# DIVERSE SCHOOLS, DIVERSE CITIZENS?

Teaching and learning citizenship in schools with varying student populations

Işıl Sincer

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**Colophon**

The research presented in this dissertation was supported by a grant from the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO), grant number 411-12-035.

ISBN: 978-94-6416-550-0
Print: Ridderprint | www.ridderprint.nl
Cover design en lay-out: Publiss | www.publiss.nl

# Diverse Schools, Diverse Citizens?

## Teaching and learning citizenship in schools with varying student populations

Diverse scholen, diverse burgers?
Burgerschap onderwijzen en leren op scholen
met verschillende leerlingpopulaties

**Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de
Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam
op gezag van de
rector magnificus

Prof. dr. F.A. van der Duijn Schouten

en volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties.
De openbare verdediging zal plaatsvinden op

donderdag 20 mei 2021 om 13.00 uur

door

**Işıl Sincer**
geboren te Pazarcık, Turkije

**Erasmus University Rotterdam**

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# 1

# General Introduction

## Introduction

Imagine you are a 12-year old student; summer break is over, and you are ready for the first day of secondary education. While you are sitting in a crowded bus to get to school in the morning, you stare out of the window and you see busy city life unfolding in front of you. People are walking down the streets and are stuck in traffic jams, hurrying to get to their jobs. When you arrive at school, you stop and stand in front of the school building for a minute. The building looks even bigger than the first time you visited the school, and you are not surprised that it houses over 1000 students. The school provides different levels of education, and you start 7th grade in a class for pre-university education. As you enter the building and walk down the hallways to find your classroom you notice from the outward appearances that the students in this school seem to have all kinds of cultural backgrounds. Based on clothing styles and gadgets you reckon that there are students from both wealthy and less wealthy families.

Now rewind the scene. Envision that just before the summer break you and your family have moved to the countryside. It is again your first school day, but this time you must cycle down country lanes to reach your school that is located at the borders of the province. You see a lot of other students on their bicycles. It is the closest school to your home, and it is also one of the few schools in the area. Therefore, many students from both surrounding small towns as well as the local area attend this school. Once you arrive at your secluded school you notice how small it is. The school exclusively provides pre-university education. Most students in school have a native background, which resembles the homogenous demographic characteristics of the region. You have heard previously that students' parents have all sorts of professions; from running an agricultural business to being in academia.

Above I have outlined two highly distinct school contexts, which are just exemplary of the many variations possible. Undeniably these contexts shape the circumstances under which education takes place. Regarding the social domain of learning, it is conceivable that students' interpretation of the meaning of relating to others and being part of a larger entity is based on the characteristics of the school setting.

While schools differ in their context and student population, in 2006 common legislation commenced, which applies to all Dutch schools and requires schools to contribute to students' societal functioning, i.e. citizenship (Dutch Ministry of

Education, Culture and Science, 2005). Broadly speaking citizenship refers to the ability and willingness to participate in and contribute to society (Dutch Educational Council, 2003, 2012; Eurydice, 2005). In most common notions the concept includes elements such as having civic knowledge, being able to think critically and to change perspectives, expressing one's opinion and allowing divergent voices, taking responsibility, showing solidarity within communities and having the capacity to endeavor for societal change (Banks, 2004; Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Geijsel et al., 2012; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007; Torney-Purta, 2002).

Given the common citizenship education law and the variety of schools, one may wonder what role the school context plays when it comes to preparing students for citizenship. As an example, think of the following situation. You have reached 9th grade in either of the two schools described above and somewhere in the second semester a virus called Covid-19 has started spreading rapidly across the globe, resulting in a pandemic. As a precautionary measure, stores and companies across the country have been closed and schools will also be closed soon. In the week prior to the closing of schools, the rapid developments incite a discussion on what the class could do to socially support each other during online education. You and your classmates additionally talk about how one could help others in the community. As yet another example, the discussion could be about emerging discrimination towards people with Chinese roots or the amplifying effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on economic and educational inequality. May these two specific school contexts, or any school context for that matter, shape the discussion on these and other society-related topics? Stated more broadly, are there certain opportunities and difficulties that specific school contexts could elicit concerning the development of competences that are needed to relate to and interact with others in society?

Throughout this thesis, school context alludes to the *social milieu* of the school (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2011) and encompasses structural (e.g. school size) and compositional characteristics (e.g. socioeconomic make-up of the student body) (Van Houtte, 2005). In this thesis several aspects of the school context are taken into consideration, but the main focus is on the ethnic school composition, i.e. the ethnic make-up of the student population. While students' personal networks may show different degrees of heterogeneity, schools - given their larger size - in many cases harbor a higher degree of diversity on several dimensions (Eidhof, 2019; Parker, 2005; Parker, 2006; Vermeij et al., 2009). That is, schools are large-scaled publicly accessible institutions, uniquely and massively reaching youngsters from all layers of society (Eidhof, 2018).

The implicit assumption regarding school composition is that students by definition encounter different perspectives and values in school (Keating & Benton, 2013; Parker, 2005). Although an ethnically diverse environment does not assure more diversity in perspectives and beliefs per se (Campbell, 2007; Moses & Chang, 2006), studies on the relationship between race and political and social outlooks do show differences in viewpoints along the lines of race (Chang, 2003; Kinder & Winter, 2001). These findings prudently suggest that the degree of ethnic school diversity could be used as an indicator of the presence of divergent student perspectives and ways of life in schools (cf. Campbell, 2007). A resulting question is, then, how meeting dissimilar others in school affects students' outcomes in the area of citizenship. Therefore, one of the main objectives of this thesis is to find out to what extent school compositional features are related to student outcomes in the citizenship domain.

Obviously, as physical spaces and learning environments, schools do not merely differ on contextual or structural features such as the make-up of the student body or the school location. Schools may also vary on factors such as the school climate, teaching and pedagogical approaches, educational vision, and so on. These are factors that are potentially adaptable (Marcoulides et al., 2005). It is crucial to take such factors into account, as they could bring about effects in learning outcomes independent of or in interaction with school contextual characteristics. For example, an open classroom climate, in which teachers spur students to openly voice and discuss contrasting ideas (Campbell 2008; Torney-Purta et al. 2001), has been shown to provide learning opportunities in the area of citizenship. Such open classrooms are positively linked to, for instance, students' sociopolitical efficacy (one's personal belief that one can bring about change in the sociopolitical domain) and civic knowledge (Fjeldstad & Mikkelsen, 2003; Godfrey & Grayman, 2014).

It may be the case that schools differ on such factors, depending on their student population, as schools and teachers may have (un)conscious views on their students' needs and capabilities (see e.g. Agirdag et al., 2013). Additionally, the way schools operate may affect the relationship between school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes. Therefore, next to school context and school composition, this thesis also focuses on school factors that may in itself influence learning outcomes in the area of citizenship, or that may be associated with school context and composition in their impact on citizenship(-related) outcomes.

## Theoretical framework

### The Dutch context and the citizenship education act

Dutch schools have become more (ethnically) diverse in the past decades. Although the Netherlands have a long tradition of immigration, especially the last six decades are marked by growing numbers of immigrants. Starting around the 1960s, increasing numbers of people with various (ethnic) backgrounds have been settling in the Netherlands due to several economic and societal developments. Among these are the arrival of so-called guest workers to reconstruct the Netherlands after the Second World War, family reunification of these former 'guest workers', migration from former Dutch colonies, refugees fleeing war and the emergence of new European Union member states. Currently, around a quarter of the Dutch population has a migration background (Statistics Netherlands, 2020), which refers to people who have at least one parent born abroad.

Most of the Dutch citizens with a migration background are concentrated in the four largest cities of the Netherlands (Statistics Netherlands, 2018), comprising over half of the population in some cases. Some of these large towns are therefore even known as 'majority-minority cities' (Crul, 2016), where the old majority (native Dutch) is no longer dominant; instead it has become one of the countless 'minority groups'. At the same time, Dutch schools show high degrees of segregation (Sykes & Kuyper, 2013), resulting in schools with high shares of migrant background students, especially in urban areas. The more rural regions are predominantly inhabited by a native Dutch population. It is within such a context, in schools as well as within society at large, that students are expected to be equipped for taking part in and contributing to public life.

While diversity has been steadily increasing in the last decades, especially after the turn of the century in the Netherlands and many countries alike, worries started to rise concerning the challenges of the increasing diversity in society. These worries include developments such as diminishing civic engagement and social cohesion and increasing individualization and discrimination (Dutch Education Council, 2003; Eurydice, 2017; Geijsel et al., 2012; Nelson & Kerr, 2006). In addition, alleged apathy towards societal issues and politics on the part of young people was also put forward as a societal concern (Lawy & Biesta, 2006; Tonge et al., 2012).

As a response to these concerns, citizenship education has been brought to life in many countries worldwide. In 2006 Dutch schools have been legally assigned the task to promote 'active citizenship and social integration' (Dutch Ministry of

Education, Culture and Science, 2005). Diversity in Dutch society plays a central role in the underpinnings of this legal task, as the pervasiveness of heterogeneity in society and the importance of the ability to handle it is addressed prominently and explicitly in the legislative text of the law.

## The notion of citizenship

Although the Dutch government stresses the notion of 'active citizenship and social integration' (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2005) it should be noted that citizenship is not a clear-cut concept. From a conceptual point of view, in general and formal terms, citizenship encompasses a legal status, marking membership of a delineated community, which is accompanied by certain rights and duties (Van Gunsteren, 1998). From a social and political perspective, the concept alludes to how members in a society organize living and ruling together (Van Gunsteren, 1998), and thus refers to the performance of a balancing act in the field of tension between either individual interests and the collective good or between the preferences of different groups of people (Eidhof, 2019). Concerning its actual contents, 'good citizenship' has been subject to ongoing debate, due to its normative character (cf. Eidhof et al., 2016; Osborne, 2000). Obviously, the notion of citizenship is time-bound, endemic and shaped within historical contexts. Approaches to citizenship are therefore also reflections of ideological and political spectra, such as communitarianism, republicanism (see e.g. Dagger, 2002; Eidhof et al., 2016) or, in the Dutch case, neo-liberalism, which highlights 'active citizenship' and 'individual responsibility' (Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010).

Apart from the debates on the meaning of citizenship, it should be additionally acknowledged that citizenship may not entail the same things for young people as it does for adults. Citizenship is not just an end goal for young people which is only completed once adulthood is reached (Biesta et al., 2009; Lawy & Biesta, 2006). Certainly, there are differences in the enactment of citizenship between young people and adults; for example, adults can vote while youth cannot. However, young people are at the same time already embedded in society through contexts and situations that they experience in their daily lives (Biesta et al., 2009; Lawy & Biesta, 2006; Ten Dam et al., 2011). Citizenship learning and practicing opportunities and activities therefore manifest themselves in settings where youngsters interact with others such as with peers, family, during online activities, small jobs, and, within school (Biesta et al., 2009; Lawy & Biesta, 2006). Thus, in their everyday life, youth move in their own communities and contexts, where they learn, participate and have specific social experiences that

reflect their daily life citizenship. When conceptualizing citizenship for younger generations it is therefore important to focus on competences needed for the future, but in ways that are also relevant and meaningful in their daily lives here and now (Eidhof et al., 2016). Hence, in this thesis, when I speak about youngsters' citizenship competences as an outcome variable, I refer to competences needed for *social tasks* that students perform on a daily basis, reflecting their abilities in moving adequately in the public sphere. Four types of social tasks have been identified in previous studies (Ten Dam et al., 2011; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007): acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences.

### Citizenship education (CE) – related school factors

Next to the notion of citizenship, some words are in place as regards the concept of citizenship education (CE). Teaching and learning in the area of citizenship can be achieved through miscellaneous school and teacher approaches, some of which may not be directly placed under the heading of 'CE'. To illustrate; citizenship can be taught and learned through separate CE subjects, formal programs and extracurricular activities organized by the school, but also through more implicit or informal practices (Dijkstra et al., 2010), such as creating an open classroom climate where students can discuss different viewpoints freely (Eurydice, 2012; Geboers et al., 2013; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). The importance of informal student learning and schools' informal practices in shaping students' citizenship outcomes has been underscored by several scholars (Biesta et al., 2009; Cleaver et al., 2006; Keating & Benton, 2013; Lundahl & Olson, 2013). According to Keating and Benton (2013), schools' informal role in learning about citizenship manifests itself in two ways; through students' socialization into the prevailing norms and values of the community and by providing the opportunity to get acquainted with diverse peers. In line with this, Lundahl and Olson (2013) refer to informal education by stating that democracy is promoted 'indirectly by disseminating certain values and ways of communicating'. In short, in this thesis, any school and teacher practices or processes, either formal or informal, that pertain to the conscious or unconscious promotion of students' citizenship competences are referred to as 'CE-related school factors' (for the sake of readability interchangeably denoted as 'school factors')

As stated, there are many school factors that can be considered to be related to or part of CE. In my examination, I focus on the following school factors spread across four studies: *teachers' context-related understandings and practices*

*concerning diversity* (study 1), *schools' diversity climate* (study 2), *schools' open classroom climate* (study 3) and *teacher support* (study 4). The latter two have been demonstrated to be positively related to citizenship(-related) outcomes (Eurydice, 2012; Geboers et al., 2013; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Wanders et al., 2020a; Wanders et al., 2020b). The fact that the former two factors both concentrate on themes related to diversity has to do with the assumption that the school composition is inseparably linked to the prominence of (the teaching of) dealing with diversity as part of citizenship education. The school composition may determine the relevance, urgency and way of focusing on (dealing with) diversity (cf. Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014). For instance, in more diverse schools, teachers have more chances to 'teach *about* diversity' by 'teaching *with* diversity'.

