control Theory, Ethnic Identification and Host National Identification

Social bonds are seen as the most important reason why individuals act conform norms and regulations. The central idea of social control theory is that every person has a natural tendency to behave in a delinquent manner, so research should focus on the factors that refrain a person to act delinquent, not on the factors that motivate a person to act delinquent (Hirschi, 2002; Matsueda, 1982). Four processes underpin the controlling force of social bonds: 1) people are too busy being involved in conventional activities to act delinquent, 2) people belief in the social norms of the group, 3) people who are committed to a group do not want to risk losing their investments (e.g., getting an education), and 4) if people

feel attached to a group, they do not want to misbehave since they are sensitive to others' opinions.

School is a social context in which the host society is very salient. If adolescents feel a strong connection with the host society, they want to refrain from acting delinquent in school, since they do not want to cause damage to this social bond. For example, many Western countries stress the importance of educational credentials for future success. When immigrant adolescents act delinquent in school, they risk their investments to become a successful member of the host society. Hence, we expect that *a stronger sense of host national identification will be associated with less involvement in school deviance (hypothesis 2).*

Several studies show that a strong sense of ethnic identification is related to more school engagement (Taylor, Casten, Flickinger, Roberts, & Fulmore, 1994), more academic efficacy (Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001), higher academic achievement (Taylor et al., 1994). So, these studies suggest that there is contextual consonance between the values and goals of the ethnic community and the values and goals of school. Consequently, according to the social control theory, adolescents who have a strong social bond with the ethnic community should act conform the school rules. Empirical evidence endorses this idea. A strong social bond with the ethnic community is related with less involvement in aggressive behaviour (McMahon & Watts, 2002) and less involvement in fights for African-American adolescents (Arbona et al., 1999). Hence, this empirical evidence leads to the expectation that *a strong sense of ethnic identification will be associated with less involvement in school deviance (hypothesis 3).*

## Ethnic Discrimination, Ethnic and Host National Identification, and School Deviancy

Research shows that a high connection to the ethnic group can attenuate the relationship between ethnic discrimination and deviance (Caldwell et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2003). According to social identification theory, once individuals identify with a specific group, they are motivated to maintain a positive image of this group and to focus on the positive aspects of their in-group, because this will bolster their own self-esteem and positive self-image (Tajfel, 1974). This urges to focus on the positive and unique aspects of the in-group, and helps in-group members to maintain a positive self-image, even when they are confronted with ethnic discrimination. Empirical evidence supports this idea. The American study of Caldwell and colleagues (2004) shows that when ethnic identification is a more central part of the self, male African American adolescents engage less in violent behaviour as response to ethnic discrimination. However, they could not find any protective effect for female African American adolescents. The longitudinal American study of Wong, Eccles and Sameroff (2003) found that ethnic identification buffered the relationship between ethnic discrimination and African American adolescents' school misconduct. Hence, we expect that *holding a strong ethnic identification will protect immigrant adolescents against the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination on school deviance (hypothesis 4)*.

Theory and empirical evidence on the moderating role of host national identification is very limited. The Dutch study of Maes and colleagues (2013) is, as far as we know, the only study that investigated the moderating influence of host national identification on the relationship between ethnic discrimination and internalizing and externalizing problem behaviours. They reason that adolescents, who strongly identify with the host national society, will be more vulnerable for the negative experience of ethnic discrimination. On the one hand, research has

shown that ethnic minority adolescents who have more intergroup contact perceive exclusion based on race as more wrong than adolescents who have less intergroup contact (Crystal, Killen, & Ruck, 2008; Ruck, Park, Killen, & Crystal, 2011). On the other hand, an important part of the self is devalued by members of a group the immigrant adolescent identifies with. Hence, we expect that *a strong identification with the host national society will exacerbate the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination on school deviance (hypothesis 5)*.

However, in contrast with their hypothesis, Maes and colleagues (2013) could not find any evidence that host national identification buffers or exacerbates the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination on problem behaviours of immigrant early adolescents.

### Gender Differences

General strain theorists determined, based on theoretical and empirical evidence, that the processes that are described in general strain theory are applicable to both male and female delinquency. However, there is empirical evidence that the character of these processes can be different depending on gender (Broidy & Agnew, 1997). For example, males and females might differ in the likelihood to react to strain with delinquent behaviour, but some studies cannot find real gender differences in the relationship between different forms of strain and delinquency (Hoffmann & Cerbone, 1999; Hoffmann & Su, 1997; Mazerolle, 1998). Because of these contradicting results in the literature, it is not possible to make statements on how gender influences strain and delinquency exactly. Hence, we do not formulate a hypothesis, but will explore potential gender differences in the relationship between ethnic teacher discrimination and school delinquency.

Research shows that social bonds are both predictive of male and female delinquency (Anderson, Holmes, & Ostresh, 1999; Huebner & Betts, 2002; Rosenbaum, 1987). However, the strength of social bonds can differ. For example, the Dutch study by Stevens, Pels, Vollebergh, & Crijnen (2004) finds that Moroccan girls, much more than boys, are moderately attached to both their ethnic background and to the host national society. Furthermore, the protective impact of social bonds can differ for boys and girls. For example, in the study of Huebner & Betts (2002), similar patterns were found for boys and girls, but social bonds were more predictive for delinquent behaviour of girls than of boys. Hence, we do not formulate a hypothesis, but will explore potential gender differences in the relationship between ethnic identification, host national identification and school delinquency.

### **Immigrant adolescents in Flanders**

Flanders is the Dutch-speaking, northern part of Belgium. Within the group of immigrant adolescents living in Flanders, we focus on students of Turkish and Moroccan descent. These are the two largest groups of people with a non-West European background living in Flanders (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013). The migration of Moroccans and Turks started during the “Golden Sixties,” when Belgian industry was in need of extra workers. Because of the economic crisis in the early 1970s, the Belgian government decided to allow migration only for family reunification or political reasons. In 2011, 4.0% of the inhabitants of Flanders were of Turkish or Moroccan decent (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013).

Students of Turkish and Moroccan descent underachieve compared to students of Belgian descent. The OECD PISA study (2012) found that Flanders has the largest difference in mathematics scores between the children of immigrants and native students of all OECD countries. This is true even when controlled for

socioeconomic status. The underachievement of minority students in Belgium is also shown in their overrepresentation in less-esteemed educational tracks, higher dropout rates, and higher levels of grade retention, as well as in their underrepresentation in higher education (Duquet et al., 2006; Heath et al., 2008).

## Data and methods

### Participants

We used data of 553 students in Grade 3 (Grade 9 according to the American system) in 45 secondary schools in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking, northern part of Belgium (50.3% boys; mean age = 16). Of the participants, 59.9% self-identified as being Moroccan, 40.1% self-identified as being Turkish.

### Procedure

This data set is a selection from a broader sample of 4322 students in 55 schools. The data were collected during the school year 2011-2012 as part of RaDiSS (Racism and Discrimination in Secondary Schools). A multistage sampling frame was employed to ensure sufficient variability and cases, in terms of schools' ethnic composition and the level of urbanization of the school environment. First, four large, multi-cultural Flemish districts were selected for sampling (Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt, and Sint-Niklaas). Second, all the secondary schools (except those schools that offer exclusively artistic education, because of the small number of students) in these areas were divided into three categories: situated in a city centre, a suburban area, or a rural area. The aim was to select two thirds of the schools from an urban area and one third from a suburban or rural area. Within these categories, a further selection was made of one third of schools with a low proportion of ethnic minority students (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, 104 schools were contacted, out of which 55 were willing to participate (a response rate of 53%). Schools are swamped with requests to participate in academic research, so they often use a 'first come, first served' principle. In the sample, 33 schools are located in a city centre, 15 in a suburban area and 7 in a rural location. Further, 17 schools have a low proportion of ethnic minorities, 16 a medium proportion, and 22 a high proportion. As a result, the participating schools cover the entire range of ethnic minority composition from 0% to 100%. Within these schools, the researcher asked all third-grade students to complete a written questionnaire. A total of 4322 students completed the questionnaires (a response rate of 92.5%). Students carried this out in the presence of the researcher and one or more teachers. The questionnaires were not anonymous, in order for the data to be coupled with other data, such as academic results provided by the schools. All the students were informed that their names would be removed once the database was complete, making the final database anonymous and confidential.

This sample was selected based on the self-identified ethnicity of the students. First, we selected all the students who are from Turkish or Moroccan descent. The ethnicity of the students was assessed primarily by the birthplace of the student's maternal grandmother. This is common practice in Belgium, as many students of immigrant descent are second or third generation and have Belgian nationality (OECD, 2008). If this data was not available, we used their mother's nationality. In the event that all this data was missing, we used the birth country of the student. Based on these criteria, we were able to categorize the ethnicity of 99.3% of all the students in the dataset. Within the group of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, we selected the group of students who identified themselves as being Turkish or Moroccan. These two steps were necessary, because some students of Belgian descent or other descent self-identified as being



Turkish or Moroccan, and to be able to verify the relation between ethnic identification and school deviance (see ethnic identification below).

## Measures

**School deviance.** School deviance was measured using a 17-item scale inspired by Stewart (2003). Participants were asked to indicate how often they performed minor deviant acts such as being late for school or skipping classes. A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from 'never' (1) to 'very often' (5). Scores were summed to a scale that ranges from 17 to 85. However, nobody scored more than 78. The mean score was 30.05 (SD = 9.75) and the Cronbach's alpha was 0.90 (see Table 9.1).

**Self-identified ethnicity.** Students were asked the following question: 'If you had to choose 1 nationality, you feel most strongly connected with, which nationality is this?' Self-identified ethnicity was a dichotomous variable: 0 = Turkish and 1 = Moroccan.

**Ethnic identification.** Ethnic identification was measured using a 3-item scale adapted from the Multidimensional inventory of black identification-Teen (Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008). These items focus on how central an ethnic identity is to a person. First, we asked the students to self-identify their ethnicity. To not confound the relationship between ethnic identification and school deviance, we opted to select only the students who self-identified as being Turkish or Moroccan. Subsequently, they were asked to answer the following three items with that self-identified ethnicity (i.e. ethnic group) in mind: 'If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would say is that I belong to this ethnic group', 'I have a strong sense of belonging to other people of this ethnic group', and 'I feel as a member of this ethnic group'. A 5-point Likert-scale was used, ranging from 'absolutely disagree' (1) to 'completely agree' (5). This measure

was constructed using a mean sum of scores. We obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76. The mean score is 4.44 (SD = 0.66).

**Host national identification.** Host national identification was measured by one item that asked the students if they felt as a member of the Belgian society. A 10-point scale was used, ranging from 'no, not at all' (1) to 'yes, completely' (10). The mean score is 5.34 (SD = 2.84).

**Ethnic teacher discrimination.** To record students' perceived experience of ethnic teacher discrimination, they were first presented with six potential experiences of discrimination by teachers, e.g., 'you are called less in class'. This question was inspired by the work of Pachter et al. (2010). If students reported they experienced one of the situations of discrimination since the beginning of secondary school, they were subsequently asked to indicate how often they were discriminated and why they thought they were discriminated. First, the students could choose from six different frequency categories: once, a few times, sometimes, often, very often, or all the time. Second, ten perceived underlying reasons were presented, as well as an additional possibility to record a reason in full text, under the category 'other'. If students reported victimization due to nationality/ethnicity or skin colour, we considered them to be victimized based on ethnical grounds. This resulted in a categorical variable with three categories: *no teacher discrimination* (= 0), *non-frequent ethnic teacher discrimination*, the student perceived that he/she experienced once, a few times or sometimes ethnic discrimination by teachers (= 1), and *frequent ethnic teacher discrimination*, the student perceived that he/she experienced often, very often or all the time ethnic teacher discrimination (= 2). Ethnic teacher discrimination was experienced at least once by 34.0% of the students.

Table 9.1. Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables according to gender: frequencies (%), means, and standard deviations (SD), and results of ANOVA comparing male and female students on school deviancy, ethnic identification and host national identification (*Observations N = 553, Groups N = 45*)

<i>Individual level variables</i>	<i>Boys</i>		<i>Girls</i>		<i>F</i>
	Mean or %	<i>SD</i>	Mean or %	<i>SD</i>	
School deviancy	31.40	10.72	28.69	8.47	10.852** *
Ethnic identification	4.40	0.69	4.48	0.62	2.318
Host national identification	5.52	2.87	5.56	2.80	3.406
No ethnic teacher discrimination	61.2%		70.9%		
Non-frequent ethnic teacher discrimination	27.0%		25.8%		
Frequent ethnic teacher discrimination	11.9%		3.3%		
Socio-economic status	38.26	12.54	36.91	12.97	
Track: academic	19.1%		28.0%		
technical	31.7%		23.3%		
vocational	49.3%		48.7%		
Self-identified ethnicity: Turkish	48.9%		31.3%		
Moroccan	51.1%		68.7%		
<i>N = 553</i>	<i>N = 278</i>		<i>N = 275</i>		
<i>School level variables</i>	Mean or %		<i>SD</i>		
Ethnic school composition	48.69%		29.59		
School size	534.40		280.98		

**Socio-economic background of students.** The socioeconomic background of students was measured 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 is used to measure the students' socioeconomic background. The mean score is 37.59 (SD = 12.76).

**Gender.** Gender was a dichotomous variable (male = 0, female = 1). Of the students in the sample, 50.3% were male.

**Track.** The Flemish school system distinguishes between academic, technical, vocational and artistic education. There were no students who followed artistic education in this sample. Of all the students, 23.5% followed an academic track (= 0), 27.5% a technical track (= 1) and 49.0% a vocational track (= 2).

**Ethnic composition of the school.** The ethnic school composition was calculated based on the concentration of ethnic minority students—that is students of non-western descent—in the school. The mean ethnic school composition was 48.69% (SD = 29.59).

**School size.** School size referred to the total number of students enrolled in the school. The data was obtained from the Flemish Educational Department. The average school size was 534 (SD = 280.98).