As said, I will scrutinize these CE-related school factors in several ways: how they are associated with the school context and student population, what their relationship is with citizenship(-related) outcomes, and how they explain or influence the relationship between school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes. Teaching students is quite challenging and in a more diverse student population or a homogeneous student body that includes a high share of non-native students, there may be extra challenges for teachers and schools (Van Tartwijk et al., 2009; Milner IV & Tenore, 2010). In such more diverse schools, teaching needs to address and navigate the various backgrounds and perspectives of students effectively. Because of these challenges, school and teacher practices may have more impact in diverse and potentially complex settings. This may mean that the student composition either directly influences teacher practices in the area of citizenship - which may in turn influence student outcomes - or that certain practices may strengthen or weaken the relationship between school composition and student competences in the area of citizenship.

## Examining the role of school composition in students' citizenship(-related) outcomes

Above I have outlined the general societal context and background that prompted legislation for schools to stimulate students' citizenship. In the two sections below, I will zoom in on (the relevance of investigating) the potential role of school composition and school factors in promoting citizenship(-related) outcomes.

Based on the principle of considering the school to be a microcosm and practice ground, the student population may, to different extents exert influence on the urgency, possibility and complexity of learning about citizenship. The more

diverse the small-scaled school society becomes, the more urgent, complex and also the more possible the practicing of particular citizenship competences could be, especially in terms of handling diversity and differences (cf. Dijkstra et al., 2015). In more heterogeneous schools, students may be confronted with all sorts of differences on a regular basis and this may require the competence to navigate the complex environment effectively and immediately. While being potentially complex, such an environment may simultaneously provide opportunities for practicing dealing with such complexity. That is, heterogeneous contexts give more chance to access novel information, divergent attitudes and a wider spectrum of behaviors, as the members comprising these contexts come from disparate networks (Cochran, 1990). By contrast, a homogenous school setting may increase bonding social capital, which goes hand in hand with solidarity and trust (Dijkstra et al., 2015; Putnam, 2000). Consequently, homogeneity in the school could potentially be associated with aspects of citizenship that are in the realm of consensus and unanimity, such as adhering to customs and conventions (Dijkstra et al., 2015). At the same time, such a context could hamper getting acquainted with dissimilar others. In short, the student composition may determine the degree to and way in which students are required to be school-citizens, here and now. Thus, investigating the relationship between school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes may expand our understanding of the degree to which the school composition may give room for, on the one hand, practicing for citizenship and, on the other hand performing citizenship. It is imperative to examine this relationship as students are not only getting prepared for being future citizens, but they are also already potentially fulfilling their citizen role in school (Biesta et al., 2009; Lawy & Biesta, 2006).

There is a paucity of knowledge on the impact of school composition on outcomes in the citizenship domain. The limitedly available research has mostly focused on the association between ethnic composition and aspects of diversity-related citizenship outcomes specifically, such as ethnic tolerance (e.g. Janmaat, 2012; Kokkonen et al., 2010) and ethnic discrimination (Bellmore et al., 2012; Closson et al., 2014). Overall, the conclusions regarding these outcomes show a divergent picture. Both positive, negative, curvilineair or non-existing relationships have been reported (e.g. Closson et al., 2014; Janmaat, 2015; Kurlaender & Yun, 2006; Vervoort et al., 2011). There are also indications that different phenomena occur simultaneously. In his study on the relationship between school composition on the one hand and degree of perceived conflict and friendship on the other, Goldsmith (2004) has demonstrated that where there is much opportunity for contact between different groups, friendship and conflict may be both fostered.

Two studies investigating other (Campbell, 2007) and more comprehensive (Dijkstra et al., 2015) aspects of citizenship, also demonstrate conflicting findings. Campbell (2007) evaluated the political aspects of citizenship and his study revealed a negative association between ethnic school diversity and political aspects, that is; the amount of political discussion in the classroom, future voting intentions and getting informed during elections. Dijkstra et al.'s study (2015) included an examination of the relationship between ethnic school diversity and citizenship competences in primary education, operationalized as knowledge, attitude, reflection and skills related to the aforementioned social tasks (acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing with conflicts, and dealing with differences (see Ten Dam et al., 2011). Their results indicated a positive relationship between ethnic school diversity and citizenship knowledge and citizenship reflection.

The limited availability of previous research in combination with mixed findings, makes it difficult to find patterns in the relationship between school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes. Moreover, as stated above, previous studies have conceptualized citizenship in rather confined ways, focusing mostly on diversity-related components. Additionally, in some studies these outcomes are not explicitly referred to as being part of citizenship outcomes. Most important, however, is the fact that the majority of studies have not investigated school factors that may play a role in the relationship between ethnic school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes.

### Examining the role of CE-related school factors in students' citizenship(-related) outcomes

Students learn from their interactions with peers, but student learning is unequivocally facilitated and impacted by teachers and their practices. Furthermore, students conversely influence classroom, teaching and school processes (Sykes & Kuyper, 2013). Hence, while the school composition may determine the dynamics and interactions between peers, the school composition also sets the conditions, constraints and possibilities under which schools deliver education. The question then rises which school factors are related to the acquisition of citizenship competences in schools varying by their student composition. School factors may explain or change the possible association between school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes. Insights into these school factors may unravel the mechanisms that play a role in the acquisition of citizenship(-related) competences.

It should be noted that Dutch schools enjoy a great deal of autonomy concerning the approach and organization of education. Based on the Dutch constitutional freedom of education, schools may employ a tailor-made approach, also regarding citizenship education. As long as schools develop a vision on citizenship and as long as their practices are in compliance with the values of the democratic state, schools may construct their own citizenship education (Dijkstra et al., 2015). That is, a general framework has been set up with core objectives and an efforts obligation, but other than that great latitude has been given to schools concerning the implementation and contents of citizenship education (Bron & Thijs, 2011). This means that schools may endeavor to adjust certain school factors in an attempt to change or optimize how school mechanisms function; in such a way that they are favorable for citizenship(-related) outcomes, and that they are in accordance with the needs of the student population. While the student body is rather steady, there are possibilities for schools to adapt teacher and school processes if necessary (Marcoulides et al., 2005).

At this point it should be mentioned that, at the time of writing, final preparations are made for the passing of a new citizenship education bill (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2019). The new legislation is aimed at detailing schools' citizenship task more clearly and, consequently, giving schools more guidance in executing their task. While still having the freedom of using a tailored approach, a common core applying to all schools has been developed. With this new law, schools are obliged to concentrate more specifically on instilling 'respect for and knowledge of the basic values of the democratic constitutional state' (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2019). Moreover, schools are expected to teach the 'social and societal competences that enable students to be part of and contribute to the pluriform, democratic Dutch society'. Moreover, schools have the task to act as role models and create a school culture that is in accordance with the basic values of a democratic society (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2019). While the research reported in this dissertation was conducted within the context of the current law, our findings may provide insights that could also be informative given the new bill.

Focusing on how schools operate, either in terms of practices geared towards citizenship or more informal processes that may influence citizenship, is relevant as uncovering relevant school factors contributes to a more complete picture of what is going on in schools. Only when we understand how schools operate - also considering the school composition - are we able to develop

educational policy that can provide schools the leads to steer the processes at school (Agirdag et al., 2012). In other words, if promoting or hindering processes can be pinpointed in the first place, as a next step necessary and useful tools could be provided to schools.

Differences between schools in terms of school practices and processes could be quite appropriate, as long as they are adjusted to the needs of the student population. A critical issue and concern, however, is that there is a risk of schools not fulfilling, or not being able to fulfil this task adequately. While the association between school composition and citizenship (education) remains underexposed, the effects of ethnic-cultural and socioeconomic school composition have received greater attention in cognitive and non-cognitive areas outside citizenship (see e.g. Perry & McConney, 2010; Rjosk et al., 2017). This attention stems from worries regarding the relationship between compositional characteristics and educational inequalities (Sykes & Kuyper, 2013). Although some incongruence exists between studies, there are studies available demonstrating an effect of student composition on educational outcomes. In these studies, students in schools with higher shares of low-SES students and in some cases larger proportions of migrant background students, show lower performance (see e.g. Agirdag et al., 2012; Dumay & Dupriez, 2008; Van der Slik et al., 2006) (also known as the achievement gap). What is just as worrying is that there are studies available indicating that characteristics of the student body are associated with school processes in a negative way. For example, studies have shown that the higher the proportion of students with a migrant and working-class background, the lower teachers' (teachability) expectations (Agirdag et al., 2013; Brault et al., 2014). It is crucial to detect in what way school factors-independently or in relation with the school composition – are associated with citizenship(-related) outcomes to prevent what is called a 'civic opportunity gap' (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). This gap refers to receiving less learning opportunities in the domain of citizenship, which has been reported especially for students in lower-SES school compositions, with lower educational levels and with a non-native background (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

## Aim of the thesis

To sum up, school composition, CE-related school factors and citizenship(-related) outcomes are the central concepts of this thesis. The main aim is to gain understanding of the extent to and way in which schools that vary in school composition may contribute to students' citizenship(-related) outcomes. More specifically, the objective is to identify school factors that may explain or change the relationship between the school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes. The results may help to develop school practices in the citizenship domain that are geared towards the needs of schools' student populations. To this end we addressed several research questions, which will be answered in the next chapters. In chapter 2 we try to answer the question 'what are teachers' context-related understandings and practices concerning dealing with diversity as part of citizenship education?' The research question that we attempt to answer in chapter 3 is: 'what is the relationship between degree of ethnic school diversity, school diversity climate and students' competences in dealing with differences?' In chapter 4 we address the question of whether ethnic school composition is related to the degree to which students feel at home in their school, and secondly, whether an open classroom climate influences the relationship between school composition and students' sense of school belonging. Finally, in chapter 5, we conclude with the following research question: 'what is the association between ethnic school diversity and students' citizenship competences and does perceived teacher support moderate this possible relationship?'

## Methods

The thesis consists of one qualitative and three quantitative studies. The data for both the qualitative and quantitative studies were collected as part of a joint large-scale research project between Erasmus University Rotterdam and University of Amsterdam. The project with the title 'Understanding the effect of schools on students' citizenship' (ESC) aims to explore how Dutch secondary education schools contribute to students' citizenship competences. The qualitative data were collected by means of case-studies in six schools across the Netherlands (Yin, 2003). The schools showed great variety in their school compositional and contextual characteristics, such as their degree of ethnic diversity, the school location and the provided level of education. Different staff members, including (home room) teachers, team leaders and school leaders were interviewed. Students took part in the study in the form of focus groups.

Additionally, classroom observations were part of the study. For the research presented in chapter 2, teacher interviews from three schools were used.

For the quantitative study, data were gathered among students, teachers, team leaders and school leaders in 81 schools across The Netherlands. The participating schools were included based on random sampling (n = 51) and, to reach enough power, by calling upon research team members' professional networks (n=30). A largely representative sample was obtained, within which schools showed variety to different extents on several school compositional and context factors, including degree of ethnic diversity, socio-economic make-up, educational level and the degree of urbanization of the school context. In each school, a contact person was asked to randomly select three 9$^{th}$ grade classes, approximately 15 teachers and 1 team leader. The school leader was also requested to take part in the study. Each of the participants filled out an online questionnaire; one for the staff and two for the students. The staff questionnaires contained items on school factors related to citizenship (education), relationships within schools and organizational matters. The student questionnaires included questions on school factors (questionnaire 1) and items on their citizenship competences (questionnaire 2). In total, over 5000 students took part in the study. For the aims of this thesis, only student and teacher data were used for the quantitative studies.

## Outline of the thesis

See figure 1 for a schematic overview of the thesis.

The study in **chapter 2** addresses the question: what are teachers' context-related understandings and practices concerning dealing with diversity as part of citizenship education? Earlier research showed that school context and student characteristics such as educational level and socioeconomic background are associated with the type of citizenship education that is offered (Ho, 2012; Osler, 2011; Goren & Yemini, 2017; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007; Wood, 2014). The aim of the qualitative study in this chapter is, firstly, to add to the literature by including the ethnic composition as a central variable and exploring how this compositional characteristic interacts with other contextual school factors (educational track, socioeconomic background and degree of urbanization). Secondly, as in the Dutch citizenship education law diversity in broader society and being able to deal with diversity is emphasized, in this study I zoom into this aspect within citizenship education. Since schools have the freedom to adapt

their citizenship education approaches to the needs of the student population, it is relevant to investigate whether how teachers understand diversity and how they include this in their teaching, differs according to the school context and student population.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the degree of ethnic school diversity, teachers' attention for diversity (i.e. the diversity climate) and whether both indicators are associated with students' competences to deal with differences. It is also investigated whether the diversity climate influences the relationship between school diversity and students' being able to deal with differences. Diversity climate is operationalized as the value that teachers collectively attach to educational goals in the domain of diversity on the one hand and their focus on diversity in their actual teaching on the other hand. The overall research question is: what is the relationship between degree of ethnic school diversity, school diversity climate and students' competences in dealing with differences? Next to the investigation of the direct relationship between the degree of school diversity and students' ability to deal with differences, we additionally explore the direct association between the school composition and the diversity climate, and in turn, between the diversity climate and the outcome variable dealing with differences. Moreover, we also look into whether the potential relationship between school composition and dealing with differences could be explained by the diversity climate (mediation). Lastly, we examine if the effect of the degree of ethnic school diversity on students' competences to deal with difference depends on the strength of the diversity climate (moderation).

In **chapter 4** the focus is shifted to an outcome that is related to but also more remote of citizenship. Here the relationship is investigated between ethnic school composition and the degree to which students feel at home in their school, i.e. their sense of school belonging. Additionally, a variable that has often been associated with the development of citizenship competences will be examined, namely an open classroom climate (Geboers et al., 2013), which is used to refer to a climate where students are enabled to voice and discuss conflicting perspectives, in free and respectful manners (Campbell 2008; Torney-Purta et al. 2001).

As an aspect of citizenship education, the role of open classroom climates in schools will be scrutinized through the following research question: does an open classroom climate influence the relationship between school composition and students' sense of school belonging? Feeling that one is part of something is

a basic human psychological need (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Deci & Ryan 2000). The significance of the need to belong can also be extended to the school context. I consider schools to be miniature versions of broader society (Eidhof, 2019), in which students learn what it means to be a member of a community. It could be argued that it is of paramount importance that students feel connected to this small-scaled society where they spend great parts of their day and practice their role as citizens.

**Chapter 5** reports on the association between ethnic school diversity and students' citizenship competences and the moderating role of the CE-related school factor perceived teacher support (as an indicator of the quality of teacher-student relationships). Citizenship competences are conceptualized and operationalized in terms of the social tasks *acting democratically*, *acting in a socially responsible manner*, *dealing with conflicts* and *dealing with differences* (see Ten Dam et al., 2011). Subsequently it will be analyzed whether feeling supported by teachers is associated with higher scores on citizenship competences. Furthermore, the aim is to examine whether the potential relationship between ethnic school diversity and citizenship competences is influenced by the levels of teacher support.

Finally, in **chapter 6** a summary of the main findings of all chapters will be presented and discussed. Moreover, I will reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the research. The chapter will also include suggestions for future studies and a consideration of the implications of the study for CE in the Netherlands. I hope to provide insights in school factors that are related to CE that are operable for schools to deploy in the advancement of CE and citizenship competences, according to the characteristics of the student population.

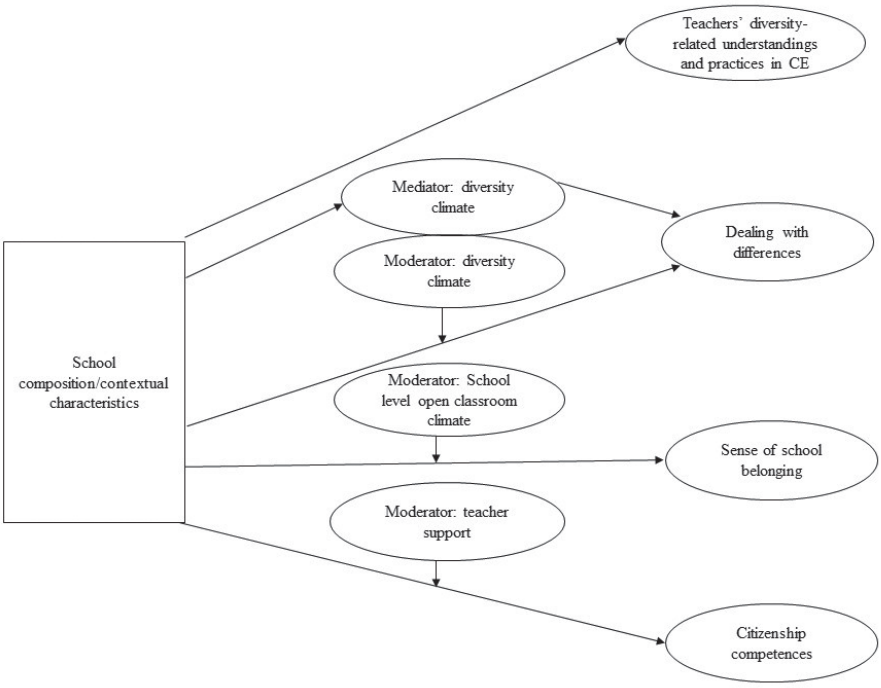


**Figure 1**. Schematic overview of the relationships between school composition, citizenship education (CE) – related school factors, and citizenship(-related) outcomes

# 2

# Teaching diversity in citizenship education: Context-related teacher understandings and practices

This chapter has been published as:

Sincer, I., Severiens, S., & Volman, M. (2019). Teaching diversity in citizenship education: Context-related teacher understandings and practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 78*, 183-192. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.11.015

## Abstract

Many secondary schools address diversity as an aspect of citizenship education. This paper examines how secondary teachers' understandings and practices concerning teaching about diversity are related to school contextual factors, such as student composition and educational track. Semi-structured interviews with 17 teachers at three schools reveal that teachers' understandings and practices regarding diversity are related to their perceptions of the needs and capabilities of their student population. However, teachers rarely addressed diversity in terms of deep-rooted issues, such as inequality and power relations. The paper concludes with implications for teachers and schools and provides suggestions for future research.

## Introduction

As in many European countries, the increased diversity in Dutch society has posed challenges regarding civic engagement and social cohesion (Dutch Education Council, 2003; Geijsel, Ledoux, Reumerman, & Ten Dam, 2012). Banting and Kymlicka (2013) observe that since the beginning of this century, The Netherlands has been characterized by a decline of multiculturalism policies in combination with a relatively strong emphasis on civic integration. Similarly, Vasta (2007) noted a move towards assimilation in the Netherlands, combined with a rhetoric of 'migrant responsibility'.

Within this context, the Dutch government introduced a law in 2006 that obliges schools to devote part of the curriculum to the promotion of citizenship skills. This call upon schools is aimed at social integration and preparing adolescents for active participation in and contribution to society (Dutch Ministry of Education and Science, 2005). Similar laws have been introduced in other European countries (Eurydice, 2005, 2012).

One of the aspects of Dutch schools' statutory citizenship education (CE) task is teaching students to deal with diversity. While CE is prescribed by law and general goals for schools are provided, Dutch schools are afforded the freedom concerning the content and implementation of CE and the attention given to diversity. Given this freedom, and the observation of declining support for multiculturalism in the Netherlands on the one hand and the need for students to learn to navigate an increasingly culturally diverse world on the other, a question is how schools actually approach teaching their students to deal with diversity as part of CE.

Literature suggests that, in answering this question, school contextual features should be taken into account, as teachers' classroom practices and attitudes towards their students are shaped by and embedded in that context (e.g., Stevens, 2007; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). Considering Dutch schools' autonomy, various approaches of teaching citizenship and diversity in particular can be expected depending on the school context. Teachers are influential actors in schools, as they put the formal curriculum and the pedagogical vision of the school into practice (Leenders & Veugelers, 2009). Therefore this study focuses on teachers; it explores how school context, in particular student composition, is intertwined with secondary teachers' CE understandings and practices related to diversity.

## Review of literature

Various conceptions of citizenship and of CE can be found in the literature (e.g., Haste, 2004; Osler, 2011). In light of the increasing diversity in many countries worldwide, this paper is based on the viewpoint that citizenship concerns finding a balance between unity and diversity within nation-states (Banks, 2004). This balance entails the opportunity to feel connected to one's own cultural background while simultaneously having a sense of affiliation with the nation-state. To promote a sense of inclusion and affiliation and to support the development of participatory citizens, the intended overarching civic culture needs to be (re)constructed with the contribution of all groups in society. This means that voices and experiences of people with diverse backgrounds should be reflected in the values of the nation-state (Banks, 2004, 2008).

Diversity on national levels may also offer young people the opportunity to develop sensitivity to global issues. Hayes and Saul's (2012) interpretation of Banks' (2004) view on global identification is that "the global seems to be infused into the national identification through immigration and immigrants bringing their different national/cultural affiliations and identifications with them into their new national home" (p. 208). Following this interpretation, diversity within the nation-state could potentially also serve as a catalyst for developing understanding of globalization and its associated issues, such as inequality and oppression by political and economic superpowers.

To address such issues, citizenship education should be transformative (Banks, 2017). Transformative CE aims for the development of citizens who critically reflect on societal issues. An additional aim is shaping citizens who are engaged in action to provoke change and achieve values that may also cross national borders, like social justice and equity. In sum, CE should aim at broadening students' world views, promoting their critical thinking, and contributing to their capacity to navigate an increasingly culturally diverse world.

However, research has shown that different types of CE are offered to different groups of students. Several studies showed that educational track or students' socio-economic background affected the scale of citizenship approaches (local, national, European, and global scale) (e.g. Osler, 2011). Ho (2012) demonstrated that Singapore explicitly differentiates the citizenship curriculum depending on the educational level. That is, students in the higher tracks have access to cosmopolitan CE and students in the lower tracks are allocated citizenship roles on a more national and local level. These findings were echoed in studies focusing

on students' socio-economic background. Wood (2014) found that lower socio-economic school communities adopted local/community-focused citizenship orientations and participation. In contrast, both students and teachers from higher socio-economic urban schools put more emphasis on global issues. Goren and Yemini (2017) reported comparable findings, demonstrating that teachers' perceptions of the relevance and definition of global citizenship education (GCE) are influenced by students' socio-economic background. Ten Dam and Volmand (2003, 2007) found that different CE goals were aimed for based on the students' educational track: *surviving* in society for students in pre-vocational education vs. *critical thinking* and *contributing to society* in the higher tracks.

In short, research has shown that CE approaches are often context-related and linked to students' socio-economic backgrounds and educational tracks. In the current study, the aim is to extend this line of research by, firstly, focusing on the ethnic-cultural student composition in interaction with contextual school factors (degree of urbanization and educational track) and, secondly, by focusing more specifically on the teaching of diversity. The research suggests that teachers' perceptions of their students may shape what kind of diversity-related CE content they offer. Whereas most previous studies examined separate contextual and compositional characteristics, our study aims to add to the literature by examining whether several contextual and student background characteristics are at play simultaneously and interactively. Moreover, although the influence of the school context has been studied widely in relation to general CE approaches, our study focuses specifically on the school contextual embeddedness of diversity as part of CE. Our research question is: what are teachers' context-related understandings and practices on dealing with diversity as part of CE? To answer this question, the following sub-questions are formulated:

- What are teachers' general CE understandings and practices?
- What are teachers' perceptions of their students in the area of citizenship and diversity?
- What kind of diversity-related activities are offered?

## Educational context of the study

The Netherlands has a tracked educational system in which three main types of tracks can be distinguished: pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO). Additionally, pre-vocational education (VMBO) consists of four sectors that

students can choose for: a) technology b) health and personal care and welfare, c) economics and d) agriculture. Four learning tracks are offered within each of these sectors: the basic vocational track, the advanced vocational track, the combined track and the theoretical track. Students' placement within the tracks is predominantly based on a primary school final examination score and the school's recommendation in the final year of primary education (Driessen, 2006).