## Strategy of Analysis

We conducted a multilevel regression analysis. Multilevel analysis was the most appropriate method, because of the hierarchical structure of the data. Students are nested within schools, so we have variables at the student level and at the school level. We performed the multilevel analyses in MLWin 2.26. All the continuous student-level and school-level variables were standardized to allow

comparison of the effect sizes. As is common for delinquency measures (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012b; Stewart, 2003), the scale was highly skewed (1.45, SE = 0.104) towards its lower end. Hence, we performed a log-transformation on school deviance and re-tested all the models. The same basic picture appeared as with the non-transformed school deviance variable, but in the transformed model it was harder to yield levels of significance, so we present the results of the analyses with the transformed school deviance variable.

The first estimated model (Table 9.2) was an unconditional model to determine the amount of variance in the outcome, within schools and between schools. The second model contained all the different control variables. The control variables have been demonstrated to relate to school deviance (For an overview; see: Demanet, 2013, pp. 5-11). At the individual level, these variables are *socioeconomic status*, *gender*, and *educational track*. At the school level, the variables are *school size* and *ethnic school composition*.

In the third model, we added the independent explanatory variables, ethnic teacher discrimination, host national identification and ethnic identification. This allowed us to test the main effect of these three independent variables on school deviance (*hypothesis 1-3*).

After testing the main effects model, we tested the different interactions described in the literature overview. First, we analysed whether the consequences of ethnic teacher discrimination on school deviance differed according to the strength of the ethnic identification or host national identification of the students. We tested this by adding an interaction term between ethnic teacher discrimination and ethnic identification (*hypothesis 4*), and an interaction term between ethnic teacher discrimination and host national identification (*hypothesis 5*). Second, we analysed if the association between ethnic teacher discrimination

and school deviance, ethnic identification and school deviance, or host national identification and school deviance differed according to the gender of the students.

In a final step, we performed separate analyses for boys and girls (see table 9.3) to test if the interaction terms *ethnic discrimination x ethnic identification* and *ethnic discrimination x host national identification* differed according to gender.

## Findings

From the unconditional model, we computed an intraclass correlation ( $\sigma^2_u = 0.084$ ,  $\sigma^2_e = 0.003$ ), that indicated that 3.4% of the variance in school deviance occurs at the school level and 96.6% occurs at the student level. In the next step (Table 9.2, Model 1), the different student-level and school-level control variables were added. Students, who self-identified as being Turkish, did not differ significantly from students who self-identified as being Moroccan on school deviance. Girls reported significantly less acts of school deviance than boys. Students in the technical and vocational track reported significantly more acts of school deviance than students who follow an academic track. The higher a students' socio-economic background, the more deviant this student acted. On the school level, the results indicate that a higher concentration of students of non-West-European descent is related with more school deviance and that being enrolled in a larger school is also related to more school deviance than being enrolled in a smaller school.

In a third step, we determined how ethnic teacher discrimination, ethnic identification and host national identification were related with school delinquency. We found evidence for hypothesis 1 and 2, but not for 3. More frequent ethnic teacher discrimination was related with higher levels of school delinquency (hypothesis 1). While a stronger sense of host national identification was associated with less school delinquency (hypothesis 2). We could not find

Table 9.2. Ethnic teacher discrimination, ethnic identification and host national identification on (log-transformed) school delinquency. Results of stepwise multilevel analysis- complete sample (*observations* N = 553, *groups* N = 45)

	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
<i>Individual level</i>					
Gender ( <i>ref: male</i> )		-0.072** (0.035)	-0.043 (0.024)	-0.043 (0.024)	-0.090** (0.029)
Technical track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		0.070* (0.035)	0.040 (0.033)	0.039 (0.033)	0.046 (0.033)
Vocational track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		0.097** (0.033)	0.075* (0.030)	0.080** (0.030)	0.075* (0.030)
Socio-economic status		0.039** (0.012)	0.033** (0.012)	0.032** (0.012)	0.032** (0.012)
Self- identified ethnicity ( <i>ref: Turkish descent</i> )		0.025 (0.027)	0.007 (0.026)	0.007 (0.026)	0.006 (0.026)
Non-frequent discrimination ( <i>ref: no discrimination</i> )			0.103*** (0.027)	0.105*** (0.027)	0.029 (0.038)
Frequent discrimination ( <i>ref: no discrimination</i> )			0.283*** (0.046)	0.264*** (0.047)	0.232*** (0.053)
Host national identification			-0.032** (0.012)	-0.035* (0.016)	-0.048** (0.017)
Ethnic identification			0.000	-0.002	-0.016

		(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.016)
Non-frequent discrimination x Host national identification	-	-	0.018 (0.026)	-
Frequent discrimination x Host national identification	-	-	-0.021 (0.039)	-
Non-frequent discrimination x Ethnic identification	-	-	-0.002 (0.028)	-
Frequent discrimination x Ethnic identification	-	-	0.063 (0.057)	-
Non-frequent discrimination x Gender	-	-	-	0.142** (0.054)
Frequent discrimination x Gender	-	-	-	0.168 (0.106)
Host national identification x Gender	-	-	-	0.027 (0.024)
Ethnic identification x Gender	-	-	-	0.036 (0.024)
<hr/> <i>School level</i>				
Ethnic school composition	0.043* (0.019)	0.045* (0.018)	0.042* (0.018)	0.045** (0.017)
School size	0.038* (0.016)	0.030* (0.015)	0.029 (0.015)	0.027 (0.015)
Constant	3.353	3.280	3.241	3.263
<i>Individual level variance</i>	0.084	0.081	0.074	0.072
<i>School level variance</i>	0.003	0.001	0.000	0.000

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001



any evidence that ethnic identification was related with school delinquency. Furthermore, the relationship between gender and school deviancy is no longer significant. Additional analyses (not shown here) indicated that ethnic teacher discrimination seems to explain the gender difference in school deviance for immigrant adolescents of Turkish and Moroccan descent. This can be a consequence of the fact that boys experience more teacher discrimination than girls do (Beaman, Wheldall, & Kemp, 2006; Van Houtte, 2007).

After testing the main effects model, we tested the different interaction effects. The interaction term between ethnic teacher discrimination and ethnic identification was added to the model to test hypothesis 4. Subsequently, the interaction term between ethnic teacher discrimination and host national identification was added to the model to test hypothesis 5. However, neither interaction term yielded levels of significance. Hence, ethnic identification and host national identification do not moderate the relationship between ethnic teacher discrimination and school deviance for students of Turkish and Moroccan descent.

In the last step, we tested if the main effects of ethnic teacher discrimination, host national identification and ethnic identification differed according to the gender of the immigrant adolescents. The impact of ethnic teacher discrimination did differ according to gender. Female students who felt discriminated against by their teachers on a non-frequent basis showed more school delinquency than male students who felt discriminated against on a non-frequent basis. For male students, ethnic teacher discrimination was not significantly related to school deviance. For female students, there was a significant association between ethnic teacher discrimination and school deviance. However, when we take into account that girls, in general, are less deviant than boys, we rather notice a pattern of convergence than of divergence. This is

presented in Figure 9.1. Girls who did not experience ethnic discrimination were less deviant than boys. Boys who experienced non-frequent teacher discrimination were as deviant as boys who did not experience ethnic discrimination. Girls who experienced non-frequent teacher discrimination were more deviant than girls who did not experience ethnic discrimination and slightly more deviant than boys who did experience non-frequent teacher discrimination. The effect of frequent ethnic discrimination did not differ according to the gender of the students. The association between ethnic identification and school delinquency, and host national identification and school delinquency did not differ according to gender.

Subsequently, we performed separate analyses for boys and girls. In Table 9.3, model 1b and model 2b, the interaction terms *ethnic discrimination x host national identification* and *ethnic discrimination x ethnic identification* were added. For boys, none of these interaction terms was significant. For girls who experienced frequent teacher discrimination, the relationship between ethnic discrimination and deviance was moderated by ethnic identification and host national identification. Host national identification seemed to be a protective factor, while ethnic identification exacerbated the negative consequences of ethnic teacher discrimination. Hence, these findings were the opposite of what we expected in hypothesis 4 and 5. However, we have to be extremely cautious with the interpretation of these results, because only 3.3% of the girls experienced frequent teacher discrimination.

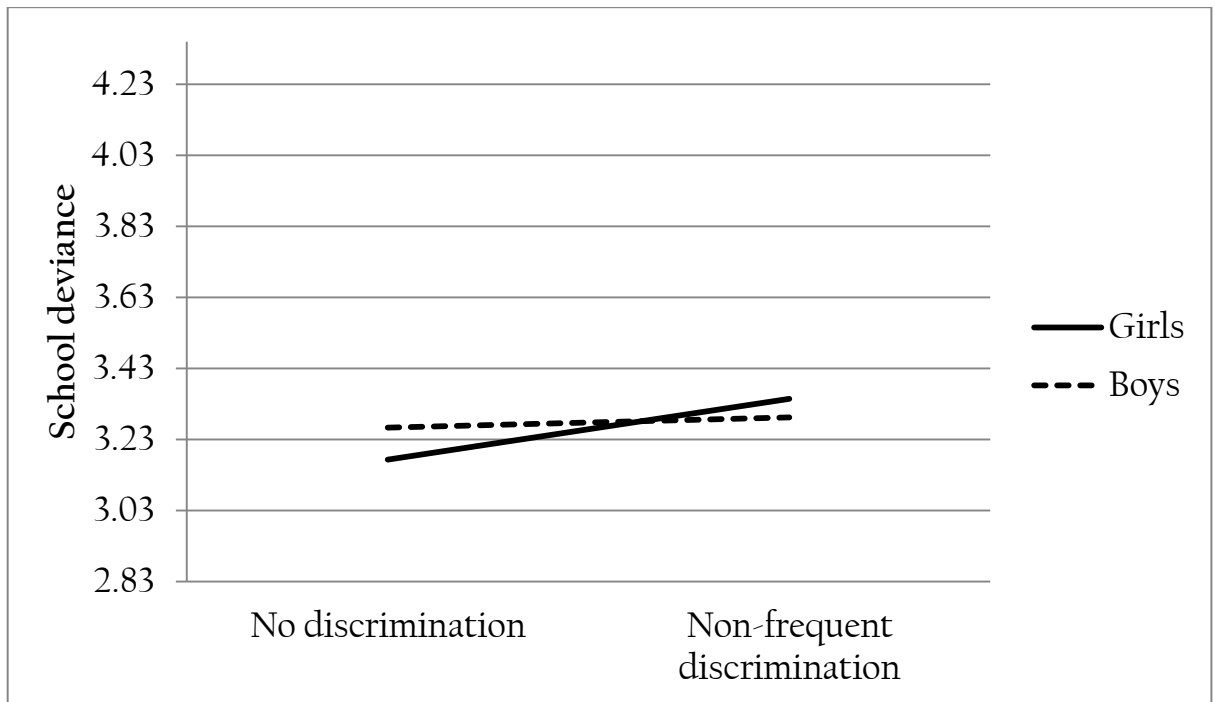
Table 9.3. Ethnic teacher discrimination, ethnic identification and host national identification on school delinquency. Results of multilevel analysis- comparison boys and girls (*observations N boys = 278, observations N girls = 275, groups N = 45*)

	<i>Boys</i>		<i>Girls</i>			
	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1a</i>	<i>Model 1b</i>	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 2a</i>	<i>Model 2b</i>
<i>Individual level</i>						
Technical track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		0.062 (0.052)	0.062 (0.052)		0.039 (0.042)	0.042 (0.042)
Vocational track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		0.106* (0.049)	0.111* (0.049)		0.050 (0.037)	0.065 (0.036)
Socio-economic status		0.025 (0.018)	0.026 (0.018)		0.036* (0.015)	0.040** (0.015)
Self- identified ethnicity ( <i>ref: Turkish descent</i> )		-0.018 (0.038)	-0.021 (0.038)		0.035 (0.034)	0.026 (0.034)
Non-frequent discrimination ( <i>ref: no discrimination</i> )		0.031 (0.042)	0.033 (0.042)		0.166*** (0.035)	0.162*** (0.035)
Frequent discrimination ( <i>ref: no discrimination</i> )		0.236*** (0.058)	0.228*** (0.061)		0.397*** (0.084)	0.407*** (0.083)
Host national identification		-0.049** (0.018)	-0.060* (0.024)		-0.024 (0.015)	-0.016 (0.019)
Ethnic identification		-0.016 (0.018)	-0.003 (0.021)		0.021 (0.016)	0.004 (0.019)
Non-frequent discrimination x Host national identification		-	0.028 (0.042)		-	0.002 (0.032)
Frequent discrimination x Host national identification		-	0.022 (0.051)		-	-0.135*

Host national identification					(0.064)
Non-frequent discrimination x Ethnic identification	-	-0.054 (0.040)	-	-	0.039 (0.037)
Frequent discrimination x Ethnic identification	-	0.022 (0.073)	-	-	0.216* (0.094)
<hr/>					
<i>School level</i>					
Ethnic school composition		0.058* (0.028)		0.059* (0.028)	0.034 (0.021) 0.033 (0.021)
School size		0.022 (0.023)		0.021 (0.023)	0.032 (0.019) 0.029 (0.019)
Constant	3.392	3.237	3.237	3.319	3.112 3.130
<i>Individual level variance</i>	0.094	0.085	0.084	0.073	0.059 0.057
<i>School level variance</i>	0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000 0.000

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001

Figure 9.1. Interaction between ethnic teacher discrimination and gender on school deviancy



## Discussion

This study examined whether ethnic teacher discrimination, ethnic identification and host national identification are related with the school deviance of male and female immigrant adolescents in Flanders. Additionally, we verified the buffering role of ethnic identification and host national identification on the relationship between ethnic teacher discrimination and school deviance with attention for potential gender differences. Some findings merit further discussion.