Students with a migrant background have been (and are still) lagging behind their native Dutch peers in secondary education, as reflected in the overrepresentation of students with a migrant background in the vocational tracks (Statistics Netherlands, 2016b). However, the gap has become somewhat smaller in the past years and the average educational level of young people with a migrant background has slightly improved (Huijnk & Andriessen, 2016). Differences in educational position are further mainly related to socioeconomic factors.

Concerning teachers, it should be mentioned that the share of teaching staff with an ethnic minority background in secondary education is remarkably low (Driessen, 2015; Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2015). Approximately 5% of the education staff in secondary education consists of employees with a non-Western migrant background, part of which are not teachers. This implies that there is a high level of incongruence between teachers' and students' ethnic-cultural background. Considering the substantial segregation in Dutch schools (Sykes & Kuyper, 2013), this incongruence may especially hold in urban areas with high concentrations of students with a migrant background. Furthermore, the Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI) report published by the European Commission (PPMI, 2017) and Severiens, Wolff and Van Herpen's study (2013) suggests that Dutch teachers are only prepared for diversity in teacher education in a limited way. That is, there are no structural, integral and nationwide policy goals for diversity-related teacher education.

## Methods

### Respondents

Semi-structured interviews were held with 17 teachers from three state-funded Dutch high schools. Given our research goal, we aimed at maximizing differences between schools regarding their contextual characteristics. Therefore three schools were approached that varied by their ethnic-cultural and socio-economic composition, educational track, and regional context.

School A is located in a rural area, comprising predominately native-Dutch students and offering vocational education (VMBO). School B is based in a large city, comprising a culturally diverse student population and providing education in all tracks ( from VMBO to VWO). Lastly, school C is located in a large city, encompassing a relatively mixed student population (in comparison to school A, but less mixed in comparison to school B). This school provides senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO).



The schools were asked to select five or six teachers who were willing to participate in our study. The vast majority of the respondents in all three schools had a native Dutch ethnic background. Table 1 provides an overview of other teacher characteristics.

**Table 1.** Teacher characteristics

| School | Teacher | Sex | Teaching subject | Homeroom teacher | Years of teaching in the school |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | A1 | Male | Social Studies, Economy, History | Yes | 2.5 |
| A | A2 | Female | Health Care & Social Work | Yes | 10.5 |
| A | A3 | Male | History, Geography and Social studies | Yes | 25 |
| A | A4 | Male | Care, Mathematics, Technics | Yes | 10 |
| A | A5 | Male | Social Studies | No | 16.5 |
| B | B1 | Male | Chemistry | Yes | 8 |
| B | B2 | Female | French | Yes | 13 |
| B | B3 | Male | Social Studies | Yes | 9 |
| B | B4 | Female | Social Studies | Yes | 3.5 |
| B | B5 | Female | Mathematics | No | 5.5 |
| B | B6 | Male | Mathematics and Biology | Yes | 12 |
| B | B7 | Female | German | Yes | 8 |
| C | C1 | Female | Social Studies | Yes | 14.5 |
| C | C2 | Male | Social Studies | No | 18 |
| C | C3 | Male | Theory of Knowledge, Philosophy, History | No | 10 |
| C | C4 | Male | Artistic and cultural education | Yes | 8.5 |
| C | C5 | Male | German | Yes | 17.5 |

## Data collection

Two interviewers, one of whom was the first author, conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers of civic education and other ninth-grade teachers (of students aged 14-15). This grade was chosen because at this age, youngsters explore their identity and gradually start thinking about societal issues (Berk, 2014). The interviewers spent three to four days at each school, spread out over a period of three weeks. In the first week, a one-day scan was carried out to get a first impression of the school and to get to know the environment. During this scan, interviews were held with two or three teachers. In the third week, some teachers were interviewed for a second time and a few new teachers were included for a first interview. Interviews were held with individual teachers. Depending on teachers' schedules, in some cases two teachers were interviewed at the same time. We allowed teachers to express themselves freely and articulate anything about their understandings or practices associated with CE. The topics addressed during the interviews that were analyzed are listed below:

Research question 1:

- Teachers' general CE approaches/understandings
- Teachers' educational goals
- Aims and practices of homeroom teachers regarding social skills

Research question 2:

- Differences between students (cognitive, language-related, ethnic-cultural, socioeconomic, related to residential area, gender-related, and other differences)
- The challenges and opportunities that a certain student population presents in teaching in general or in relation to citizenship education
- Students' current citizenship/social competences

Research question 3:

- Deploying the student population as a tool for citizenship education
- Diversity-related citizenship education within the curriculum, e.g., programs, projects
- Discussing controversial/socially sensitive issues in the classroom

### Analysis

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by student assistants. To do justice to the complexity of possible interacting dimensions, we chose to apply an open-ended approach. However, the citizenship conceptualizations mentioned in the literature review were used as sensitizing concepts, which were supplemented and refined based on our inductive approach.

The analysis started with reading over transcripts globally and then reading them line by line. The analysis proceeded with a two-stage process of coding (Esterberg, 2002); during the phase of open coding we used the sensitizing concepts to look for and identify key themes and categories that emerged from the data. After reading and coding a significant number of transcripts, patterns appeared as the themes and categories recurred in various transcripts. In the second phase, focused coding took place. This meant a more detailed analysis was conducted of the key themes in which the smaller text segments were grouped into larger segments. The qualitative data software ATLAS.ti 7 was used to code the data and facilitate the data analysis. The coding and selection of quotes was carried out by the first author. The second and third authors provided feedback on the coding and interpretation of the selected quotes.

## Findings

Below, for each school we describe a) teachers' general CE understandings and practices, b) teachers' perceptions of their students' characteristics, capabilities, and needs in the area of citizenship and diversity and c) what kind of diversity-related activities are offered. Each school portrait commences with a description of the school local context and the structural and compositional school characteristics.

### School A

School A is located in a town in a small municipality in the southern part of the Netherlands. The town has around 700 predominantly native Dutch inhabitants and the area is characterized by a relatively great dependence on the agricultural sector. A vast majority of School A students have an ethnically Dutch background. Most students do not reside in the small town where the school is located, but are inhabitants of the municipality (12.000 inhabitants). A large fraction of the students' parents work in agriculture or the vocational sector. The school

comprises approximately 350 students and offers pre-vocational education for senior stage students (grades 9 and 10). The students are placed in either the basic vocational track, advanced vocational track, or a merged theoretical/combined track. Lessons take place in classrooms and 'open learning centers' where real-life workplaces are simulated (e.g., a nursing home). The school is Catholic but students with any religious belief are welcomed. Lastly, it is worth noting that at the time of the interviews, an asylum seekers center had recently opened close to the town, housing approximately 800 refugees.

### *Teachers' general CE understandings and practices*

Teachers mainly approached CE from two perspectives, which we labelled as a vocational focus and a social focus. Concerning the first perspective, School A teachers indicated being highly engaged with preparing their students for their further education, the labor market, and adulthood. This suggests that teachers had a broad perception of CE. The emphasis appeared to be on the acquisition of practical and career skills and fostering self-reliance. The homeroom teachers regularly mentioned that they are charged with career guidance, in which they let students practice skills needed during internships and in their future jobs. For example, receiving guests (primarily for students in the Health Care and Social Work sector), preparing for a job interview, and having an appropriate job attitude.

The second perspective is reflected in teachers' many references to social goals and perspectives, whereas political content in CE was mentioned sporadically. Two main aspects of the social domain emerged when teachers were asked how they wished their students to be equipped when leaving school. Firstly, homeroom teachers emphasized intrapersonal skills, such as independence, emotion regulation, knowing one's own competences, and reflecting on one's own functioning. Additionally, interpersonal skills were brought up by almost all teachers, e.g., collaboration skills, presentation skills, taking responsibility, and communication skills. Teachers also referred to skills leading to favorable classroom climate and peer relations, such as good manners and adhering to teacher rules. Goals and perspectives on a more political and societal level were relatively more often expressed by social studies teachers. Among these goals were developing well-informed opinions on societal issues from a multidimensional perspective and critical thinking in relation to the world one is living in. One of the teachers stated attaching importance to political topics such as knowledge of the state system and the working of democracy.

### *Teachers' perceptions of their students in the area of citizenship and diversity*

Regarding teachers' perceptions of their students, School A teachers predominantly mentioned students' local focus, their assumed career path, and students' attitudes towards diversity. Moreover, teachers appeared to adopt an intersectional perspective when talking about their perceptions. Firstly, while School A teachers aimed for CE on a variety of scales ( from local to international), the residential context appears to present a challenge for achieving this goal. The low population density and agricultural characteristics of the area seemed to result in a quite local focus of students. This local focus related to students' future career perspectives and their current and future positioning in society. Some teachers indicated that many of the male students (who are more likely than girls to choose the technical education sector) choose a technical/agricultural career. This career path suggests that many students stay in the area. Female students tend to choose the Health Care and Social Work sector more often. Although it was not mentioned explicitly, teachers' responses implied that female students remained in the local area as well.

In relation to students dealing with ethnic/cultural diversity, many of the teachers, especially those teaching social studies, referred to the homogeneous ethnic make-up of the student population and region. Consequently, this resulted in low levels of familiarity with diversity. Teacher A5's response illustrates how gender, educational track and sector intersect with respect to attitudes towards diversity:

> But what stands out most, I think, is the ethnic-cultural part, whereby . . . open-mindedness, tolerance towards people with a different background is very limited. And that varies; in a technology class it's less nuanced than in a health and personal care and welfare class. And I think, in any case, it has to do with differences between boys and girls. Boys are a little less nuanced than girls in that respect. You also see that as the [educational] level increases, so to say, in a theoretical combined group ethnic groups are discussed in more nuanced ways and in a basic vocational or advanced vocational group it is less nuanced.

### *CE activities in the area of diversity*

According to the teachers, students experience ethnic/cultural and regional diversity mainly through three school-initiated CE activities: 1) social studies, 2)

class outings to Dutch cities and European trips and 3) discussing the news in the classroom. Below, these three types of activities are discussed and related to student background factors.

Teachers stated that during social studies classes, diversity-related topics such as the Dutch multicultural society are addressed. The teachers varied in the importance they attached to familiarity with ethnic/cultural and regional diversity, but they also varied in the type of diversity-related knowledge and skills they wished their students to acquire. Teacher A1 held multiple views regarding diversity, which tied in with his views on the characteristics and needs of his students. On one hand, he approached diversity mainly in terms of mitigating the local focus of the students, taking into consideration their assumed future education and residence in the local area. On the other hand, students' regional focus was at the same time a reason for this teacher not to concentrate excessively on teaching about ethnic/cultural diversity. This is in line with a statement of another teacher (A2), demonstrating teachers' local focus and the extent to which attention is paid to urban life: "They visit the city occasionally. But to say that we are engaged with it; no, not me, at least."

Teacher A3 put more emphasis on direct exposure to the noticeable elements of multicultural society, which is somewhat compatible with an exoticizing approach. He felt that pupils should learn about multicultural society by:

> Every now and then showing them things; driving them to [nearby city] to a more ethnically diverse school in senior secondary vocational education. By talking about soccer players that are not 100% Dutch. . . .What I always mockingly present is Dutch salad, Belgian fries, and Middle Eastern kebab, from Egypt or other countries.

In addition to his consideration of multicultural society, this teacher also appeared considerate of the socio-economic and local reality of his students. In fact, the teacher utilized the prominence of local agriculture to elevate his students' sense of pride and self-esteem. The teacher stated that even in this school the term "silly farmers" occasionally occurs, and he mentioned that he tries to negate this image by emphasizing the idea of the Dutch agricultural sector as a profitable sector with high standards of animal welfare.

Lastly, we asked teacher A5 about the relevance of open-mindedness towards diversity given the ethnically homogenous environment of his students:

> And I believe it is too easy to say: they won't progress any further than this, so they do not need to be tolerant. . . . Because here also . . . an asylum seekers center is established. You could do two things: you could either condemn it. . . .That is the easy one and you hear that a lot, but I think that we should counterpose that: why do people come here? And the fact that you are from another country, does that make you less of a human or could you also just participate and be part of society? . . . . They [asylum seekers] could also end up in your village, so you are going to give them a wide berth?

Teacher A5 explained that one of the ways in which he discusses diversity-related topics is by linking current migration to similar migration patterns in Dutch history.

As mentioned above, European trips and class outings are the second type of activity offered in the area of diversity. CE aims on a global scale are evident through charity events organized every now and then for the benefit of developing countries worldwide. However, School A students get the opportunity to familiarize themselves with cultural and regional diversity more directly by participating in European exchange trips, albeit occasionally. Teachers additionally indicated organizing local outings, such as trips to a college in the neighboring city or more distant urban areas for the purpose of promoting familiarity with diversity. These local trips are again mostly approached from a future education perspective as one of the teachers explained that encountering diversity is aimed at "subsiding the shock" when students go to senior secondary vocational education. Hence, the local, rural, and non-diverse context of the students invokes a considerate and 'protective' attitude in some teachers.