### **Ethnic teacher discrimination, host national identification and ethnic identification**

In line with the general strain theory (Agnew, 1992), immigrant adolescents who experienced more teacher discrimination, reported to be more involved in delinquent school behaviour (hypothesis 1). Hence, this result seems to indicate that ethnic teacher discrimination is a source of strain which is responded with resistance against school.

However, the relationship between ethnic teacher discrimination and school delinquency is different for male and female adolescents who experienced ethnic teacher discrimination on a non-frequent basis. When male adolescents indicate that they experienced ethnic teacher discrimination on a non-frequent basis, this is not related with their delinquent behaviour in school, while when female adolescents indicate that they experienced ethnic teacher discrimination on a non-frequent basis, this is related with their delinquent behaviour. In contrast, both male and female adolescents, who experienced ethnic teacher discrimination on a frequent basis, reported more acts of delinquency than students who did not experience ethnic teacher discrimination. A possibility is that non-frequent teacher discrimination will not affect boys as much as girls, since boys are already more involved in school delinquency and have a different relationship with their

teachers. Research shows that boys are more reprimanded, monitored and receive more criticism than girls (Beaman et al., 2006; Van Houtte, 2007).

In line with social control theory (Hirschi, 2002), we find that a stronger sense of host national identification is related with less involvement in school deviance (hypothesis 2), and this for both male and female students. Further research is needed to examine the exact underlying mechanisms, but based on the social control theory, it seems that attachment to the host society refrains male and female students to act delinquent in school.

In contrast with social control theory (Hirschi, 2002), we could not find that ethnic identification and school deviance are related (hypothesis 3), and this is the case for both male and female students. There are many empirical studies that support social control theory (Demant, 2013, p. 29), however, few of these studies focus on the relationship between ethnic identification and school deviance for immigrant adolescents. It is possible that social bonds with the ethnic community are not related with adolescents' behaviour in school, because school is an institution of the host society that is separate from the ethnic community. Misbehaving in school does not necessarily have consequences in the ethnic community, nor do students risk losing their investments in the ethnic community by misbehaving in school (Hirschi, 2002; Matsueda, 1982).

In sum, ethnic teacher discrimination and host national identification are two factors that are related with the school deviance of immigrant adolescents of Turkish and Moroccan descent, living in Flanders. Ethnic identification does not seem to have an influence. While the relationship between ethnic teacher discrimination and school deviance differs for male and female adolescents, this is not the case for host national identification and ethnic identification.

## Moderating role of ethnic and host national identification

Neither ethnic identification, nor host national identification play a moderating role in the relationship between ethnic teacher discrimination and school deviance of immigrant adolescents. Hence, neither hypothesis 4 nor 5 are confirmed. The Dutch study of Maes et al. (2013) focuses on a very similar, although younger, population of immigrant students and finds the same results. Ethnic and host national identification do not moderate the relationship between ethnic discrimination and externalizing problem behaviours (e.g., rule-breaking behaviour and aggressive behaviour).

The USA study of Sellers & Shelton (2003) could also not find a moderating effect of ethnic identification on the relationship between ethnic discrimination and psychological distress. However, they did find a moderating effect of ethnic ideology (e.g., the ideas that individuals have about how a member of their ethnic community should think and act) (Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998). Hence, they suggest that the protective value of ethnic identification is not about the extent to which an individual identifies with an ethnic group, but what it means to be a member of that group (Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

However, the USA study by Wong et al. (2003) did find that ethnic identification moderates the relationship between ethnic discrimination and externalized problem behaviour. As did the USA study of Caldwell et al. (2004), but they found only a moderating effect for boys and not for girls. Hence, more research is necessary to obtain a clear picture about the moderating role of ethnic identification on the one hand and other dimensions of ethnic identification on the other hand.

Furthermore, the knowledge about the moderating role of host national identification is very limited. The fact that this study and the study of Maes et al. (2013) find similar results for a similar population suggests that host national



identification does not attenuate or exacerbate the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination on delinquent behaviour. However, in line with the suggestion of Sellers and Shelton (2003), it is possible that the moderating effect of host national identification is not connected with immigrant adolescents' identification, but with the meaning given by immigrant adolescents to their host national identification.

However, we have to indicate that for the group of girls, who experienced frequent teacher discrimination, host national identification and ethnic identification did moderate the relationship between discrimination and school delinquency. In contrast with hypotheses 4 and 5, a high connection to the ethnic community exacerbates the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination, while a high connection to the host national society buffers against the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination. However, since there are only 9 girls who frequently experienced ethnic teacher discrimination, we have to be very cautious with the interpretation of these results. A larger number of cases are necessary to be able to draw conclusions with a greater degree of certainty. Hence, further research on larger datasets is necessary to determine if the findings of this study are a consequence of the unique profile of these girls or indicate a common pattern among girls who feel discriminated against on a frequent basis.

In sum, ethnic identification and host national identification do not seem to moderate the relationship of ethnic teacher discrimination and school delinquency for either male or female adolescents, except for girls who experienced ethnic teacher discrimination on a frequent basis.

### **Limitations, suggestions for future research and policy implications**

First, this study only included one dimension of ethnic and host national identification, while the study of Sellers and Shelton (2003) suggests that it would

be interesting to include a dimension of meaning-giving, next to the degree of identification. A sequential mixed-method approach would be very suitable to explore this further. Qualitative research could be used to explore the dimension of meaning-giving among immigrant adolescents. Subsequently, quantitative research could be used to relate different dimensions of ethnic identification and host national identification with different outcome variables. Future research could also benefit from including ethnic groups with varying migration histories or lengths of stay. This would allow researchers to explore how these elements influence the relationship between ethnic and host national identification and school delinquency. For example, it is possible that the influence of ethnic identity is stronger for East-European immigrants, whose migration history can be situated in the last decade. In contrast with the migration history of the Turkish and the Moroccans, that started in the 'Golden Sixties'.

Second, since we only have cross-sectional data, we cannot verify the causal relationship between ethnic teacher discrimination and school delinquency. However, in all probability, this relationship will be reciprocal. The longitudinal study by Simons et al. (2003) shows that the relationship between discrimination and delinquency is reciprocal, but in line with the general strain theory, the predominant causal flow is from discrimination to delinquency. Hence, an element of reciprocity can be expected, but this does not necessarily prejudice the exacerbating role of ethnic teacher discrimination.



## Chapter 10: Do attitudes toward school influence the underachievement of Turkish and Moroccan minority students in Flanders? The attitude-achievement paradox revisited

*D'hondt, Fanny, Van Praag, Lore., Stevens, Peter A. J., & Van Houtte, Mieke (2015).*

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While many ethnic minority students underachieve compared with their ethnic majority peers, they often hold very positive school attitudes. Mickelson (1990) explained this attitude-achievement paradox by the existence of a double set of attitudes. Abstract attitudes reflect the dominant ideas about schooling, while concrete attitudes refer to a person's perceptions of reality and originate from the educational benefits people expect to obtain on the labour market. According to Mickelson, only students' concrete attitudes influence achievement. Applying Mickelson's theory in Flanders, regarding students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, we could not find evidence that abstract and concrete attitudes play a role in the achievement of ethnic minority students. Qualitative research suggests that this could be due to distinct interpretations of success and ways of dealing with perceived constraints. This contrasts with ethnic majority students, who are more likely to end the school year unsuccessfully if they hold pessimistic concrete attitudes.

Sociologists have paid considerable attention to the relationship between race/ethnicity and educational inequality, particularly with regard to the underachievement of racial and ethnic minorities in education (Stevens and Dworking 2014). In the United States, a large number of studies have focused on the underachievement of African American adolescents compared with their White peers, known as the 'Black and White Achievement Gap' (Jencks and Phillips 1998; Dworkin 2014). Although this gap has narrowed since 1975, it remains large and significant (Dworkin 2014). This has resulted in considerable debate about the underlying mechanisms that explain the persistence of this achievement gap. However, scholars in the USA have managed to identify a range of potentially influential factors: from individual factors (e.g. stereotype threat), through family factors (e.g. family income), to school factors (e.g. teacher expectations) (Steele and Aronson 1995; Phillips et al. 1998; Ferguson 2003). A key explanatory mechanism for the achievement gap that has emerged from this line of research is the 'attitude-achievement paradox among Black adolescents' (Mickelson 1990, 2008). Many scholars, such as Mickelson, have found that African American adolescents have positive attitudes toward education but fail to use these attitudes to realize achievement (Ogbu 1987; Downey and Ainsworth-Darnell 2002). However, according to Mickelson (1990), these positive attitudes are only related to abstract attitudes about the role of schooling in achieving success and upward mobility. If African-American adolescents are asked about their concrete attitudes concerning the role of schooling, they do not believe that schooling is essential to achieve success in their personal life. As a result, this double set of attitudes would be the key to resolving the attitude-achievement paradox: abstract attitudes do not predict achievement, while concrete attitudes do.

Other scholars have tested this attitude-achievement paradox. For instance, Downey and colleagues (Downey 2008; Downey et al. 2009) tested Mickelson's theory but did not find evidence in the national USA data (NELS) they used. Although this result casts doubt on the findings of Mickelson, it should be remarked that Downey and colleagues did not test the attitude-achievement paradox using the measurement tools developed by Mickelson. They instead used a selection of items available in secondary data. Furthermore, Mickelson's theory has been tested mainly in a USA context and in relation to African American students. Nevertheless, previous research in Europe shows that students of immigrant descent often underachieve compared with their native peers (Luciak 2004; Duquet et al. 2006). This is in contrast with the positive school attitudes these students of immigrant descent often hold (Phalet and Claeys 1993; Heath et al. 2008). This current study builds on previous research by exploring the role of abstract and concrete attitudes on achievement in a different context than the USA, namely Flanders (the northern part of Belgium), but using the same measurement tools for abstract and concrete attitudes as Mickelson. The goal of this study is to examine: 1) if the scores for abstract and concrete attitudes differ between ethnic majority and minority students and 2) what role abstract and concrete attitudes play in the achievement of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent. In the following section, we will first review Mickelson's theory and the criticism of her work. Second, we will give a description of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Belgian context.

## The attitude-achievement paradox

African American adolescents and their parents often express very positive attitudes toward the role of schooling in achieving success and upward mobility (Kao and Tienda 1995; Ogbu and Simons 1998; Downey 2008). However, these positive attitudes are not reflected in the underachievement of African American adolescents compared with their White peers (Mickelson 1990; Jencks and Phillips 1998). According to Mickelson, the underlying mechanism that explains this paradox is the existence of two kinds of attitudes toward school: abstract and concrete. Abstract attitudes represent the idea that education is in itself important to be successful in life. This general idea is held both by ethnic majority and minority students. Concrete attitudes refer to the role schooling plays in the personal lives of young people. This idea stems from the returns on education people expect to get on the labor market, the opportunities and the wages they perceive (Mickelson 1990). For middle-class, White students, there is a convergence between their concrete and abstract attitudes, because schooling is perceived to be a vehicle for success in their professional life. However, for ethnic minorities and working class students who have witnessed significant others being discriminated against in the labor market, there is a gap between their abstract and concrete attitudes (Mickelson 1990, 2008; Ogbu 2008). Mickelson's 1990 study shows that both in the group of middle class students and in the group of working class students, African Americans hold more pessimistic concrete attitudes than their White peers. The same is true for all working class students, who are more pessimistic than their middle class peers, when asked about their concrete attitudes. Furthermore, African American students hold more optimistic abstract attitudes than their White counterparts. This suggests that ethnic minority students have (compared to white peers) more optimistic abstract attitudes, but more pessimistic concrete attitudes.

Mickelson's theory, especially the interpretation of the concrete attitudes, fits within the cultural-ecological model of Ogbu (Ogbu and Simons 1998; Ogbu 2008). In this model, due to the relationship with the dominant society and experiences of discrimination, ethnic minority communities create a collective way of thinking (a 'community force'). In reaction to labor market discrimination, ethnic minorities seem to have developed group beliefs about the role schooling may play in their personal lives. More specifically, these ethnic community members have similar ideas about the role of school credentials in getting ahead, ideas about the role of schooling in the life of their role models, and alternative strategies to achieve success (Ogbu and Simons 1998). This community force depends on the history of these ethnic minority groups and their self-perceptions vis-à-vis the dominant society (Ogbu 1992). If minorities had voluntarily migrated to the receiving country, searching for a better life, they might be more optimistic about their opportunities in this new society (Ogbu and Simons 1998). Discrimination in the labor market is an adaptation problem that they, as a community, have to overcome. Hence, they have confidence in the educational system and they believe that the key to achieving personal success is education (Ogbu 1992; Hermans 2004). Therefore, for these voluntary minorities (such as Chinese immigrants in the USA), their abstract and concrete attitudes are similar. However, the focus of the attitude-achievement paradox is not on voluntary minorities, but involuntary ones (such as African Americans in the USA). These minorities did not migrate in search of a better life, but were forced to do so through slavery, conquest, or colonization (Ogbu and Simons 1998). These involuntary minorities experienced employment and wage discrimination for many generations and may still do so. This has led to the belief that discrimination continues to play a role in their lives and that hard work at school and/or in the labor market is not enough for them to succeed in society. On a daily basis, they



see people who are successful without education, and people who cannot achieve despite a good education.

In sum, the abstract attitudes of most African American adolescents are not in line with their concrete attitudes. Thus, according to Mickelson's theory, that is confirmed in her 1990 study and replicated in 2001 using different data, this double set of attitudes explains the attitude-achievement paradox. While the optimistic abstract attitudes do not influence the achievements of African American adolescents, the pessimistic concrete attitudes do.