Finally, School A teachers stated that they discuss controversial issues related to the Dutch multicultural society and other worldwide news events with students during classes. One of the teachers (A2) explained that, even though students are often not that involved in societal issues, she addresses these issues by asking students how they would act in certain situations. Other teachers pointed out the occasionally stereotypical utterances of students when discussing societal issues. These usually seemed to occur while discussing topics related to diversity/multicultural society. Furthermore, at the time of the opening of

the asylum seekers center, the school organized an informational meeting to discuss its impact. Similar to teacher A3, teacher A1 expressed that stereotypical statements were noticeable during these discussions. However, the teacher also stated that his students are quite flexible and are able to abandon these viewpoints as time passes and as they become more informed on the subject.

### School B

School B is based in a large and diverse city. More specifically, the school is located in a district with a higher share of low educated and low-income households compared to the city average. School B has approximately 1600 students divided into six so-called 'section schools'. At School B, students are predominantly from families with a Surinamese, Antillean, Ghanaian (or other African) background. The remaining share consists mainly of students from Dutch, Turkish, and Moroccan origin. According to the teachers, approximately 70% of their students reside in the district and the other 30% come from areas adjacent to the city. These latter ones are areas with high(er)-income households. Some of School B's structural features are its education founded on the middle school concept and the opening and closing of each class in a circular seating arrangement. Another focal point of School B is the broad curriculum, which offers sports, music, and other creative and cultural subjects. The school includes all educational tracks, distributed over the six section schools. Based on the middle-school principle, students are placed in educationally heterogeneous classrooms in the first two years of secondary education (grades 7 and 8), that is, all education tracks are mixed for most school subjects. Although all education levels are offered, students from the pre-vocational track are overrepresented (around 70%) within the school.

#### *Teachers' general CE understandings and practices*

Like School A teachers, School B teachers tended to focus mostly on the social domain rather than on the political domain in CE. Secondly, the teachers regularly referred to the school's urban environment when talking about CE. On a national, local, or community level the social domain mainly involves participation in charity-affiliated events. Furthermore, the teachers indicated that they attach importance to the development of certain values, virtues, and character qualities that are beneficial for students' daily interactions with others. These goals include the enhancement of good manners, listening to others and showing respect. Teachers also emphasized the importance of forming and stating one's own opinion freely and critically, and displaying positive attitudes towards differences.

Additionally, many teachers referred to the circular seating arrangement in classes, which supposedly stimulates direct interaction among different students, whereby teachers draw a parallel with diversity in society. Teachers also indicated that the seating arrangement promotes the development of cooperation skills, and values such as equality and openness towards others. Moreover, School B teachers frequently alluded to the diverse, urban environment in which their students are growing up. This diversity and urban perspective is reflected in the CE understandings of some of the teachers. Teacher B5 stated the following when asked what she would like her students to gain from school:

> I believe they should have learned that there are other solutions than the street solutions they often know; to conflicts, to difficult situations, also to situations that actually are not conflicts. To issues they are not in agreement with or of which they feel there is injustice. I feel it is very important that we [teach] children a way . . . that we let them practice with situations in which they find their own way, but also let them learn what is effective, that is what I would really want.

### *Teachers' perceptions of their students in the area of citizenship and diversity*

In the evaluation of their students' citizenship and diversity-related functioning, School B teachers underlined their students' local focus within urbanity, family backgrounds, and social capabilities. In relation to the first focus, a few teachers talked about the local orientation of the students residing in the southeast part of the city (approximately 70%), within the context of a highly urbanized area. Teacher B3's response illustrates this local orientation:

> I think the aspect . . . national and international level [of citizenship], is less accessible for the majority [of students] at our school. Because they indeed, as I said, they know their world [as]
>
> Interviewer: they are [inhabitants of the city]?
>
> Teacher: No, they are inhabitants of South-East. [name of district]-people. That is really a difference. And the ones [students] coming from outside South-East are a bit more aware of that.

In line with the above, teacher B3 additionally indicated that his students experience citizenship more on a school-level:

> I think you should be aware of the fact that the atmosphere at school is to a large extent very positive. That is due to a form of citizenship, but citizenship especially in a small environment. Outside that environment, to them it is actually, because for a large part . . . it is not always that fun. To them, I think, this, the school is their safe environment and perhaps therefore they [act] more consciously to keep a nice atmosphere.

Regarding the second focus, teachers regularly referred to students' home resources when discussing preparing students for society. In these cases, teachers generally assumed a compensating role. The following quote by teacher B4 serves as an example:

> What you just said [referring to teacher B3's response] that as a teacher, you are also partly an educator. Well, in this environment where the school is located . . . it is even more so the case. You see, we are teachers first and foremost, but many of the students who enroll in this school just have a more difficult home situation and many single-parent families, for whom you are actually a supportive figure.

Lastly, teachers referred to students' (diversity-related) social capabilities. They explained that students from different backgrounds interact well with each other. Even when students do not mix outside of class, they do seem to appreciate and learn from the in-school diversity. Moreover, as stated earlier, School B puts much emphasis on the development of students' social skills in a more broad sense. Teacher B6 indicated that their students' social skills makes them stand out:

> Look . . . the feedback we receive, also from these children, when they go to senior secondary vocational education, higher vocational education or university - because there are these feedback moments - . . . What we always hear is: School B children stand out. We can immediately pick them out. Because they can get socially along with anyone, dare to stand in front of a classroom, give a presentation, express their opinion, with good arguments.

### *CE activities in the area of diversity*

Teachers in School B mainly described two types of diversity-related CE activities: discussing the news and opportunities to deploy the diverse student population. It simultaneously seemed that preparing students for a diverse society is not a conscious focus within CE, as some teachers remarked that the diverse society is already reflected in the student composition. Instead, some teachers focus more on "eradicating students' blinkers" and trying to show that "this is not the whole world. And that this is not all of the Netherlands, and that the Netherlands is more than, the borders of the subway."

Additionally, School B teachers indicated that controversial issues are discussed during social studies classes, but also to some extent during Dutch classes where the news is addressed to develop students' vocabulary (*Nieuwsbegrip*) (Centre for Educational Services, 2011). One of the teachers (B4) mentioned that every now and then conflicting perspectives emerge. She stated that it is important to point out the issues in those cases and to demonstrate multiple perspectives. The teacher also showed awareness of her intermittent normativity in teaching:

> Just by naming that this is a difficult topic and why one can differ in opinion and make both sides heard. Sometimes that is a bit more difficult. . . but then . . . I try to just at least show both sides, and be unprejudiced, but with my view on reality. Yes, you try to do that unprejudiced but sometimes you can't help but influence it.

Teacher B3 added that he believes that some topics, such as sexual preferences, are easier to discuss with these students than students in, for example, a strict Protestant Christian school.

When it comes to the deployment of the diversity of the student population, several teachers seemed to hold multiple perspectives. On one hand, teachers thought that the obviousness of their diverse population makes it unnecessary to actively act upon it or utilize it. Yet, they also recognized that this diversity can facilitate teaching practices surrounding citizenship and diversity-related topics. One of the social studies teachers (B3) stated that he uses his students' background characteristics incidentally for teaching purposes:

> I have never avoided anything. I am also not always going to name it, every time like: yes, "you as a Surinamese", or "you as a Ghanaian". I get a bit tired of that. Then I'd rather view someone as a person and not just

> always directly look at where someone is from. But it is convenient, when you are discussing different religions, to have some randomness every now and then, that's nice, [like asking] different people. . ."yes, you tell us something."

Teacher B5 explained how, in her view, the school is somewhat avoidant in addressing their student population:

> The multiculturality, it's actually, we don't address it, but it is evidently, it is like that. And you learn by doing that people have different views on all kinds of things and one would say: you could deploy it [diversity] much more. But we don't do it. Perhaps also a little because it is rather, before you know it, you'll end up having a discussion that you don't want. It also is a bit of avoidance behavior what we are showing, I think.

### School C

School C is a bilingual (English and Dutch) school for senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO) in a large and diverse city. Both educational tracks are almost equally represented within the school. In this school, English is the main language of instruction for approximately 70% of the classes. The student population of School C can be considered ethnically diverse or mixed since 30-35% of the students have a migrant background. Also in comparison with School A, the make-up of the student body is relatively diverse. The diversity of the city is not fully reflected within the school: students from School C are mainly from high-income families. Accordingly, the school charges a relatively high school fee to cover some of the (bilingual) education costs. For efficiency reasons, in the 10$^{th}$ grade, students from another location (called 'regular department', where teaching is fully in Dutch) affiliated with the bilingual school, are transferred to School C and distributed among the classes. The students of the regular department mainly have a migrant background, which alters the make-up of the student body of School C.

#### *Teachers' general CE understandings and practices*

In School C two main themes emerged in teachers' statements regarding CE: world citizenship and, similar to Schools A and B, a focus on the social domain of citizenship. The statements of some teachers suggest that, overall, School C is internationally oriented. With respect to CE, one teacher (C4) explained how the aim to create world citizens is reflected in school:

> And I also think, the multiple languages, English is also a thing which . . . yes, we are more engaged with making them [students] world citizens actually. World citizenship and Chinese, Spanish, and English, and it evidently also encompasses a lot of culture. . . Finally, in the senior classes it is supposed to all merge in the social traineeship obviously. . .Yes, I think this school is highly engaged with making them [students] world citizens.

However, none of the teachers explained exactly what constitutes 'world citizenship' in their view. On a national and community level, students participate in activities for non-profit organizations and charities as part of the school's 'Community and Service' program.

Teachers' responses additionally pointed to a principal orientation towards the social domain of citizenship at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, and societal level. The teachers referred to, for example, developing life wisdom, entering society and continuing education in a mature manner, interacting with others, benefitting others in society, learning about other cultures and being unprejudiced. Some teachers also mentioned the opportunity for students to participate in political institution simulations, such as 'Model United Nations' and 'Model European Parliament'.

### *Teachers' perceptions of their students in the area of citizenship and diversity*

Teachers expressed that although group formation along ethnic lines is somewhat visible in school, in general, interaction between students is positive. Nonetheless, one teacher (C3) critically evaluated school policy for eliciting segregation between students from different backgrounds:

> What I regret . . . is that in the first year of secondary school, children are grouped according to postal code. . . It is a difficult step for primary school children to enter into secondary education. In this way they can cycle [to school] together. But amongst others it has the effect of always having four VWO-classes of which three are from the North and one from the South. That means that also segregation is induced right from the start. Because you have one 'black' [colored] class and three 'white' classes. And I regret that.

Concerning diversity-related attitudes and knowledge, some of the teachers indicated that challenging classroom discussions can take place every now and then due to students' seemingly unbalanced statements concerning controversial international issues. In view of diversity closer to home, teacher (C2) emphasized his students' expertise: "We discuss all these things and especially when it concerns a subject such as pluralistic society, those kids are highly knowledgeable, because they are firmly rooted in it, so to speak. So they understand that quite well."

### *CE activities in the area of diversity*

School C teachers described three types of CE activities in the area of diversity: long- and short-distance trips, discussing the news (similar to Schools A and B), and the utilization of the diverse student population (similar to School B). As for the first type of activity, the students have several opportunities to participate in international trips, e.g., exchange trips to China and Germany. Furthermore, an international traineeship of 40 hours is a compulsory part of the curriculum. Romania, India, South Africa, and Japan are among the available destinations. Two teachers referred to the generally affluent backgrounds of their students and argued that it is important for their students to be aware of their privileged position. This awareness is fostered by exposing students to poverty across the globe. In that sense, students' boundaries are expanded as they witness other people's lives internationally. Consequently, feelings of compassion may be elicited. Teachers underscored how students upon return from poverty areas are affected and overwhelmed by what they observed. Students get the chance to put things in perspective and realize their own purchasing power. Notwithstanding, none of the teachers stated that this event subsequently elicited discussions in the classroom on societal and/or political issues and change, such as the root causes of poverty or inequality. Furthermore, one of the teachers (C3) drew attention to the elitist character of these school trips, explaining that not all students' parents can afford these trips, which also stresses class differences.

In relation to the second diversity-related activity, many of the (homeroom) teachers indicated that news, current affairs, and diversity-related topics are discussed in class. One of the civic education teachers (C2) explained that he occasionally avoids certain discussions in class. One reason is that international controversial issues are not always part of the formal curriculum. Secondly, the teacher referred to the complexities of particular subjects and the resulting difficult discussions. Another teacher (C3) stated that he questions certain

sensitive topics and challenges his students by contradicting their statements. In this way he attempts to foster students' ability to change perspectives. He also admitted being normative in his teaching when students express viewpoints that are unacceptable in his view.