### **The theory of Mickelson revisited**

Despite the influence of Mickelson's 1990 article (the ISI Web of Science site indicates that the article had been cited 326 times as of April 2014), surprisingly few scholars have tested Mickelson's theory as a whole. The ones who did found mixed evidence. Mickelson's findings were reaffirmed in some studies (Steinberg et al. 1992; Mickelson 2001; 2008 (using different data); Carter 2005; Herman 2009), but not all scholars could replicate these results (Harris 2006; 2008; Downey 2008; Downey et al. 2009). Of the aforementioned studies, only Mickelson (2001; 2008) and Carter (2005) make use of the same measurement tools for abstract and concrete attitudes as used by Mickelson in the 1990 article. For example, Downey (Downey 2008; Downey et al. 2009) and his colleagues used 12 school attitudes (e.g. discipline is fair; education is important for getting a job later on) from the 'National Education Longitudinal Study, 1990-2000' to test Mickelson's theory in the USA and found that African American adolescents displayed greater pro-school attitudes than White students did. Furthermore, these attitudes appeared to influence their achievement in school. Similar findings were found for other minority groups, such as Asians and Hispanics. Although these results seem to undermine Mickelson's theory, it is difficult to draw firm

conclusions, as Downey and colleagues used different measurement tools than Mickelson. In a very similar study on the NELS, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) added school behavior to their analysis, next to school attitudes. This shines a different light on the picture. School behavior explains the achievement gap of the African American students, while adding school attitudes does not. Hence, Farkas and colleagues (2002) in their comment on this study, conclude that these findings indicate that there is a disjuncture between African American student positive school attitudes and their school behavior.

The mixed results could indicate the importance of maintaining conceptual and methodological clarity between different types of school attitudes, since research shows that students make nuanced distinctions about the role of schooling in their future life (Harris 2008). Furthermore, it draws attention to the importance of the context, especially given the context specific character of concrete attitudes. The theory of Mickelson is developed in the United States and in relation to students of Afro-American descent. Some studies have used the theory in relation to different groups of ethnic minorities in the United States and in relation to mixed-race adolescents (Gibson 1988; Steinberg et al. 1992; Carter 2005; Herman 2009). However little attention has been given to the ethnic composition of the context (e.g. neighborhood, school, peers) or to a non-USA context (Herman, 2009). Since the attitude-achievement paradox is not unique for the United States (Phalet & Claeys 1993; Luciak 2004; Heath et al. 2008), this study is designed to explore whether Mickelson's theory can be applied in a different context than the USA, namely in Flanders (the northern part of Belgium) and in relation to students of Turkish and North African descent. In the next section, we will explain the Belgian context more carefully.

## The Belgian context

It is theoretically interesting to test Mickelson's theory in different national contexts, since ethnic minority students also tend to have similar positive school attitudes and achievement results in other countries (Phalet and Claeys 1993; Luciak 2004; Heath et al. 2008). In Belgium, students of Turkish and Moroccan descent underachieve compared with their peers of Belgian descent (Duquet et al. 2006). Although there are no standardized tests in the Belgian educational system to compare students, the underachievement of those of Turkish and Moroccan descent is expressed in the overrepresentation of these minorities in less esteemed tracks, the higher drop-out rates, the higher levels of grade retention, and their underrepresentation in higher education compared with their peers of Belgian descent (Duquet et al. 2006; Heath et al. 2008). Although Turkish and Moroccan immigrants came to Belgium voluntarily as economic migrants in the 1960s searching for a better life, research suggests that they fit more into the category of involuntary migrants (e.g. African Americans) than with other voluntary migrants (Suárez-Orozco 1991; Gibson 1997; Hermans 2004; Van Praag 2013). For instance, despite important differences in migration history, time frame and country, the situation of Turkish and North African minority students in Flanders is similar to those of their African-American peers in the sense that they experience similar social problems. First, immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan descent are almost four times as likely to be unemployed as people of Belgian descent and this gap remained constant since the early 1980s (OECD 2008). Field experiments with correspondence tests on the labor market and the housing market also indicate that immigrants of Turkish and North African descent are still discriminated against (Baert et al. 2013; Van der Bracht & Van de Putte 2013). Second, the results of the OECD PISA study (2008) show that Belgium and especially Flanders, has the largest differences in mathematics and reading between the children of

immigrants and native students from all the OECD countries, even if controlled for socio-economic status. Hence, like their African American peers, students of Turkish and Moroccan descent and their families face inequality and discrimination in Flanders on different and essential domains in life.

Furthermore, qualitative research suggests that students of Turkish and Moroccan descent have ambivalent ideas about the role of schooling and that their concrete ideas about education are more in line with involuntary migrants (e.g. African Americans) than with other voluntary migrants (Hermans 2004; Van Praag 2013). Hermans (2004) showed that parents of Moroccan descent have high expectations for their children and believe that education is essential for success in life. Nevertheless, they stated that academic achievement was not proportionally rewarded with good jobs, at least not for Moroccans. Additionally, Van Praag and colleagues (Van Praag 2013) found that students of North African and Turkish descent interpret professional success in terms of the working conditions and living environment of significant others and adapt their future goals when experiencing or perceiving discrimination. Hence, we can assume that migration history is less important for the ethnic minorities currently living in Belgium than their relationship with the dominant society. The initial optimism about the search for a better life presumably changed due to countless encounters with discrimination in society and unequal access to good jobs and wages. Over the years, the ethnic community may have internalized experiences and perceptions of discrimination. Consequently, they have adapted their concrete attitudes toward schooling, similar to what Ogbu predicted for involuntary minorities in the United States. Although students of Turkish and Moroccan descent show important resemblances with the involuntary minorities as described in Ogbu's classification, it is important to make the nuance that they do not fit perfectly into this category. Qualitative research indicates that they still seem to bear some signs of their fairly

recent migration and voluntary search for a better life, for example in their search for upward mobility (Van Praag 2013).

In sum, (1) we expect that students of Turkish and Moroccan descent will have different school attitudes than students of Belgian descent. Due to their favorable position in Flemish society, students of Belgian descent are hypothesized to have positive abstract and concrete attitudes toward the role of schooling in achieving success. By contrast, students of Turkish and Moroccan descent are expected to hold positive abstract attitudes toward education, but more negative concrete ones because of perceived discrimination in education and the labor market. (2) For both groups, we expect that net of individual and school factors, concrete attitudes will predict achievement, while abstract attitudes are expected to have no effect on achievement.

## Data and methods

### Sample

The data used is taken from RaDiSS (Racism and Discrimination in Secondary School), collected during the school year 2011-2012 from 4322 students in a sample of 55 secondary schools in Flanders. Flanders is the Dutch-speaking, northern part of Belgium. A multistage sampling frame was employed to ensure sufficient variability and cases, in terms of students' ethnicity and the level of urbanization of the school environment. First, four large, multi-cultural Flemish districts were selected for sampling (Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt, and Sint-Niklaas). Second, we divided all the secondary schools in these areas into three categories: situated in the center of a city, a suburban area, or a rural area; artistic education, the one exception, was not subdivided because of the small number of students (Van Houtte et al. 2012b). We aimed to select two thirds of the schools from an urban area and one third from a suburban or rural area. Within these districts, we

selected one third of schools with a low proportion of ethnic minority students (<15%), one third with a medium concentration (between 15% and 49.9%) and one third with a high concentration (between 50% and 100%) (Flemish Educational Department 2011). In total, 104 schools were contacted out of which 55 were willing to participate (a response rate of 53%). Because the non-response rate was not related to the ethnic composition of schools, the participating schools cover the entire range of ethnic minority composition from 0% to 100%. In our sample, 33 schools are located in the center of a city, 15 in a suburban area, and 7 in a rural location. Further, 17 schools have a low proportion of ethnic minorities, 16 a medium proportion, and 22 a high proportion. Within these schools, the researcher asked all third year students present (approximately 15 years old) to complete a written questionnaire. Students carried this out in the presence of the researcher and one or more teachers. The questionnaires were not anonymous, because we wanted to couple this data to other data, such as the academic results provided by the school. All students were informed that their names would be removed once the database was complete, making the final database anonymous and confidential.

For the present study, we focus on a sample of students of Turkish, Moroccan, and Belgian descent. From the 2092 respondents in this subsample, 513 (24.5%) are of Turkish or Moroccan descent (respectively 10.2% and 14.3%). The ethnicity of the students was assessed primarily by the birthplace of the students' maternal grandmother. This is common practice in Belgium, as most students of immigrant descent are second or third generation and have Belgian nationality (83.4% of this sample is second or third generation). If this data was not available, we used their mother's nationality. In the event that all this data was missing, we used the birth country of the student. Based on these criteria, we could categorize the ethnicity of 99.3% of all the students in the dataset. We created a dichotomous

variable (native = 0, immigrant = 1). We decided to group the students of Turkish and Moroccan descent in one category as the migration history of both groups started in the early 1960s as labor migrants and both groups were subject of the same regulations after the migration stop in 1974 (Verhaeghe et al. 2012). Furthermore, they have comparable educational outcomes (OECD 2008). In the current study, additional analyses (not shown) showed that both groups did not differ significantly in their educational outcomes and in their scores on abstract and concrete attitudes. In the following sections, the term ethnic minority or immigrant refers to students of Turkish or Moroccan descent.

## Variables

The descriptive statistics of the variables in this study are presented in Table 10.1.

### *Dependent variable*

In the Flemish educational system, there are no centrally administered standardized tests. Consequently, there is no test score available with which to compare the achievement results across schools. The only uniform system is the use of a certificate given at the end of the school year. This certificate is the result of a decision made by the teacher college and is mainly based on students' final grades at the end of the school year on different subjects. If students received an A certificate, they had completed their school year successfully, meaning that they (generally) had no unsatisfactory grades and could continue with the same subject. If they received a B certificate, they had (multiple) unsatisfactory grades for important subjects and had to change their field of study or track. If they received a C certificate, they had to repeat a year in the same track. Although the evaluation criteria may differ between schools (e.g. some schools more readily give

a B rather than a C to students depending on students' classroom behavior, study motivation during this school year and the students' future perspectives and (perceived) capabilities [Stevens 2007]), the consequences are the same for all students. Students are free to change between schools, but the outcome of the certificate counts in every school. We created a dichotomous variable that indicates whether students had *successfully ended their school year* (0 = A, 1 = B or C).

Some schools in Flanders calculate an *average achievement score* students obtained on all the examinations they took during the school year, providing a continuous achievement measure. For 19 schools and 1267 students (1093 students of Belgian descent and 174 students of Turkish and Moroccan descent) in this sample, we have information on the average achievement score of the students. To account for the fact that the average achievement score is not standardized, we group centered this variable (around the average by track by school). Hence, a positive score indicates that the student scored above the track average of his/her school, a negative score that the student scored lower than the average.

#### *Individual-level independent variables*

*Abstract attitudes* are measured using a 7-item scale and *concrete attitudes* with a 6-item scale adapted from Mickelson (1990, 2008). We obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.71 for abstract attitudes and 0.63 for concrete attitudes. These results are very similar to the estimated reliability coefficients of Mickelson (1990). Although Mickelson used a 7-point Likert scale, a 5-point scale was used in this study to maintain conformity with the other scales in the questionnaire. Both scales are aligned in the same direction: the higher the student's score, the more optimistic they are about the role of schooling in future success.

The *socio-economic status* of students is measured using the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and



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 is used to measure the students' socio-economic background. Of the sample, 55.7% is *male*, 44.3% *female* (male = 0, female = 1). We make a distinction between the academic, technical, and vocational *track*. We measure *prior academic attainment* by previous year retention. A dichotomous variable was constructed based on whether the student had to repeat a year in his or her school career (never = 0, at least once = 1). We make a distinction between first, second and third immigrant *generation*. Students of Turkish and Moroccan descent who are not born in Belgium are defined as first generation, students who are born in Belgium but their mother was not born in Belgium or a West-European country are defined as second generation, and students who are born in Belgium and their mother is born in Belgium or a West-European country are defined as third generation.

#### *School-level independent variables*

The *socio-economic context of the school* is measured by calculating the mean of the SES of the respondents (see above). *Ethnic composition of the school* is calculated based on the proportion of students of immigrant descent. The data for *school size* is taken from the Flemish Educational Department. The smallest school in the sample has 100 students and the largest 1170 students.

Table 10.1. Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent level variables (observations N = 2092, groups N = 41): frequencies (%), means, and standard deviations (SD), and results of ANOVA comparing ethnic majority (N = 1579) and ethnic minority students (N = 513) on abstract and concrete attitudes

	<i>Ethnic majority students</i>		<i>Ethnic minority students</i>		
<i>Individual-level variables:</i>	Mean or %	SD	Mean or %	SD	<i>F-value</i>
Completed the School Year Successfully	87.50%		71.50%		
Average Achievement Score	0.32	7.66	-2.00	7.50	
Abstract Attitudes	3.60	0.50	3.83	0.60	70.84***
Concrete Attitudes	3.16	0.63	2.98	0.73	27.15***
Socio-Economic Status	53.85	16.0	37.98	12.7	
Gender: Male	58.10%		48.30%		
Academic Track	51.20%		24.20%		
Technical Track	24.90%		27.10%		
Vocational Track	23.90%		48.70%		
Prior Academic Attainment: Repeat Grade	26.60%		60.00%		
<i>School-level variables:</i>	Mean or %		SD		
Socio-economic context	49.92		9.56		
Ethnic composition of the school	37.45%		28.11		
School size	649.95		274.08		

\*\*\*p < 0.001

## Research design

Before focusing on the research questions, it is essential to verify whether students hold both abstract and concrete attitudes toward school. Using multi-group confirmatory factor analysis, the validity of both inventories is confirmed for the whole sample, as well as for the native and immigrant sample separately at the level of full scalar invariance (abstract attitudes scale: CFI: 0.908, RMSEA: 0.052; concrete attitudes scale: CFI: 0.902, RMSEA: 0.056). For the first research question, we start with a one-way ANOVA, to compare the mean on abstract and concrete attitudes between ethnic majority and minority students. In the next step, we explore the net effects of ethnicity and socio-economic status on school attitudes using a multilevel regression model. Multilevel modeling is the most appropriate method because of the hierarchical structure of the data: students are nested within schools. We perform the multilevel analyses in MLWin 2.26, firstly with school failure, and secondly with average achievement score as dependent variable. For the analyses with average achievement score as dependent variable, we use the Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) estimation procedures, to account for the limited number of schools at the second level (Stegmueller 2013).

To answer the second research question, we focus mainly on the dichotomous variable ‘school success versus school failure’, since the process of awarding end-of-year (A, B or C) certificates constitutes a uniform system of student evaluation in Flanders, with binding consequences for the educational career of students. Furthermore, this variable gives insight in the school failure of 2092 students in 41 schools. Important differences between analyses with school failure and the continuous average achievement score as dependent variables are discussed in the text and the analyses with average achievement score as dependent variable are available in Appendix B. All analyses are performed for the complete sample (ethnic majority and minority students together), and for each

ethnic group separately. Analyses on the whole sample give an insight into the (under)achievement of students of immigrant descent. The analyses of the subsamples provide a better understanding of the influence of school attitudes on achievement for each ethnic 'community'. First, we estimate the unconditional model to determine the amount of variance that occurs between schools.

Next, we examine the underachievement of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent compared with those of Belgian descent. By adding the abstract and concrete attitudes to the model, we want to verify whether these attitudes can explain or partly explain the underachievement of the ethnic minority students. However, prudence in interpreting and comparing log-odd ratios is necessary, as carrying out a logistic regression causes limitations due to the fixed unobserved heterogeneity (Mood 2010). In a fourth step, we add variables that have been demonstrated to relate to achievement in order to rule out spurious relationships and selection effects. At the student level, these variables are socio-economic status, gender, track, and prior academic attainment (Coleman 1968; Mickelson 1990, 2008; Jencks and Phillips 1998; Van Landeghem and Van Damme 2004; Stevens 2007; Dworkin 2014). At the school level, we control for the socio-economic and ethnic composition of the school and school size (Coleman 1968; De Fraine et al. 2002; McMillen 2004; Leithwood and Jantzi 2009; Agirdag et al. 2012). In variables measured by means of a scale, responses are imputed for missing values by item correlation substitution: a missing value for one item is replaced by the value of the item correlating most closely with that item (Huisman 2000). All metric variables are standardized for the comparison of effect sizes. Given that ethnicity and school attitudes both have a significant impact on achievement, in a final step we add an interaction between ethnicity and attitudes to verify the impact of ethnicity on attitudes to school with regard to achievement.

Finally, we proceed with the two separate analyses. For each ethnic group, we start with an unconditional model, followed by a model including school attitudes and control variables at the individual and school level. These separate models for each ethnic group give more insight into the differential impact of attitudes to school on achievement for students of distinct ethnic groups, net of gender, track, socio-economic status, prior academic attainment, socio-economic context of the school, ethnic composition of the school, and school size. For the sample of ethnic minority students, we also control for immigrant generation.

## Findings

For this present study, we formulated two main research questions. First, we wanted to test whether ethnic minority and majority students scored differently for abstract and concrete attitudes. Table 10.1 shows that students of Turkish and Moroccan descent scored significantly higher than students of Belgian descent for abstract attitudes and significantly lower for concrete attitudes. At an abstract level, ethnic minority students expressed strong beliefs that schooling is important. However, they were more pessimistic about the role that schooling could play in their personal professional success. The multilevel analysis presented in Table 10.2 indicates that only ethnicity had a significant

Table 10.2. Ethnicity and socio-economic status on school attitudes. Results of stepwise multilevel analysis (observations N = 2092, groups N = 41)

<i>Abstract attitudes</i>			
	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Constant	3.670	3.600	3.602
Ethnicity (ref: Belgian descent)		0.226*** (0.027)	0.219*** (0.029)
Socio-economic status			-0.007 (0.013)
School level variance	0.009	0.000	0.000
Individual level variance	0.281	0.279	0.279
<i>Concrete attitudes</i>			
	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Constant	3.065	3.101	3.102
Ethnicity (ref: Belgian descent)		-0.102* (0.04)	-0.071 (0.041)
Socio-economic status			0.052** (0.017)
School level variance	0.039	0.037	0.033
Individual level variance	0.398	0.397	0.396

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001

influence on abstract attitudes. Thus, net of socio-economic status, ethnic minority students subscribed to the importance of schooling in society more than their majority counterparts did. However, distinct patterns emerged with regard to concrete attitudes. While ethnicity has initially a significant impact on concrete attitudes, this shifts when socio-economic status is added to the model. As a result of these findings, we can state that the impact of socio-economic status on concrete attitudes was stronger than the impact of ethnicity. In an additional analysis (not shown), we added prior academic achievement to the model presented in Table 10.2 to control for its influence on abstract and concrete attitudes towards schooling. Students who had to re-do a school year had less optimistic abstract and concrete attitudes. However, prior academic achievement

did not influence the observed relationships. The relationships between ethnicity and abstract attitudes and socio-economic status, and concrete attitudes remained significant.

The second research objective was to define the influence of abstract and concrete attitudes on achievement. We started with a stepwise logistic multilevel analysis for the entire sample, visualized in Table 10.3. The unconditional multilevel analysis indicates that 15.5% ( $\sigma^2_u = 0.603$ ,  $\sigma^2_e = 3.29$ ) of the variance in school failure was situated at the school level, which implied that multilevel analysis was necessary. In the first step, ethnicity was added to the model. The ethnic minority students were more likely to fail in school compared with their majority peers, but adding school attitudes to the model did not reduce the effect of ethnicity. Abstract attitudes did appear to influence school failure initially, but this relationship disappeared when we added the control variables. As expected, concrete attitudes had a significant influence on school failure, net of individual and school factors. The more pessimistic students were about the role of schooling in their personal future success, the more likely they were to obtain a B or C certificate at the end of the school year. At the individual level, gender, prior academic attainment, and track had a significant impact on school failure. Girls were less likely than boys to end their school year unsuccessfully. In addition, students who had had to repeat a grade previously were more likely to end the school year unsuccessfully and students in a vocational track were less likely to end the school year unsuccessfully than students in an academic track. This last result may seem counter-intuitive, as students in technical or vocational tracks have previously been associated with a less study-oriented culture (Van Houtte and Stevens 2010). However, a Flemish study by Stevens (2007) finds that teachers change their assessment standards for the vocational track. These teachers said/reported that they attached less importance to students' marks due to their

enrollment in the least cognitive vocational track, but gave more importance to students' school attitudes, such as their motivation and being polite (Stevens 2007). More research is necessary to fully comprehend this finding. With respect to school-level variables (socio-economic context, ethnic composition, and size), only ethnic composition of the school was found to be related to school failure. Irrespective of students' ethnic descent, the higher the proportion of people of immigrant descent in a student population, the more likely students were to end the school year unsuccessfully.



Table 10.3. Abstract and concrete attitudes on school failure. Results of stepwise logistic multilevel analysis-complete sample (Observation N = 2092, groups N = 41)

	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
<i>Individual level</i>					
Ethnicity (ref: Belgian descent)	0.841*** (0.159)	0.857*** (0.162)	0.607*** (0.181)	0.686*** (0.184)	
Abstract attitudes		-0.125* (0.063)	-0.115 (0.064)	-0.103 (0.064)	
Concrete attitudes		-0.211** (0.065)	-0.202** (0.067)	-0.324*** (0.088)	
Gender (ref: male)			-0.395** (0.144)	-0.399** (0.144)	
Prior academic attainment (ref: no past failure)			0.656*** (0.146)	0.644*** (0.146)	
Socio-economic status			-0.082 (0.081)	-0.071 (0.081)	
Technical track (ref: academic track)			-0.135 (0.257)	-0.113 (0.256)	
Vocational track (ref: academic track)			-0.620* (0.279)	-0.615* (0.277)	
Ethnicity* Concrete attitudes				0.278* (0.127)	
<i>School level</i>					
Socio-economic context				0.120 (0.251)	0.133 (0.248)
Ethnic composition of the school				0.439* (0.212)	0.435* (0.209)
School size				0.119 (0.122)	0.117 (0.120)
Constant	-1.639	-1.955	-1.993	-1.872	-1.890
<i>School level variance</i>	0.600	0.408	0.423	0.307	0.294

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001

In the final step, an interaction between concrete attitudes and ethnicity was added to the model. The impact of concrete attitudes on school failure was greater for students of Belgian descent than for those of immigrant descent. To obtain a better understanding of these results, we focused on the separate analyses for each ethnic group. First, we focus on the ethnic majority students. Table 10.4 indicates that 12.3% of the variance in school failure was situated at the school-level ( $\sigma^2_u = 0.465$ ,  $\sigma^2_e = 3.29$ ). Significant relationships and their direction in previous analyses mostly remained the same for this analysis. The only difference was that socio-economic background was significantly associated with school failure for native students. The higher their socio-economic status, the more likely they were to end their school year successfully. Second, for students of immigrant descent, the results changed completely, as shown in Table 10.4. Prior academic attainment was the only factor that remained related to school failure. If a student previously had had to repeat his or her grade, it was more likely that he or she would obtain a B or C certificate at the end of the school year. For this subsample, neither abstract nor concrete attitudes had a significant impact on the school failure of ethnic minority students. However, the interaction between concrete attitudes and school failure showed a difference between ethnic majority and minority students. Further analyses, shown in Table 10.4, indicated that concrete attitudes had a significant impact on the likelihood of school failure of ethnic majority students, while no relationship between concrete attitudes and school failure could be found for ethnic minority students (comparison of the coefficients of concrete attitudes in model 1A and model 1B in Table 10.4, by means of a t-test:  $t = -1.66$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ).

Table 10.4. Abstract and concrete attitudes on school failure. Results of logistic multilevel analysis, ethnic majority and ethnic minority students (Ethnic majority: Observations N = 1579, groups N = 39, Ethnic minority: Observations N = 513, groups N = 37)

<i>Individual level</i>	Ethnic majority students		Ethnic minority students	
	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1A</i>	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1B</i>
Abstract attitudes		-0.127 (0.089)		-0.093 (0.094)
Concrete attitudes		-0.310*** (0.093)		-0.086 (0.099)
Gender ( <i>ref: male</i> )		-0.652*** (0.187)		-0.044 (0.231)
Prior academic attainment ( <i>ref: no past failure</i> )		0.662*** (0.194)		0.681** (0.232)
Socio-economic status		-0.231* (0.101)		0.242 (0.141)
Technical track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		-0.049 (0.368)		-0.390 (0.349)
Vocational track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		-0.887* (0.415)		-0.576 (0.360)
Second generation ( <i>ref: first generation</i> )		-		-0.332 (0.292)
Third generation ( <i>ref: first generation</i> )		-		-0.114 (0.338)
<i>School level</i>				
Socio-economic context		0.213 (0.302)		0.022 (0.423)
Ethnic composition of the school		0.525* (0.252)		0.193 (0.324)
School size		0.238 (0.138)		-0.188 (0.178)
Constant	-2.027	-1.770	-1.012	-0.899
<i>School level variance</i>	0.464	0.305	0.308	0.281

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001

In two additional analyses (not shown)<sup>2</sup> interactions between abstract attitudes and ethnicity (Turkish vs. Moroccan), concrete attitudes and ethnicity (Turkish vs. Moroccan) (1), and abstract attitudes and immigrant generation and concrete attitudes and immigrant generation (2) were added. The results showed that the impact of abstract and concrete attitudes neither differ according to ethnicity, nor according to immigrant generation.

The analyses with GPA as dependent variable show very similar results. There are two important differences. First, in the analysis of the whole sample (Table 10.5, Appendix B) the interaction between ethnicity and concrete attitudes is only borderline significant ( $p = 0.066$ ), but additional analyses have shown that this is a consequence of the small number of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent ( $N = 197$ ). The analyses of the separate samples (Table 10.6, Appendix B) reaffirm that concrete attitudes have an impact on the achievement of ethnic majority students, while no relationship could be found for ethnic minority students. Second, in the separate analysis of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, only one factor relates to yearly achievement score, which is gender instead of prior academic attainment.

### Discussion and conclusion

First, in line with Mickelson's findings for African American students, we found that in Flanders ethnic minority students have more optimistic abstract attitudes and more pessimistic concrete attitudes than ethnic majority students do. It also shows that Turkish and Moroccan minorities fit more into Ogbu's category of involuntary minorities (Mickelson 1990; Ogbu and Simons 1998; Hermans 2004; Luciak 2004; Matthew 2011). According to Mickelson, while both ethnic minority and majority students hold optimistic abstract attitudes, the

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<sup>2</sup> Additional analyses can be obtained from the authors upon request.

interpretation of concrete attitudes depends on the job opportunities of significant others in the student's environment. Hence, it seems likely that the initial optimism of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants changed to pessimism over time, due to the unequal chances of obtaining a 'good' job with a 'good' wage. However, we cannot clarify the attitude-achievement paradox without taking socio-economic status into account. In line with Mickelson (1990), even when socio-economic status is taken into account, ethnicity remains the only factor that relates to abstract school attitudes. Furthermore, similar to Mickelson's findings, we find that students of Turkish and Moroccan descent hold more optimistic abstract attitudes towards education than their Belgian peers. We understand this strong belief in 'schooling as a key to success' from the migration history of ethnic minority students. Migration is generally motivated by the dream of being socially mobile and schooling is seen as an excellent way to achieve this social mobility (Andriessen et al. 2006; Kao and Tienda 1995; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2002). However, since African American students also hold more optimistic abstract attitudes than their White peers, more research on ethnic minority populations is necessary to fully comprehend why ethnic minority students tend to be more optimistic than their majority peers.

When we shift from the abstract to the concrete level, socio-economic status has a larger impact than ethnicity on concrete attitudes. Students with a lower socio-economic status appear to be more pessimistic about the role of schooling in future success. Initially, it might be argued that ethnicity has a greater impact on the development of pessimistic attitudes toward school due to labor market discrimination. However, a student's socio-economic status creates the material reality in which he or she lives and is the result of former labor market opportunities. As a consequence, this influences students' interpretation of

concrete attitudes more than their ethnic background (Mickelson 1990; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2002).