Pertaining to utilization of the student population in teaching practices, one homeroom teacher (C4) explained that during homeroom classes, personal backgrounds in terms of ethnicity/culture are discussed. This homeroom teacher indicated that students are invited to discuss whether they personally experience friction within the school, following worldwide issues. Teacher C3 articulated his wish for more deployment of the student population concerning CE:

> I am also a teacher coach here. So you are sitting in a social studies class and the class is full of children and the whole lesson is about multicultural society, while, it [multicultural society] is just sitting in front of you. It's just sitting in front of you. Have the kids discuss it together.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, secondary education teachers' context-related understandings and practices regarding teaching diversity as part of citizenship education (CE) were examined. The results show that teachers' practices more so than their understandings concerning teaching diversity, are indeed context-related. Overall, the results indicate that diversity and teaching students to deal with diversity had different meanings in different contexts. This varied between cosmopolitan orientations and familiarizing students with different living styles in their own direct environment. Teachers' practices, and to some extent their understandings, were connected to their perceptions of the needs and capabilities of their students. These perceptions were influenced by several features, such as students' cultural and socioeconomic background, the degree of urbanization of the school location, and the educational tracks offered. Moreover, the findings indicate that there is an interplay between these contextual characteristics.

In School A, 'diversity' seemed to mean looking beyond the boundaries of the rural/agricultural context and becoming familiar with life in big cities and with Dutch multicultural society. Additionally, in their teaching, teachers tried to take students' backgrounds into account; e.g. they introduced their students to

diversity in somewhat careful and protective ways. The teachers also took into consideration students' local focus by adopting a local focus in their teaching themselves. Moreover, through discussing news events and migration, teachers aimed to foster tolerance and reduce prejudice.

Comparable to School A, School B teachers were committed to broadening their students' societal views and implicitly or explicitly referred to characteristics of the student population when explaining how they approached this. They talked about how they endeavor to broaden their students' local focus, but in this school 'local' refers to the realities of living in an urban area and to the (socio-economic) family backgrounds of their students. In this school, teaching diversity seemed to imply equipping students with social skills to interact with the 'other', rather than just meeting the 'other'. In line with this, the variety of student backgrounds at times served as a resource for facilitating discussions on diversity-related topics.

In School C, in addition to preparing students for participation in Dutch society, and making them aware of Europe as an international context for citizenship, teachers referred to citizenship orientations on a cross-continental level. More specifically, in this school, teaching diversity seemed to entail educating world citizens. In explaining the school's focus on world citizenship, all teachers mentioned the importance of students coming into contact with other cultures through the international trips, however they emphasized different aspects. The social studies teachers expressed the emergence of students' feelings of compassion and connectedness to the communities in the areas they visited. Other teachers spoke more in terms of helping students to put their own lives into perspective given their privileged positions.

Our findings are partially consistent with general context-related CE approaches. Different citizenship scales (local, national, European, and global) were discernible among the aims across all teachers (Osler, 2011). However in practice, global citizenship activities were offered more frequently at School C. This is in line with literature on differentiated citizenship practices according to socioeconomic background (Wood, 2014) and educational level (Ho, 2012), as School C is more affluent compared to Schools A and B and offers bilingual education at the pre-university level. Furthermore, the distinction between educating for adulthood versus educating for citizenship in relation to educational track (Ten Dam & Volman, 2003, 2007) can also be partly confirmed in this study. School C teachers' aim of developing world citizenship appears

to comply more with the notion of educating for citizenship (compared to the adulthood focus of School A, marked by their vocational orientation). School B teachers' CE understandings and practices did not clearly match aspects of either one of the conceptualizations. A more prominent feature of school B teachers is their aim to educate socially skilled students. The different ways in which the teachers of school C explained their focus on world citizenship seems to reflect Weenink's (2008) Bourdieu-based distinction between 'pragmatic cosmopolitanism' and 'dedicated cosmopolitanism': an instrumental attitude in the sense of acquiring cosmopolitan capital for future advantages, such as job opportunities and study, versus an internalized orientation towards the world, characterized by flexibility and openness to other cultures (Weenink, 2007). More generally, in a future study, it would be worth theorizing and exploring the relationship between the type of CE and diversity education offered and schools' contextual and compositional characteristics more deeply, using Bourdieu's framework (1986).

Although the aim was to present three distinct school and teacher portraits in relation to their unique contextual characteristics, the data also show more general patterns across the three schools. A first notable general observation is that the transformative CE conceptualization (Banks, 2017) was hardly reflected in teachers' responses. In all three schools diversity-related issues were discussed in the classrooms. However, these discussions did not necessarily seem to be intended to yield 'change-minded' students.

Secondly, when asked about their citizenship aims, the majority of teachers in this study stressed the importance of the social domain (e.g., listening to opinions of others, dealing with diversity, behaving appropriately in various situations), rather than emphasizing a more political domain (e.g., future intention to vote, political interest). Our findings are remarkable in view of Geboers, Geijsel, Admiraal, and Ten Dam's review study (2013), which showed that researchers study the political domain in relation to CE effects more frequently than the social aspects. Hence, our results may have uncovered a discrepancy between theory (the focus of researchers) and practice (the focus of teachers). Interestingly, our findings are consistent with research on civic education in several countries (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Alviar-Martin & Baildon, 2016; Leung & Yuen, 2012), showing a depoliticized approach to civic education. This approach implies a focus on developing social skills and creating harmony.

A third common response pattern is teachers' positive appraisal of and uncritical attitude towards diversity. In all three schools, multicultural Dutch society was considered a given and teachers' statements indicated that CE was geared towards preparing students for participation in a diverse society. Diversity-related activities that teachers mentioned were also alike to some extent. Two of the common activities that stand out are 1) class outings and trips on a local, national, and international level and 2) discussing controversial issues and news events during classes. The content of these discussions and the associated skills fit the core objectives of CE, namely dealing with diversity, taking different perspectives and reducing prejudice (Bron, 2006). In fact, returning to our research question, our study suggests that teachers' diversity-related CE practices show similarity to some extent, yet they are also largely context-related. Teachers offered miscellaneous practices tailored to their perception of their students' background characteristics and capabilities. By contrast, context-relatedness is less obvious in teachers' diversity-related CE understandings: teachers evaluated diversity in similar, positive ways and they hardly expressed clear visions on dealing with diversity that go beyond what can be considered as subcomponents of the concept, such as promoting tolerance and diminishing prejudice.

A number of potential limitations and suggestions for future research should be considered. First, although teachers have a pivotal role in schools, we are aware that taking the perspectives of other actors into account, such as the students themselves and the school leader would create a more complete picture of daily practices and understandings in schools. The perspectives of school leaders may uncover whole-school policies and visions, which in turn may influence teachers' CE understandings and daily practices. Moreover, it is important to have students' voices heard as they may have different perceptions of the teaching they receive.

Secondly, the schools included in this study were not selected randomly and we did not conduct interviews with the majority of teachers in the schools. Therefore our study does not allow for generalizations. However, rather than generalizing, our purpose was to show examples of the contextual embeddedness of teachers' diversity-related CE understandings and practices. Nonetheless, for generalization purposes we recommend that future studies adopt a mixed-method or quantitative approach with larger sample sizes. If teachers align their CE practices to the alleged needs and capabilities of the student populations, this may affect students' citizenship outcomes. We suggest future quantitative studies to investigate whether the school composition influences the way

teachers and schools deliver CE. In turn, it should be examined whether possible differentiated understandings and practices are associated with students' citizenship outcomes.



Our findings have implications for teachers and school management teams. We propose that actors within schools enter into a dialogue and reflect carefully on their views regarding diversity-related CE and how they wish to translate these views into practice. Our study shows that the school composition and other contextual characteristics are salient factors for general and diversity-related CE, as teachers frequently referred to the needs and capabilities of their student population. However, teachers in our study rarely mentioned rooted and institutionalized diversity-related questions in society such as (reproduction of) inequality and power relations in relation to the characteristics of their student population. Teachers displayed positive attitudes towards diversity and addressed diversity in their teaching practices, which is in accordance with the core objectives of CE in the Netherlands (Bron, 2006). Notwithstanding, it is also important to address the challenging aspects of a diverse society and student population, and the more deeply rooted issues mentioned above. This is needed in order to prevent superficial diversity approaches, as these may facilitate feelings of exclusion for students of diverse backgrounds. Therefore we suggest school actors to also address more fundamental social issues and deliberate on their diversity-related CE views and practices.

When it comes to the observed overall lack of a critical stance in teachers' diversity-related CE understandings several explanations are possible. It is conceivable that it is illustrative of a struggle. That is, teachers may find it complicated to find a balance between unity and diversity, a difficulty which is also debated in relation to citizenship and CE conceptualizations (Kiwan, 2008; Parker, 1997, 2001). Due to the sensitivity of the subject, teachers may experience difficulties and discomfort in addressing diversity that goes beyond meeting the 'other', promoting tolerance and perspective-taking. Teachers may therefore display a more 'uncritical' stance. This uncritical stance fits into the earlier stated observation of depoliticization of civic education (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Alviar-Martin & Baildon, 2016; Leung & Yuen, 2012). Our findings demonstrate that, next to CE in general, depoliticization is also visible in the aspect of teaching diversity. Teachers could be more inclined to, perhaps unconsciously, depoliticize their diversity teaching endeavors, in order to maintain harmony in their classroom. Integrating politics in the discussion of diversity-related issues may excite conflict and controversy in the classroom, situations which

some teachers in our study wished to avoid. This finding is in line with a small-scale qualitative Dutch study by Radstake and Leeman (2010), showing that a majority of teachers experienced deficiencies in their professional competences to guide discussions on diversity in diverse classes. With the depoliticization of diversity-related issues, it is not possible to take a transformative CE approach, as raising deeply rooted and institutionalized issues concerning diversity is utterly political and a prerequisite for counteracting societal issues.

In sum, our findings show that teachers' general and diversity-related CE conceptualizations are indeed influenced by their students' educational level, ethnic-cultural background, socioeconomic position as well as their rural versus urban location. Additionally, the data show that the various contextual factors interact, which adds to existing research, as most prior studies examined separate compositional or contextual characteristics. Furthermore, our study contributes to knowledge about CE and diversity education by its unique focus on the school contextual embeddedness of diversity as part of CE.

On the one hand, The Netherlands forms a unique case to study in the European context given its clear reduction in multiculturalism policies, compared to other European countries (Banting & Kymlicka, 2013). On the other hand, there is a common trend among the general public across Europe of growing negative attitudes towards diversity and stronger support for right-wing parties. Our research suggests that, also in light of the rise of negative diversity attitudes, the teaching of diversity and citizenship education should become more interlinked. Moreover, within this climate, it is important that teachers develop a nuanced and critical stance regarding diversity in relation to the specific context of their school. This suggestion also has implications for (teacher) education and policies in the Netherlands and across the rest of Europe, as responsibility for the development of nuanced diversity stances cannot be solely assigned to individual teachers. Policy measures that aim to incorporate diversity themes in teacher education in a structural and integral way, could support teachers in developing their understandings and practices related to diversity.

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# 3

# The relationship between ethnic school composition, school diversity climate and students' competences in dealing with differences

This chapter has been published as:

Sincer, I., Volman, M., Van der Veen, I., & Severiens, S. (2020). The relationship between ethnic school composition, school diversity climate and students' competences in dealing with differences. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1846508

## Abstract

In societies that are characterized by diversity, citizens are required to have the competences to handle differences. Schools differ in their degree of ethnic diversity which means that they provide different contexts for learning to deal with differences (DD). This study investigated the association between ethnic school composition, the diversity climate (the importance that teachers collectively attach to diversity and the attention they pay to teaching diversity) and students' competences in DD. Multilevel analyses were performed on data from 4,402 students and 535 teachers across 62 secondary education schools in The Netherlands. The results showed a positive relationship between ethnic school diversity and DD-reflection and DD-attitudes. In addition, the degree of ethnic school diversity was associated with more diversity-related practices. However, no relationship was found between ethnic school diversity and teachers' diversity-related educational goals. Moreover, diversity climate was not related to students' DD competences. Lastly, the diversity climate did not mediate nor moderate the relationship between school composition and DD. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

## Introduction

A cohesive society calls for citizens who, at the very least, have knowledge and understanding of different backgrounds and diversity (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2005; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). But perhaps more importantly, citizens need to possess openness to society and the diversity present in it (Berlet et al., 2008). It follows that in diverse societies where fertile grounds for tension exist, being able to *deal with differences* (DD) is a key competence (Ten Dam & Volman, 2007).