Our second finding does not confirm Mickelson's key idea. The key idea is that abstract attitudes have no impact on achievement, while concrete attitudes do. In the Flemish context, we could only find this result for students of Belgian descent. For the students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, the results were not in line with the findings of Mickelson, nor those of Downey. While for students of Belgian descent we find a positive relationship between optimistic concrete attitudes and the likelihood of succeeding at the end of the school year, no such relationship is found for ethnic minority students. Hence, based on the indicators of achievement and prior achievement available in this study, we cannot state that the underachievement of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent is a consequence of pessimistic concrete attitudes. Although it is not the focus of the attitude-achievement paradox, it is interesting to note that the results for the ethnic majority students follow the key idea of Mickelson. In Mickelson's findings, the relationship between concrete attitudes and achievement was stronger for ethnic majority students than for minority students. A similar result was obtained by Midgley and colleagues (1996) for the relationship between concrete school attitudes and self-handicapping strategies. Future research is necessary to explain why the achievement of ethnic majority students is more strongly influenced by school attitudes and why we cannot find a relationship between concrete attitudes and the achievement of ethnic minority students.

A possible explanation, based on qualitative research in Belgium (Van Praag 2013), is that while students of Turkish and Moroccan descent take into account discrimination in the labor market, their reaction to this reality is diffuse. Concrete attitudes are the reflection of students' idea of future success and the role of schooling in this. Qualitative research shows that students of Turkish and

Moroccan descent have more vague definitions of success than their ethnic majority peers. The main element in their definition of success is that they want to have better working conditions than their parents, which results in a wide range of interpretations of success. Furthermore, the students of Turkish and Moroccan descent use distinct coping styles to deal with the prospect of labor market discrimination. To cope with these future constraints, some students attempt to achieve more in school, while others search for alternative ways to become successful in future life (e.g. reliance on the local immigrant community or becoming self-employed). Consequently, these alternative ways do not automatically imply dropping out of school, but may result in making different educational choices. For example, students may opt for a particular field of study to learn a trade (e.g. a car mechanic) or prepare for higher education (e.g. a general practitioner). Hence, the combination of more vague definitions of success and distinct coping styles might explain why we find no evidence that concrete attitudes have an impact on achievement for students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, while we do find evidence of this for students of Belgian descent.

Another possible explanation and an important limitation of this study is that, in contrast with Mickelson's study, we were not able to measure achievement and prior achievement with a continuous standardized test score. Because of this, we are not able to entirely replicate Mickelson's study in the Flemish context. However, we tried to overcome this obstacle by including two measures of achievement. The fact that both measures showed the same results, in combination with the analysis carried out on the sample of ethnic majority students, where school attitudes, gender, prior academic attainment, socio-economic status, and ethnic composition of the school all relate to the achievement outcomes, as described in other research (Coleman 1968; Mickelson 1990, 2008; Jencks and Phillips 1998; Van Landeghem and Van Damme 2004;

Stevens 2007; Mickelson et al. 2013; Dworkin 2014), adds to the validity of these findings.

We measure prior academic attainment in a rudimentary way, namely as grade retention. However, an extra control is created, since the decision about the certificate is based on the school results of the whole school year and made at the end of the school year. At the time the students completed the questionnaire, they had no idea about the certificate they would receive. Therefore, in combination with the control for prior academic attainment, this longitudinal component substantiates the relationship between school attitudes and achievement.

For future research, it would be interesting to ask students to fill out a standardized test at the beginning and end of the school year. This would allow researchers to examine more subtle effects of school attitudes on achievement. It would also be interesting to explore the different coping strategies ethnic minority students use to overcome perceived and expected discrimination in the labor market (Brondolo et al. 2009). Insight into the different coping styles could shed light on how pessimistic concrete attitudes might influence the educational path of ethnic minority students. For example, some coping strategies might explain the unequal distribution of ethnic minority students in the vocational track. Finally, it would be very interesting to test the attitude-achievement paradox in other national contexts and for other ethnic minority groups. The comparison of high and low-achieving ethnic minority groups with different migration histories and different relationships with the dominant society could shed light on the dynamics underlying the attitude-achievement paradox (Ogbu and Simons 1998; Luciak 2004).

The main goal of this study was to explore the role of abstract and concrete attitudes on achievement in a different context than the USA, but with the same measurement tools used by Mickelson (1990) to assess abstract and concrete



attitudes. We found evidence for Mickelson's idea that students hold both abstract and concrete attitudes. These abstract attitudes are subscribed to by all students, while the interpretation of the concrete attitudes depends on the social position of the student in society. However, when applying Mickelson's theory to Belgium, it is interesting to find that, contrary to the African American students in the United States, the concrete attitudes of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent did not predict their achievement. Although both groups face similar collective problems, such as racism and ethnic discrimination, this divergence in the impact of concrete school attitudes might be explained by the distinct belief of students of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the opportunities to change their position in society. This could be a consequence of the different (migration) history of the Turks and Moroccans and the different reason for migration. Based on qualitative research in Flanders (Van Praag 2013), it could be suggested that students of Turkish and Moroccan descent take future labor market discrimination into account but are still driven by the search for social upward mobility. Hence, pessimistic concrete attitudes do not necessarily lead to a loss of study motivation, but rather inspire students when making educational choices and setting out their future plans. Similar findings were found for Sikh immigrants in the United States (Gibson 1988), what indicates that the criteria that immigrants use to evaluate their own and their children's (future) economic success is constantly changing and adapted depending on the comparison groups they use and as a reaction to the opportunities and constraints they perceive in the host society. Nevertheless, future research is needed to explore this idea more profoundly.

## Chapter II: General conclusion

Ethnic discrimination is one of the causes of ethnic inequalities in education (Stevens & Dworkin, 2014). It creates constraints that hinder an adolescent in making his/her desired choices and impedes opportunities to be a successful, healthy and happy person, both in school and in one's future life. A great number of ethnic minority adolescents are living in Europe and in other Western countries. In Flanders, 12.7% of the adolescents aged 12 to 17 are immigrants or children of immigrants, coming from non-Western-European countries (Noppe & Lodewijckx, 2013). Hence, ethnic discrimination can affect the life chances of a large group of adolescents.

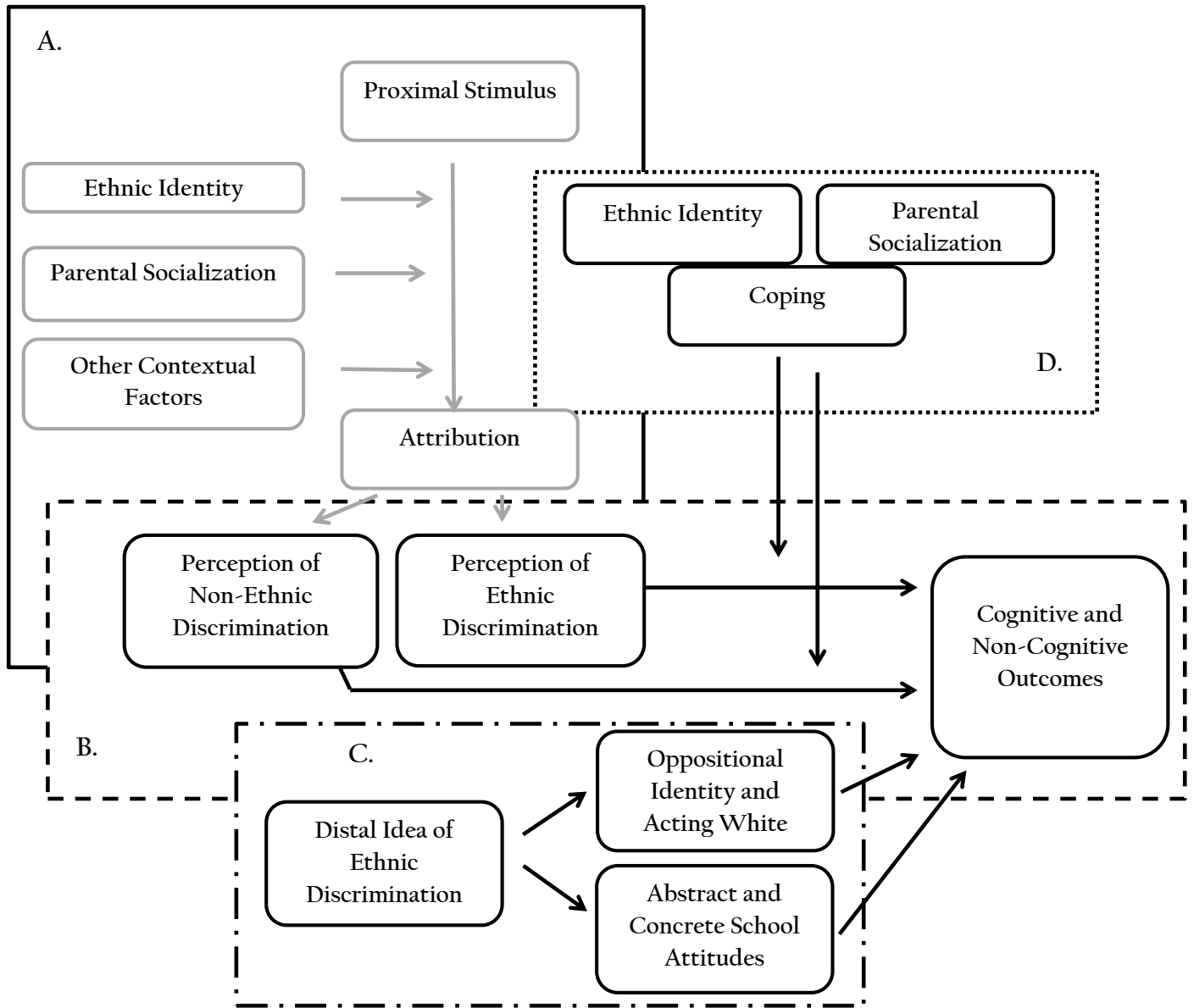
Despite the societal importance, the scientific field of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality is underdeveloped in some respects. Theoretically, there are several approaches that treat the relationship between ethnic discrimination and educational inequality as a given, but, except for critical race theory (CRT), there are no theories that discuss this relationship explicitly (see chapter 2). In the first part of this dissertation, we reviewed several of these theories and developed a more comprehensive theoretical framework that may help to understand the experience of ethnic discrimination and its consequences, underlying mechanisms, and coping responses. Empirically, there is a rich tradition of qualitative research, but there are only a limited number of quantitative studies, especially in Europe. Quantitative studies can, however, give insight into the prevalence and consequences of ethnic discrimination for a large group of students. Hence, in the second part, we conducted five quantitative studies that focused on how the experience of ethnic discrimination relates to the academic achievement and educational well-being of ethnic minority students in

Flanders, with specific attention to the processes that moderate these relationships.

In this last chapter, we reflect on the main findings of this dissertation and the lessons learned. Although this marks the end of the dissertation, because the research is still a work in progress, we subsequently take a look at the limitations and possibilities for future research. To end, we make several recommendations, targeting policy makers, school principals and school teachers.

### **Main findings**

The theoretical model (see Figure 11.4) developed in the first part of this dissertation will be used as an outline for the discussion of the main findings. We divide this model in four different boxes: a) the complexity of the experience of ethnic discrimination, b) the relationship between the direct, proximal experience of ethnic discrimination by peers or teachers and cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, c) the relationship between the distal idea of ethnic discrimination (e.g., expected future discrimination or discrimination experiences of significant others) and cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, and d) the factors that moderate the relationship between ethnic discrimination and cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes.



### A. Ethnic discrimination as a complex phenomenon

As discussed in the cultural-ecological framework of Ogbu (2008) and the CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Stevens & Crozier, 2014), ethnic discrimination is a complex phenomenon, rooted in a cultural and historical context and influenced by power dynamics and situational characteristics. Adolescents' life chances can be affected by individual, cultural and institutional

discrimination (Jones, 1972). Furthermore, the minority stress theory shows that ethnic minority students are not spared from other forms of discrimination (Meyer, 2003), and the attribution theory proposes that stressful situations are not always perceived in the same way (Graham, 2005; Graham, Bellmore, Nishina, & Juvonen, 2009). In line with the social stress theory (Harrell, 2000; Pearlin, 1989), the prevalence of ethnic discrimination is not arbitrary, not even among ethnic minority students. The prevalence patterns found in this study show that different power dynamics are at work (e.g., ethnic minority adolescents experience less ethnic discrimination by peers if there is a higher percentage of ethnic minority students in school, but in that situation they experience more ethnic discrimination by teachers), but other structural factors play a role as well, such as gender (e.g., the prevalence of ethnic discrimination is higher among boys than among girls) or track (e.g., the prevalence of ethnic discrimination is higher in vocational than in academic track).

In this dissertation, we attempted to capture this complexity in two ways. First, by focusing on one context, namely school. Adolescents lead their lives in several social settings, but in each of these settings different dynamics are at work. Hence, focusing on the educational context allows us to go into more detail about ethnic discrimination and educational inequality.

Second, we used three different ways to measure ethnic discrimination. First, we developed a survey measure that takes into account several dimensions of the experience of discrimination and victimization in school. We made a distinction between discrimination by peers and discrimination by teachers in order to be able to verify if this difference in perpetrator has a difference in impact. Furthermore, students could indicate how frequently they experienced discrimination/victimization in school.

Finally, adolescents had the possibility to attribute these experiences to different underlying reasons. It was not our goal to carry out experiments to learn more about the underlying attribution processes, but in line with minority stress theory and attribution theory, we did want to learn more about the unique and detrimental character of ethnic discrimination and its relationship with other discrimination/victimization experiences of adolescents (Graham, 2005; Meyer, 2003).