For younger generations, the teaching of DD competences is partly entrusted to schools as a part of promoting citizenship competences, which is a legal task assigned to schools in many European countries (Eurydice, 2012). However, although schools have the same assignment, each school operates within a particular, unique context requiring school-specific approaches to citizenship education (Eidhof, 2019). In terms of student backgrounds, for example, the compositional contexts of schools may demand different DD competences and offer different opportunities and constraints for 'practicing' such competences. In this study, we explore whether the make-up of the student population matters for students' DD competences. More specifically, we examine whether there is a relationship between *ethnic school diversity* and students' DD competences.

Next to our interest in the direct relationship between school diversity and DD competences, a second aim is to examine school practices that may explain the relationship between school composition and DD. Previous research has demonstrated that schools and teachers act upon the student population they serve, in other words: school compositional characteristics and school processes are related (e.g. Agirdag, 2018; Brault et al., 2014; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). Thus, the association between school composition and DD competences may not be a given, as school processes and practices may influence this relationship.

In line with this, the current study focuses on schools' *diversity climate,* as a designation of possible relevant school practices. Within the school context, diversity climate could be interpreted as the (possibly various) ways in which teachers and students in a school understand diversity and deal with it. Part of this is the importance that teachers collectively attach to and the attention they pay to teaching diversity and dealing with differences, which is the focus of this article. In short, the objective of this study is to explore the association among school composition, school diversity climate and DD.

### Competences for dealing with differences (DD)

It is argued that in diverse, democratic societies, youngsters should acknowledge diversity and acquire the competences to deal with dissimilar others (see e.g. Dutch Ministry of Education and Science, 2005; Schuitema et al., 2008; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007; Ten Dam et al., 2011; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). This includes attitudes and values such as showing tolerance, respect and valuing diversity. Although such social attitudes can be considered to be self-contained concepts, they can also be viewed as important aspects of citizenship. For example, the promotion of tolerance is repeatedly emphasized in the literature as being one of the aims of citizenship education (see e.g. Eurydice, 2012). However, it can be argued that for the co-existence with dissimilar others in society a broader conceptualization than these social attitudes is needed. In this reasoning, we follow the conceptualization by Ten Dam et al. (2011), who propose that for young people, citizenship manifests itself in daily social tasks, one of which is dealing with differences (DD). The competence to deal with differences is further subdivided into the knowledge, attitude, skills and reflection component (Ten Dam et al., 2011; Rychen & Salganik, 2003). As citizens, young people need to have knowledge and understanding of societal issues, have a democratic attitude, show the ability to act effectively in a particular situation or setting and think critically about societal matters. When applied to DD, a young person, for example, would have to know what tolerance means, be willing to learn about differences between people, have the skills to act tolerant in a particular situation, and think critically about why people are intolerant and how this may affect social and societal relationships. In short, being able to deal with differences refers to a comprehensive social competence that includes several components that are imperative for an active and critical participation in and contribution to society (Ten Dam et al., 2011). See Table 1 (and Ten Dam et al., 2011) for a more elaborate description of DD.

**Table 1.** Definition of dealing with differences based on the particular components

| COMPONENTS / SOCIAL TASK | **Knowledge** knowing, understanding, insight<br>A young person with such knowledge… | **Attitudes** thoughts, desires, willingness<br>A young person with such attitudes… | **Skills** estimate of what one can do<br>A young person with such skills… | **Reflection** contemplation of topics<br>A young person with such reflection… |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dealing with differences**<br>Handling of social, cultural, religious, and outward differences. | . . . is familiar with cultural differences, has knowledge of rules of behaviour in different social situations, knows when one can speak of prejudice or discrimination. | . . . has a desire to learn other people's opinions and lifestyles, has a positive attitude towards differences. | . . . can adequately function in unfamiliar social situations, adjust to the desires or habits of others. | . . . thinks about the nature and consequences of the differences between people and cultural backgrounds for behaviour and processes of inclusion and exclusion. |

*Note.* This is one part of a larger table taken from Ten Dam et al. (2011) on citizenship competences (see their publication for the full table)

## The school as a practice ground for dealing with differences (DD)

Schools are public institutions where young people are usually surrounded by more diversity compared to their personal networks in their private lives (Eidhof, 2019; Parker, 2005; Vermeij et al., 2009). This physical proximity between people ('propinquity'; Blau, 1977; Graham et al., 2013) leads to higher chances of getting into contact. As such, the school may carry the potential to serve as a practice ground or a mini-society (Eidhof, 2019), where young people, to a greater or lesser extent, meet others with varying cultural and social backgrounds, lifestyles and perspectives (Parker, 2005).

In more diverse schools, students may not only have more opportunities to practice with diversity for the future, they are also already at present required to have the capacity to handle differences inside the school, more so than in non-diverse schools. In contrast, students in ethnically homogenous schools may have less sources to practice with differences and become familiar with diversity. In sum, students are embedded in different compositional contexts, creating potentially different conditions and opportunities for dealing with differences.

## School composition and DD

Earlier studies on the link between school or classroom composition and (concepts related to) DD have predominantly paid attention to outcomes related to attitudes, such as ethnic (in)tolerance (Janmaat, 2012; Keating & Benton, 2013; Kokkonen et al., 2010), inclusive, multicultural, interethnic and outgroup attitudes (Bubritzki et al., 2018; Janmaat, 2014; Janmaat, 2015; Van Geel & Vedder, 2010; Vervoort et al., 2011), ethnocentric prejudice (Dejaeghere et al., 2012), ethnic discrimination (Bellmore et al., 2012; Closson et al., 2014), and comfort working with people from different backgrounds (Kurlaender & Yun, 2006). One study with a somewhat broader scope is that of Carter (2010), who examined the relationship between ethnic composition and students' cultural flexibility. Taken together, the aforementioned studies show varied results, revealing either positive (Bubritzki et al., 2018; Closson et al., 2014; Dejeaghere et al., 2012; Janmaat, 2012; Janmaat, 2014; Kokkonen et al., 2010; Van Geel & Vedder, 2010), negative (Vervoort et al., 2011), curvilineair (Bellmore et al., 2012; Kurlaender & Yun, 2006), or non-relationships (Bubritzki et al., 2018; Carter, 2010; Closson et al., 2014; Dejeaghere et al., 2012; Janmaat, 2012; Janmaat, 2015; Keating & Benton, 2013; Kokkonen et al., 2010) between school composition and the outcome variable.

It is difficult to reach firm conclusions due to the multitude of school composition measures, outcome measures and methods utilized. Moreover, the addressed outcomes are narrower than the broad concept of dealing with differences that we are interested in. Lastly, in most of these studies there is hardly any attention to possible underlying mechanisms. This may in fact be an additional explanation for the mixed picture emerging from prior studies. Processes taking place in schools may have an influence on how and why school composition relates to DD (-related concepts), and therefore such school processes should be taken into account. In brief, our first objective is to add to the literature by examining the link between school ethnic diversity and the competence of dealing with differences, with a primary focus on the ethnic/cultural dimension (Ten Dam et al., 2011).

## School composition and schools' diversity climate

When explaining how the school composition relates to processes within the school, the teaching or pedagogical context seems relevant to consider. Teachers and schools can, consciously or unconsciously, react to or employ the characteristics of the student population in their teaching practices and beliefs

(e.g. Agirdag, 2018; Brault et al., 2014). It is important to gain more insight in such school and teacher factors as the student composition is primarily a given, while teacher and school practices can potentially be adjusted (Marcoulides et al., 2005).

One such malleable and relevant factor is the school's diversity climate. In a previous qualitative study, we focused on two aspects of the diversity climate in a school: 1) teachers' diversity-related understandings; 2) teachers' practices (in addressing diversity as an educational goal) (Sincer et al., 2019). Elaborating on this with a quantitative approach, in the current study, we focus on the diversity-related educational goals and practices of teachers in a school.



When it comes to dealing with diversity, different ideological approaches exist (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010). Commonly, a distinction is made between colour-blind, multicultural or cultural pluralistic and assimilationist approaches (Celeste et al., 2019; Civitillo et al., 2017; Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Schachner, 2019). Leaving aside the exact meaning of these conceptualizations, it can be stated that the most substantial division between the notions is the degree to which emphasis is placed on ethnic-cultural differences regarding the aim of reducing prejudice and fostering prosperity of all groups in society; varying from a focus on similarities (with the risk of colour-blindness) to a focus on attention for ethnic-cultural differences (multicultural approach). The emphasis on differences is translated to the educational context by the implementation of what is called 'multicultural education' (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010). Banks' (1993) framework is most commonly known, however, several conceptualizations and practices exist concerning multicultural education and no clear consensus has been reached on the concept (Banks, 1993; Bennett, 2001; Zirkel, 2008). In the present paper, the self-designated term 'diversity climate' is used to refer to the degree to which teachers provide a supportive climate for learning about and handling diversity. That is, a climate in which students get acquainted with cultural diversity, where diversity is regarded to be a resource, where equality is fostered and a climate in which prejudice and discrimination are countered (Civitillo et al., 2017; Schachner, 2019).

The question is whether the make-up of the student body is associated with how teachers approach diversity. In more diverse schools teachers may hold the belief that less attention to and practice for diversity is needed due to the assumption that students are already familiar with diversity. Oppositely reasoned, teachers may think that students should be taught to handle differences, precisely because

students encounter differences daily within school. In a similar vein, in less or non-diverse schools, on the one hand, teachers may pay explicit attention to diversity, as students have less opportunities to come in contact with and gain understandings of dealing with differences. On the other hand, a focus on diversity may appear less urgent and relevant to teachers in these schools as students are facing less occasions where they must deal with different views and backgrounds.

Available literature on how the compositional context of the school is related to the school's diversity climate is limited. Related to the topic of teachers' diversity practices, Flemish research suggests that the more diverse schools are, the more multicultural educational practices teachers implement (Agirdag et al., 2016; Vervaet et al., 2018b). To our knowledge, in the Dutch context only two studies in this area are available. Our own small-scaled qualitative study research has shown that teachers' diversity-related teaching practices are related to the school context; not so much in terms of amount of attention for diversity but in the sense that practices are tailored to the alleged needs of students (Sincer et al., 2019). Diversity-related understandings were less influenced by the school's contextual features (Sincer et al., 2019). The only Dutch study that we know of with a quantitative design is a study by Verkuyten and Thijs (2002). In their study, according to the pupils, in classrooms where the share of students with a Turkish or Moroccan background was higher, more multicultural education took place, whereas in classes with more Dutch students they perceived the opposite. In the view of teachers, there was no relationship between the make-up of the student body and multicultural education. The scarcity of research in this area warrants the need for more research. Therefore, the second objective of our study is to investigate the association between school composition and teachers' diversity-related goals and practices.

### Schools' diversity climate and students' DD competences

Students differ in their citizenship competences and although student level factors explain most of the variance in citizenship outcomes, schools play a role in these differences as well (Dijkstra et al., 2015; Geboers et al., 2013; Isac et al., 2014; Munniksma et al., 2017). However, when it comes to the broad concept of DD there is a lack of knowledge on effective school practices. Rather, previous studies, again, predominantly focused on students' racial/ethnic attitudes as an outcome variable, such as racial stereotyping and ethnic prejudice (Aboud et al. 2012; Bigler, 1999; Vervaet et al., 2018a), inter-ethnic attitudes (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013), and interpersonal relationships (Aboud et al., 2012; Zirkel,

2008). These studies all address the effectiveness of some form of education on multiculturalism/diversity, ranging from more structural forms of multicultural education (e.g. Vervaet et al., 2018a, 2018b) to short-term interventions programmes. Review studies show a mixed picture (Bigler, 1999; Aboud et al., 2012), with a trend toward a positive impact on students' attitudes and/or intergroup relations (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013; Zirkel, 2008).



It is assumed that education about other cultures develops children's knowledge and understanding of different cultures, positively influencing their out-group attitudes (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2013). When children receive new information that defies stereotypes and thus learn about the outgroup, negative out-group attitudes may be adjusted (Pettigrew, 1998). Moreover, multicultural education sets norms about treating others in an anti-discriminatory way (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2013). In a similar vein, Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) showed that increased knowledge, reduced anxiety and enhanced empathy and perspective taking is the principle that underlies the effect of contact on prejudice reduction.

Applying the abovementioned principles to the current study, we expect that the importance attached to diversity by teachers and the actual teaching of diversity, which we designate as the diversity climate, may possibly contribute to students gaining understanding of (knowledge), thinking about (reflection), being positive about (attitude) and having the skills to act upon differences. Following, the third objective of our study is to explore whether there is an association between the diversity climate and students' DD competences.