The multidimensional character of this measure is one of the strengths of this dissertation. With the use of this measure, we found that both frequent and non-frequent experiences of ethnic teacher discrimination are related to self-reported school delinquency for ethnic minority students, while only frequent experiences of ethnic teacher discrimination are related to a higher sense of academic futility. Female minority adolescents, who experienced non-frequent teacher discrimination, report more school delinquency than male minority students, who experienced non-frequent teacher discrimination. In chapter six, we showed that ethnic and non-ethnic discrimination both had a unique impact on sense of school belonging. Ethnic minority students who indicated that they experienced ethnic discrimination had a lower sense of school belonging than students who indicated that they experienced non-ethnic discrimination. However, we could not find any evidence that ethnic teacher discrimination and ethnic peer discrimination are differently related to sense of school belonging. Although the ethnic school composition had an influence on the prevalence of ethnic and non-ethnic discrimination, this was only partly the case for the impact. Ethnic school composition only influenced the impact of frequent ethnic teacher discrimination: when there are fewer ethnic minority students in a school, the frequent experience of ethnic teacher discrimination is related to a lower sense of school belonging than in a school with many ethnic minority students.

Second, the distal idea of ethnic discrimination was measured indirectly. According to Mickelson's theory (1990), students' expectations about the returns on education on the labor market, the opportunities and the wages they perceive, will be reflected in their answer pattern on the concrete school-attitude scale. Since ethnic minority students have witnessed significant others being discriminated against, they will hold pessimistic ideas about the role of education in their future success and thus, pessimistic concrete school attitudes. However, since we found that the interpretation of concrete school attitudes is more a reflection of the socio-economic status of the student than a reflection of their ethnicity, it is hard to state that concrete attitudes fully capture the distal idea of ethnic discrimination. Socio-economic status and ethnicity are highly correlated in Flanders, and ethnic discrimination can contribute to the socio-economic status of a students' family, so it is difficult to disentangle these influences. Future research would benefit from more direct survey questions of students' beliefs about limited opportunities on the labor market.

Third, in chapter seven, we measured teachers' prejudiced beliefs in a very innovative way, that is, we used both an explicit and an implicit measure. The explicit measure was a self-reported ethnocentrism-scale. The implicit measure was an experimental response latency test, the Single Category Implicit Association Test (SC-IAT) (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006). The asset of this study is that instead of asking the students about their experiences with ethnic discrimination, we related teachers' shared prejudiced beliefs, measured implicitly and explicitly, to ethnic minority students' educational well-being. The technique of linking teachers' prejudiced beliefs to ethnic minority students' outcomes can be regarded as an objective way of measuring how teachers' ideas can influence how students act and feel. Furthermore, the use of both explicit and implicit measures is a good example of how quantitative researchers can challenge

themselves to use specific measures that capture much more of the complexity of ethnic discrimination than the use of one simple survey question (e.g., Did you experience discrimination because of your ethnicity?).

In conclusion, theories such as the cultural-ecological framework (Ogbu, 2008) or the CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Stevens & Crozier, 2014), and empirical studies in line with these theories, discuss or describe the complexity of ethnic discrimination, but quantitative research that examines the complexity of ethnic discrimination in a systematic manner is scarce. However, the results of this dissertation differ according to the dimensions taken into account and according to the outcome. This indicates the importance of including the multidimensional character of ethnic discrimination in the analyses. The strength of quantitative research is the ability to find more general patterns, but this search for generality does not have to stand in the way of complexity. In order to provide a real added value to the field of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality research, quantitative researchers have to explore new ways of measuring the multidimensional character of ethnic discrimination (e.g., context, frequency, perpetrator, implicit measures of teachers' prejudiced attitudes). This will allow a better understanding of how ethnic discrimination is related to educational inequality.

## **B. Proximal experience of ethnic discrimination and cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes**

Theories that discuss the role of ethnic discrimination in educational inequality assume, explicitly or implicitly, that ethnic discrimination contributes to more inequality. However, especially in Europe, there are few quantitative studies that examine how ethnic discrimination contributes to educational inequality. Hence, an important goal of this research was to conduct a quantitative



study that focuses on how the experience of ethnic discrimination is associated with the academic achievement and educational well-being of ethnic minority adolescents in Flanders. With this dissertation, we were able to demonstrate that the proximal experience of ethnic discrimination is related with ethnic minority students' sense of school belonging, sense of academic futility and school delinquency.

The American study by Faircloth and Hamm (2005) discusses different indicators of school belonging and concludes that for all students (e.g., European American, African American, Latino and Asian descent) ethnic discrimination is an important indicator of school belongingness. In line with this study –to the best of our knowledge the only other such study--, we found that ethnic discrimination is associated with a weaker sense of school belonging. School belongingness has proven its positive effect on a wide range of outcomes that lead to school success, such as study engagement, positive attitudes toward school or school completion (For an extensive review: Osterman, 2000).

The longitudinal American study of Lambert et al. (2009) shows that experiences of ethnic discrimination decrease the feelings of academic control among African American adolescents. In line with this study – we assume to be the only other such study –, we found that ethnic discrimination is associated with a stronger sense of academic futility. Students with little to no sense of academic futility will put more effort into school and will be more motivated to perform, which in turn leads to higher levels of engagement in learning activities and, subsequently, higher achievement (Agirdag et al., 2012; Ross & Broh, 2000; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010).

Ethnic discrimination is also related to more self-reported school delinquency, in accordance with several other studies (Simons, Chen, Stewart, & Brody, 2003; Stevens, Vollebergh, Pels, & Crijnen, 2005; Wong et al., 2003).

Research shows that school deviance co-occurs with school drop-out, grade retention, lower academic achievement and less commitment and motivation for school (Bryant, Schulenberg, Bachman, O'Malley, & Johnston, 2000; Finn, 1989; Jenkins, 1995; Jimerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egeland, & Sroufe, 1997; Zimmerman & Schmeelk-Cone, 2003).

Unfortunately, we are not able to make statements about the association between the proximal experience of ethnic discrimination and academic achievement. Choices have to be made, and since we already linked achievement to the distal experience of ethnic discrimination and we want to broaden the perspective to both achievement and educational well-being, we focused on non-cognitive outcomes. Non-cognitive outcomes are prerequisites for academic achievement. Moreover, to realize the emancipatory power of education to its fullest, educational equality should not only be about equal opportunity to achieve in school, but also about equal opportunity to experience educational well-being.

In conclusion, other studies already found that the proximal experience of ethnic discrimination is related to less self-esteem, more depressive symptoms, less psychological resiliency, more anger, becoming involved with friends who had fewer positive qualities and more negative qualities, decreased academic motivation (i.e., importance of school, utility value of school and beliefs about academic competence), and achievement (Fisher et al., 2000; Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006; Thomas, Caldwell, Faison, & Jackson, 2009; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007; van Dijk, Agyemang, de Wit, & Hosper, 2011; Maykel Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006; Wong et al., 2003). In combination with the results of this dissertation, it is clear that ethnic discrimination can be a stressful and detrimental experience for ethnic minority adolescents. It affects their mental well-being, their academic achievement and their educational well-being. Hence,

the fact that ethnic discrimination affects the lives of a large number of immigrant adolescents should be an incentive to include ethnic discrimination in a deliberate way in the scientific debates on educational equality.

### **C. Distal experience of ethnic discrimination and cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes**

In contrast with proximal discrimination, ethnic discrimination as a distal experience is more abstract and encompasses more the idea of institutional discrimination. This idea of distal discrimination and its consequences is discussed thoroughly in the cultural-ecological framework (Ogbu, 2008), the acting white-hypothesis (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and Mickelson's theory (1990) on abstract and concrete attitudes. All these theories indicate that historical and distal ideas of ethnic discrimination can influence adolescent's academic achievement, educational effort, behavior and well-being. However, it appears to be difficult to substantiate this idea empirically with quantitative evidence, and this is also the case in this dissertation. When we tested Mickelson's theory, we could not find evidence that concrete school attitudes, of which the theory assumes that it captures students' distal idea of ethnic discrimination, is related with ethnic minority students' academic achievement. We did, however, find evidence that ethnic majority students who hold pessimistic concrete school attitudes have a higher chance of ending the school year unsuccessfully.

It would be incorrect to conclude, based on these findings, that the distal idea of ethnic discrimination is irrelevant in relation to educational inequality. First, as discussed in the section on the complexity of ethnic discrimination, we measured the distal idea of ethnic discrimination indirectly through concrete attitudes and it is likely that we did not fully capture this distal idea of ethnic discrimination. Second, concrete school attitudes did influence the academic

achievement of ethnic majority students, and findings of Flemish qualitative research show that students of Turkish and Moroccan descent use different coping styles to deal with the prospect of labor market discrimination (Van Praag, D'hondt, Stevens, & Van Houtte, 2015). To cope with limited opportunities in the future, some students attempt to achieve more in school, while others search for alternative ways to become successful in future life (e.g., reliance on the local immigrant community or becoming self-employed). Hence, it is more correct to conclude that it is likely that the distal idea of discrimination does influence ethnic minority students' educational choices, but that the mechanisms through which the distal idea of ethnic discrimination influences educational trajectories are intricate and different from the ones that influence ethnic majority students. Therefore, to capture these mechanisms, quantitative researchers should probably use a different approach. For example, they could use longitudinal data that follows the educational trajectory of students to examine how the distal idea of discrimination influences processes of choice; or, make an international comparison between countries with different unemployment rates among ethnic minorities and majorities to explore how differences in employment perspectives influence ethnic minority and ethnic majority students' behavior in school.

#### **D. The role of moderating processes**

Based on a review of the literature and different theoretical approaches, we realized that a more comprehensive theoretical framework would be incomplete without a consideration of moderating processes. Theoretical approaches (e.g., social stress model (Pearlin, 1989)) and quantitative and qualitative evidence (e.g., Mellor, 2004; Wong et al., 2003) indicate that ethnic discrimination can affect a person in different ways relative to which coping methods s/he uses to moderate the experience. In addition, when we have more knowledge about the coping

responses that are adaptive, we can support ethnic minority adolescents better. Addressing ethnic discrimination and educational inequality is challenging, so it is also important to empower the targets of ethnic discrimination. Subsequently, we explored respectively the role of parental ethnic socialization practices, and ethnic and host national identity in two empirical studies. More specific coping responses (e.g., problem-focused versus emotion-focused) were beyond the scope of this research, but should be taken into account in future research.

When we examined the main effects of parental ethnic socialization practices (i.e., cultural socialization and preparation for bias), ethnic identity and host national identity, we observed that almost all of these coping resources helped students in their educational well-being. Higher levels of cultural socialization and preparation for bias were related to a lower sense of academic futility (see chapter eight). A stronger sense of host national identity was associated with lower levels of self-reported school delinquency (see chapter nine). However, we found no evidence that ethnic identity was related with self-reported school delinquency.

When we examined the protective role of these coping resources, our analyses suggested that none of these coping resources protected ethnic minority adolescents against the negative impact of ethnic discrimination. The only moderating factor was cultural socialization, but a higher level of cultural socialization exacerbated the negative effect of frequent ethnic teacher discrimination on the sense of academic futility. Hence, in this case, it could not be considered an adaptive coping resource.

To conclude, when statistical effects do not reach levels of significance, it is often considered to be a weakness of the research. In our opinion, such an approach of insignificant results is short-sighted. In general, this field is characterized by inconsistent and non-significant results (Brondolo et al., 2009).

This does not indicate that this is a weak field of research, but rather that it is still a field in progress. Moderating coping processes are an essential part of a theoretical framework on ethnic discrimination and educational inequality, but researchers have to stop searching for general patterns and generally adaptive coping approaches. Motivated by a search for knowledge that can support adolescents who experience ethnic discrimination, researchers want to gain insight into which coping approaches can protect against this detrimental experience. To be able to do this, however, we have to acknowledge that coping is a dynamic and sequential process, influenced by the context. Coping resources most likely operate in a very subtle way. Therefore, future research should try to capture the complexity of coping approaches by using more specific measures that are tailor-made for a certain context. Furthermore, because of the subtlety, this field would benefit from a mixed-methods approach. The strength of quantitative research would be that it can focus on finding the patterns of which coping responses are most adaptive in specific situations. The strength of qualitative research would be that it can give insight in the intricate phenomenon of coping and all the different dimensions quantitative researchers should take into account.

### **Limitations of the dissertation and suggestions for future research**

*Extent of the Other Forms of Ethnic Discrimination.* A strength of this dissertation is that we used detail-oriented quantitative measures in order to attempt to capture the complexity inherent to ethnic discrimination. This required making several choices. First, we chose to focus on the educational context, despite the fact that the neighborhood, the public space, and the media are all contexts in which adolescents can experience ethnic discrimination; experiences that can have deep and far-reaching effects throughout their lives. Hence, to get a more complete picture of how ethnic discrimination can affect an adolescents' life,

future research should also focus on contexts other than school, and preferably assess their development and impact simultaneously. Second, except for chapter ten, the empirical studies in this dissertation focus on individual discrimination. We have paid little attention to institutional and cultural discrimination in our analyses. We framed our evidence in a wider context of cultural and institutional discrimination, but we did not test it. The central goal of this dissertation was to conduct a quantitative study on the *experience* of ethnic discrimination. It is essential to include institutional and cultural discrimination in the discussion of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality, but since these are often more subtle forms of discrimination, they require a different approach. To find empirical evidence for these kinds of discrimination, a researcher has to compare a variety of institutional factors such as: punitive disciplinary policies (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Welch & Payne, 2010), the funding of schools (Orfield & Lee, 2005), analyze the curriculum, text books, and the ideology about valued and disvalued languages or follow the placement of students (Mehan, 1992).

*Extent of the Longitudinal Data.* Because of the cross-sectional character of the data, we are unable to make claims about the causal relationship between ethnic discrimination and different outcomes. Nevertheless, we did make implicit causality assumptions by focusing on the relationship between ethnic discrimination and academic achievement and educational well-being. Especially in chapters six, eight and nine, longitudinal data would have been useful to determine the causal character of the researched relationships. Although the use of longitudinal data would definitely be an improvement, we have to indicate that it would not be a miracle solution. In all probability, the relationship between ethnic discrimination and sense of school belonging, sense of academic futility or self-reported school delinquency will be reciprocal, rather than one-directional (Brendgen, Wanner, & Vitaro, 2006; Delfabbro et al., 2006; Simons et al., 2003).

Hence, maybe even more important than the use of longitudinal data in future research is the awareness that for theoretical and empirical clarity, one can assume the one-directional influence of ethnic discrimination on different outcomes, but in reality these relationships will be a complex multiplicity of reciprocal influences.

*Refine ethnic minority categories.* Each time we started an new empirical study, we considered different elements in order to decide which ethnic groups would be included in the studies and which ethnicities would be grouped together (e.g., group size, similar status in host society, similar generational status, migration history). Group size was the most important factor to consider, because of methodological reasons. East-Europeans, for example, were always grouped together. We are aware that this is a very rough categorization, however, only a small number of students came from Eastern Europe. It is true that Eastern Europeans share the same geographic background and a similar migration time frame, but the categorization of ‘East-European migrants’ hides important differences in terms of language, religion, socio-economic status, residence status (Verhaeghe & Perrin, 2015). Hence, future research would definitely benefit from more large-scale datasets, so that ethnic minority categories can be refined.

*Use of a mixed-methods approach.* Quantitative research is of great value in the field of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality. It gives insight into the broader patterns of prevalence and consequences of ethnic discrimination for a large group of ethnic minority students. Furthermore, numbers and statistics give the necessary weight to the problem of ethnic discrimination in education and wider society, since often there is the assumption that if it is not counted, it does not count. However, the complexity of ethnic discrimination, the influences of different moderating factors, the influence of the context, all contribute to the fact that it is not easy to represent the problem of ethnic discrimination in quantitative



numbers. A mixed-methods approach would help to develop detailed measures and/or to understand the results of quantitative analyses. For example, in chapter ten, we did not find any associations between concrete school attitudes and academic achievement. Qualitative research helped to explain why this might be the case. Cross-fertilization between quantitative and qualitative research methods would enrich the field of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality tremendously.

### **Social policy recommendations**

The topic of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality has an important social value, so to conclude, we will discuss several policy recommendations that might help to address the problem of ethnic discrimination and educational inequality. However, since this dissertation is fundamental research in nature, these recommendations will not be a pure reflection of the empirical findings, but it will be a reflection of the whole research process: writing this dissertation, attending conferences, attending workshops with different stakeholders, reading theoretical and empirical papers, and having discussions with colleagues.

The first key word is acknowledgement, namely the acknowledgement that ethnic discrimination is a problem in society and in education. It seems as if the norm to no longer overtly express explicit ethnic prejudices, is associated with a denial that ethnic discrimination is still a serious issue in society. Research has an important role to play here, since it can 'objectively' present figures that describe the problem of ethnic discrimination. We are convinced that an acknowledgement of the fact that ethnic discrimination is a serious societal problem, would help to create a broader social consensus that more action should be taken to develop in the direction of ethnic equality.

The second key word is reflection. First, it is important to reflect about cultural and institutional discrimination. The challenge of institutional and cultural discrimination is that these forms of discrimination are often unintentional and even unconscious. Another challenge is that educational policy is developed on a governmental level, but brought to life in the daily institutional practices of schools and classrooms. Nevertheless, institutional and cultural discrimination can have far-reaching consequences for the lives of ethnic minority adolescents. Therefore, to evolve in the direction of more educational equality, policy makers, principals and teachers should take up the challenge to reflect critically on educational policy and institutional practices (related to, for example, pedagogy, curriculum and selection systems) to identify how explicit and implicit processes affect the educational pathways of adolescents. This is not an easy exercise, because one has to make the invisible, visible and because it requires stepping out of one's own frame of reference, norms and values to look at things from a different perspective.

For example, in Flanders, parents and children are completely free to choose an educational trajectory (Boone & Van Houtte, 2013b). There are no centrally administered standardized tests, only a non-binding recommendation of the teacher of the last year of primary education. Furthermore, there is free-choice of secondary school and there is no fee for attending private schools. Hence, on paper, the choice of an educational trajectory is free from any constraint. However, in our sample, 51.5% of the West-European students follow an academic track, 23.1% a vocational track, whereas of the students of non-West European descent, 21.6% follows an academic track and 52.9% vocational track. This social disparity in educational trajectories is a consequence of different processes of which we will discuss one (Boone, 2013; Stevens & Dworkin, 2014). The freedom of educational choice becomes relative when you have the feeling that your educational efforts

will not be rewarded with ‘good’ jobs and ‘good’ wages on the labor market, as discussed in the theory of Mickelson (1990). Flemish qualitative research shows that ethnic minority students make educational choices within the boundaries they perceive (e.g., going to vocational track to become self-employed to avoid ethnic discrimination) (Van Praag et al., 2015). In addition, they often have diffuse definitions of success. They know that they want to avoid physically hard labor, low wages or ethnic discrimination, but they have little knowledge about what they want to do and which trajectory they have to follow for that. In contrast, ethnic Belgian students often indicate that they want to follow this specific track to be able to do the same job as their parents or friends of their parents. They have a more clear idea about what they want to do in life and the steps that are necessary to pursue this goal. Hence, although on the surface there are no constraints to choose an educational trajectory, this freedom does create inequality. In this example, good personal and structural guidance is necessary so that students choose based on their talents and interests, and not because of their fear to be discriminated against.

Therefore, if policy makers and school principals want to address cultural and institutional discrimination, it is important to be fully aware of how ethnic minority and majority students are affected by educational policies and institutional practices. This process of critical reflection is best carried out in interaction with different stake holders. This is necessary to step out of one’s own frame of reference and for members of the ethnic majority, to become aware of their own privileges. ‘Whiteness’ is so omnipresent in education and wider society, that it is difficult to realize that this is a reality, not the reality (Gillborn, 2008). In Flanders, a local platform for discussion, called ‘lokaal overlegplatform’ supports the implementation of equal opportunity policies in primary and secondary education. It is a platform with a local character that brings together

principals, parents, student representatives, teacher representatives and socio-cultural organizations. Such a platform is ideal to reflect critically about potential influences of institutional and cultural discrimination. In addition to the different stakeholders, it would be interesting to add researchers to these panels as well. Academic research can disclose processes, which can support or contradict the intuitive feelings of some of the other stakeholders.

Second, teachers should act as reflective practitioners. Reflective practitioners question their pedagogical practices and taken-for-granted beliefs, and strive for doing the right thing, instead of doing things right (Urban, Vandebroek, Lazzari, Peeters, & van Laere, 2011, pp. 23-24). This approach could help teachers to question their own ethnocentrism. Many well-meaning teachers act in a discriminatory way, because they interpret ethnic minority students' behavior and culture from their own point of view. Hence, instead of blaming well-meaning teachers, it is much more constructive to guide them in how their behavior can challenge ethnic inequality instead of maintaining ethnic inequality. One technique to do this is video stimulating recall (Schepens, Aelterman, & Van Keer, 2007). Teachers are being recorded when teaching and afterwards they sit together with a coach and reflect about their taught processes during teaching. It can help to disclose certain unconscious forms of ethnic discrimination.

The third key word is intercultural competencies. First, intercultural competencies must be an integrated part of the teacher training (Roose, Pulinx, & Van Avermaet, 2014). Student teachers have to meet different pedagogic and didactic competencies to become a teacher, and intercultural competencies should become an essential part of this. It should not be approached as a technical competency (e.g., teach in standard Dutch), but as part of becoming a professional with various skills. The context of the classroom can change quickly, so teacher-training is not about learning ready-made solutions, but about becoming a teacher

with an open-mind and reflexive attitudes, who starts from the talents of the students, not their deficits. A student teacher, who does not treat their students in a respectful way, will not become a teacher. Hence, a student teacher, who does not approach multiculturalism in a respectful way, should not become a teacher either.

Second, teachers should be supported to develop the best possible intercultural competencies. Teaching to students with a different ethnic background than one's own can be challenging, for example, how do you approach students who speak a different language? In Flanders, many teachers are convinced that it is in the best interest of the student to forbid to speak another language than Dutch (Agirdag, 2009; Extra & de Ruiter, 2001; Sierens, 2006). However, research shows that allowing multilingualism can have a positive influence on students' achievement and students' sense of school belonging and multilingualism is an economic asset (Agirdag, 2014; Van Der Wildt, Van Avermaet, & Van Houtte, 2013). Hence, teachers have to be supported to do what is in the best interest of the child, but also how to apply multilingualism in the daily practice of the classroom. That is why life-long learning trajectories are very important. Teachers should be assisted with workshops, leaflets with interesting tips and tricks or a magazine to learn about the latest research findings.

Third, ethnic minority and ethnic majority students should be taught intercultural competencies. Ethnic diversity is the social reality, so it is important that adolescents develop into open-minded citizens who respect one another. Every adolescent benefits from developing intercultural competencies. Hence, this must be part of every curriculum, not only in ethnic concentration schools (Agirdag, Merry, & Van Houtte, 2014). Furthermore, the Belgian ethnicity is part of this ethnic diversity. Ethnic majority students have to become aware that they have an ethnicity. All frames of reference, cultural values, history should be up for

reflection and discussion. For example, if students only focus on the historical and cultural background of the immigrant students in school during one special project week, and during the rest of the school year, the whole curriculum is approached from the ethnic Belgian point-of-view, this contributes towards ethnocentric worldviews. Furthermore, ethnic Belgian students will not become aware that they also have an ethnicity, since this kind of multicultural education does not challenge them to critically observe their own historical and cultural background.

*Educational equality demands serious efforts from different actors at different levels in society. I hope that the insights of this dissertation will contribute to this demanding process in a positive way.*

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## Appendix A

### 1. Items of Psychological Sense of School Membership scale (Goodenow 1993)

- (1) I feel like a real part of this school.
- (2) People here notice when I'm good at something.

- (3) It is hard for people like me to be accepted here. (*reversed*)
- (4) Other students in this school take my opinions seriously.
- (5) Most teachers at this school are interested in me.
- (6) Sometimes I feel as if I don't belong here. (*reversed*)
- (7) There's at least one adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.
- (8) People at this school are friendly to me.
- (9) Teachers here are not interested in people like me. (*reversed*)
- (10) I am included in lots of activities at this school.
- (11) I am treated with as much respect as other students.
- (12) I feel very different from most other students here. (*reversed*)
- (13) I can really be myself at this school.
- (14) The teachers here respect me.
- (15) People here know I can do good work.
- (16) I wish I were in a different school. (*reversed*)
- (17) I feel proud of belonging to this school.
- (18) Other students here like me the way I am.

## 2. Items of the School Delinquency Scale (inspired by Stewart 2003)

- (1) been late for school
- (2) skipped lessons
- (3) skipped school all day
- (4) cheated on tests

- (5) copied someone's homework
- (6) not done your homework
- (7) fought at school
- (8) stolen at school
- (9) committed vandalism at school
- (10) smoked at school
- (11) drunk alcohol during school hours
- (12) done drugs during school hours
- (13) talked back at teachers
- (14) broke the school rules
- (15) had to do impositions
- (16) been sent to detention
- (17) been suspended for one or more days

## Appendix B

Table 10.5. Abstract and concrete attitudes on average achievement score. Results of multilevel regression analysis- complete sample (*observations N = 1267, groups N = 19*)<sup>3</sup>

	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>
<i>Individual level</i>		
Ethnicity ( <i>ref: Belgian descent</i> )		-2.891*** (0.749)
Abstract attitudes		0.402 (0.222)
Concrete attitudes		1.080*** (0.254)
Gender ( <i>ref: male</i> )		2.893*** (0.437)
Prior academic attainment ( <i>ref: no past failure</i> )		-2.625*** (0.573)
Socio-economic status		0.667** (0.257)
Technical track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		1.475* (0.638)
Vocational track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		2.503** (0.817)
Ethnicity* Concrete attitudes		-1.039 <sup>†</sup> (0.565)
<i>School level</i>		
Ethnic school composition		0.991* (0.387)
Constant	0.002	-0.801 (0.519)
<i>Individual level variance</i>	59.013	54.072
<i>School level variance</i>	0.029	0.081

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001, <sup>†</sup>p=0.066

Table 10.6. Abstract and concrete attitudes on average achievement score. Results of multilevel regression analysis- students of Belgian descent (*observations N = 1093, groups N = 19*) and students of Turkish and Moroccan descent (*observations N = 174, groups N = 16*)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Only one school variable at a time was added to the model, because of the limited number of schools at the second level. Ethnic school composition is the only school variable that proved to relate significantly to year average.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 3 on school level variables.

	Student of Belgian descent		Students of Turkish and Moroccan descent	
	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>
<i>Individual level</i>				
Abstract attitudes		0.273 (0.255)		0.736 (0.485)
Concrete attitudes		1.116*** (0.259)		0.089 (0.552)
Gender ( <i>ref: male</i> )		2.823*** (0.469)		3.034* (1.251)
Prior academic attainment ( <i>ref: no past failure</i> )		-3.134*** (0.653)		-0.619 (1.210)
Socio-economic status		0.894** (0.282)		-0.847 (0.721)
Technical track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		1.737* (0.685)		0.598 (1.994)
Vocational track ( <i>ref: academic track</i> )		3.252*** (0.423)		1.263 (2.060)
Second generation ( <i>ref: First generation</i> )		-		1.253 (1.818)
Third generation ( <i>ref: First generation</i> )		-		0.735 (1.940)
<i>School level</i>				
Ethnic school composition		0.884* (0.432)		1.686 (1.036)
Constant	0.326	-1.016	-2.008	-6.393
<i>Individual level variance</i>	58.762	53.955	56.927	55.227
<i>School level variance</i>	0.046	0.082	0.283	0.373

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001