### School diversity climate as a mediator or moderator

Next to examining the three associations explained above (school composition → DD, school composition → school diversity climate and, lastly, school diversity climate → DD) our additional aim is to gain understanding of the possible role of the diversity climate as a mediator or moderator. Given the contradictory hypotheses on the direct relationship between school composition and DD, we would also have contrasting expectations regarding the mediating effect of the diversity climate. On the one hand, the more diverse schools are, the less strong the diversity climate may be and consequently, the less competent students are in DD. On the other hand, the more diverse schools are, the stronger the diversity climate that teachers create, and in turn, the more competent students are in DD.

It is also possible that the diversity climate operates as a moderator and changes the strength of the association between school diversity and DD. As the study is explorative, several hypotheses are possible, revealing either an enhancing or buffering effect. For example, a strong diversity climate could reinforce a positive effect of school diversity on DD because of the higher relevance in such a context (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014). In contrast, a stronger diversity climate could buffer the positive relationship between the degree of school diversity and DD; students in native homogenous schools are more likely to have less encounters and familiarity with students from different backgrounds, both inside and outside school. A stronger diversity climate could therefore mitigate the relationship between school diversity and DD, as a way of compensating for the possible lack of diversity in students' daily interactions.

To summarize, in this article we address the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between ethnic school diversity and students' competence in dealing with differences?
2. Is ethnic school diversity related to the school's diversity climate?
3. What is the relationship between schools' diversity climate and students' competence in dealing with differences?
4. Is the relationship between school diversity and students' competences in dealing with differences mediated or moderated by the diversity climate?

## Methods

### Participants and procedure

Data were collected as part of the large-scale ESC research project (*Understanding the Effects of Schools on students' Citizenship*) in 2016 in Dutch secondary schools. The project's aim was to gain insight in citizenship education in secondary education and 9th grade students' citizenship competences. As such, the dataset was used for other articles as well (submitted). Initially, 82 schools across the Netherlands agreed to participate based on, firstly, a random sampling procedure resulting in 52 schools confirming participation. For this, we used a stratified sampling approach, based on a list of all secondary education schools in the Netherlands that include 9th grade classes. From this list, 100 schools – subdivided into the vocational, general and mixed school tracks – were drawn and for each school a first and second replacement school was selected in case of non-participation of the first approached school. Secondly, in order to enhance statistical power, 30 additional schools were obtained by contacting

schools within the professional networks of the research team. The total sample appeared to be largely representative of Dutch secondary education schools, with a small overrepresentation of public schools and schools in the province of North-Holland. Schools providing only lower level vocational education were slightly underrepresented. One school decided to discontinue their partaking at an early stage of the study. Ultimately, 5,297 students in a sample of 81 secondary schools took part in the study. Besides students, in each school, the school leader, one team leader and approximately fifteen teachers were invited to participate in the study.



For the current study, we used student and teacher data which was gathered by anonymous online questionnaires; one for teachers and two for students. Schools received instructions that described how to randomly select three 9th grade classes. Prior to participation, letters were sent to students' parents, explaining the study aims and procedures. With this letter, parents were given the opportunity to deny permission for their child's participation. Administration of the two student questionnaires took place within two regular classes and in presence of a trained test leader.

The first questionnaire concerned student background characteristics (e.g. age, ethnic background), students' perception of school factors relating to the school climate or citizenship education (e.g. the degree of an open classroom climate) and attitudes regarding social tasks (as part of the Citizenship Competences Questionnaire (CCQ); for an extensive description, see Ten Dam et al., 2011). The second questionnaire contained items of the CCQ (see Ten Dam et al., 2011), and newly constructed knowledge items (see below for a description).

In addition, schools were given instructions on how to randomly select 15 9th-grade teachers who taught the three selected classes. The schools were asked to select teachers teaching across all subject areas, including teachers of social studies, history, cultural education and other social subjects. The teacher questionnaire took approximately 30 min to complete and teachers were allowed to fill out the questionnaire at any location and any time within the duration of the study.

Criteria were set up on the basis of which students, classes, teachers and schools were included in the analysis. For inclusion 1) data had to be available on at least student background characteristics; 2) no less than 10 students per class had to participate in the study 3) a minimum participation rate of 60% per class

was required and 4) after applying the foregoing criteria, schools should not have more than 1 class that was excluded from the analysis. These four criteria were intended to obtain representative data as much as possible on school compositional features. Additionally, in line with previous studies (Vervaet et al., 2018a, 2018b; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2009), schools with at least five teachers participating in the study were included. For our analysis, these five teachers had to have at least completed the items related to the diversity climate. Lastly, apart from the five criteria, two schools were excluded due to sharing their school location and thus causing ambiguity regarding their interrelatedness. A third school was excluded due to a high proportion of students with special needs, causing a mismatch with the characteristics of the overall sample. Taken together, the selection criteria resulted in an ultimate sample of 4,042 students and 535 teachers across 62 schools.

## Variables

### *Student background variables*

To ensure that the effects of school composition and diversity climate are not spurious ones, we included several control variables on the individual-level and school-level, some of which have been shown to be associated with DD-related and citizenship-related outcomes (see, for example, Dijkstra et al., 2015; Janmaat, 2012; Munniksma et al., 2017; Schulz et al., 2010).

On the student level, *migrant background* was measured by information drawn from the student questionnaires on parents' country of birth. A dichotomous variable (1 = migrant background, 0 = native) was constructed based on Statistics Netherlands' (2016a) definition of having a migrant background. If both parents were born in the Netherlands, the student was classified as native. Students with either of the parents born elsewhere were classed as having a migrant background. If no parent data were available, the student's country of birth was considered instead. In our sample, 22.8 % of the students had a migrant background.

Students' *socioeconomic status* (SES) was measured using the educational level of parents, information on which was provided by the students. We assessed SES by determining the parent with the highest educational level. Research shows that parents' educational level is a strong predictor for citizenship outcomes (Schulz et al., 2010; Wanders et al., 2020), as high-educated parents may provide a richer environment for learning opportunities in the area of

citizenship (Wanders et al., 2020). Conversely reasoned, we expect that students with low-educated parents would be in a more disadvantageous position, and therefore a dummy variable was created for SES (1 = low SES, 0 = not-low SES). Next, to be able to include students in the analysis who had missings on SES (18.1%), we additionally created a variable for missingness on SES (1 = missing, 0 = not missing). Students whose parents had completed maximally secondary vocational education were classified as having low SES. In our sample, 11.7% of the students was classified as 'low SES' (see Table 2).



Two other individual level control variables concerned students' *gender*, which was equally distributed across the sample (51.6 % female), and *educational track*, for which we dichotomized students' educational level (1 = vocational track, 0 = other tracks). Vocational education was well represented, as 44.2% of our respondents were enrolled in this track (see Table 2).

### *School level variables*

In line with previous research, as an indicator of *ethnic school diversity* we calculated the Herfindahl Index (Dijkstra et al., 2015; Lancee & Dronkers 2011; Putnam 2007), which takes into account the number and size of different ethnic groups. The formula for calculating the index is: (proportion ethnic background $_1$)$^2$ + (proportion ethnic background $_2$)$^2$ + · · · + (proportion ethnic background $_n$)$^2$. Originally, the index was intended to reflect the degree of homogeneity (Putnam, 2007) but since we were interested in the degree of heterogeneity, we subtracted the index from 1. An index of zero indicates an entirely homogenous context and an index of 1 corresponds to a fully heterogeneous context. For the calculation of the Herfindahl index, students were assigned to ethnic groups, according to parents' country of birth. The students were classed into nine large ethnic groups. If both parents were born abroad, we considered mothers' country of birth to assign students to an ethnic group. In case of non-availability of information regarding parents' birth place, the student's country of birth was used. The following nine groups were constructed: Native-Dutch (77.2%), Turkish (3.9%), Moroccan (4.9%), former Dutch colonies (Surinam, Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, 2.2%), European (North, West, South, 3.3%), Mid- and Southeast European and other Western (2.0%), Middle Eastern (1.4%), Asian (2.4%), Sub-Saharan African and other Non-Western (2.4%). The small number of students in certain groups made it difficult to create more distinct groups, causing the merger of multiple groups or regions. The average diversity index of the schools in our sample was .32 (SD = .22).

The *school diversity climate* consisted of two components, being *teachers' diversity-related education goals* and *teachers' diversity-related teaching practices*. For educational goals, including citizenship goals, we used a 17-item scale adapted from the Dutch Inspectorate of Education (2017), Pulinx (2017) and Zaman (2006). Respondents could answer on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not important at all; 5 = very important). Within the educational goals scale, we selected 4 items that referred to diversity-related educational goals. A scale of the 4 items was constructed by averaging the responses. The scale was internally consistent with a Cronbach's alpha of .82. The educational goal items were introduced with the question: With education, a variety of goals can be pursued. Which goals do you think are important?' A sample item of the diversity-related educational goals scale is: 'learning to handle differences (e.g. social or ethnic differences between people)'. The school average for this scale was 4.38 (SD = .18). For the diversity-related teaching practices we selected several items on teaching practices that we deemed relevant in terms of teaching diversity content. These items were inspired by scales of the Dutch Inspectorate of Education (2017), Agirdag et al. (2016), and Torney-Purta et al. (2001).

Next, the Cronbach's alpha of the selected items were checked and items that lowered the Cronbach's alpha considerably were successively omitted. This resulted in the selection of 5 items with the best alpha (.68). Subsequently, a scale was created by taking the mean score of the 5 items. All items could be answered with a 5-point Likert scale, whereby a higher value indicated more diversity practices. An example of the items is: 'I offer learning content or learning material that reflects multicultural society'. On the school level, the average score for teachers' diversity-related practices was 3.43 (SD = .22). Finally, we performed a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation. Based on eigenvalues > 1, the PCA indicated a two-factor structure, explaining 54% of the variance. All items loaded highly (between .55 and .86) on the respective intended constructs. Given these indications, we assume that goals and practices concerning teaching diversity are conceptually distinct aspects of diversity climate. See Appendix 1 for an overview of all items on the diversity climate.

School level variables that were included as control variables were *school SES composition, school size, degree of urbanization* and *school type*. To measure *SES composition*, we aggregated individual SES to the school level. In our sample, schools had a mean proportion of students with a low SES of .12 (SD = .08; see Table 2) (with missing-SES students included in the proportion). S*chool size*

was operationalized as the total number of students per school, information on which was drawn from a dataset of the Education Executive Agency (2015). The average school size in our sample was 846 (SD = 521).

For the *degree of urbanization* we used data published by Statistics Netherlands (2012), that classifies five categories (rural to highly urban) based on the number of home addresses per postal code area. Young people in more urbanized settings may encounter more complex and challenging circumstances compared to youngsters in less or non-urban environments (see e.g. Geijsel et al., 2012; Zwaans et al., 2008), which may impact the way they are challenged to practice with citizenship. The average degree of urbanization was 3.55 (SD = 1.33). Lastly, we determined the school type. In the Netherlands, some schools are referred to as 'categorial', which means that a school provides education solely for a specific track (e.g. vocational education). Other types of schools are 'comprehensive' in the sense that at least two or more tracks are offered. We therefore distinguished between categorial vocational schools (=1) and other school types (=0), as we expect students in categorial vocational schools to have a double potential 'disadvantage', given the expectation to perform at relatively low cognitive level and the fact that they have less opportunities to come in contact with students from other tracks and thus to deal with differences. The categorial vocational school type made up 32% of the sample.



### *Dealing with differences*

DD competences were measured using the CCQ ( for an extensive description see Ten Dam et al., 2011). This questionnaire contains items on four social tasks, one of which is dealing with differences, that are regarded as exemplary for the daily citizenship practices of youngsters between the age of 11 and 16. All social tasks consist of four components: knowledge, attitude, skills and reflection. In total, the original questionnaire contained 94 items, 22 of which belonged to DD. However, the research team constructed new items for the knowledge component of all social tasks, including DD. This new knowledge measure was intended to prevent a ceiling effect and to build a larger database of knowledge items, which in turn could also be standardised, as this was not possible with the original CCQ knowledge items. In addition, the new knowledge measure makes it possible to differentiate the separate social tasks within the knowledge component. The new knowledge measure included 39 items on DD, with a reliability coefficient (measurement of accuracy) of .91. A multiple-choice test with three response options was used to measure students' knowledge. Students

were instructed to choose what they thought to be the best option. An example of a DD-knowledge item is 'What is another word for tolerance?', accompanied by the following response options: a) 'Forbearance', b) 'Respect', and c) 'Peacefulness' (the correct answer is 'a')[1]. Students' scores on the DD-knowledge items were determined with item response theory analysis (IRT). On average, the students in our sample had a score of .79 (SD =1.29). The other components – attitudes, skills and reflection – were measured with survey items and rated with 4-point Likert scales. The attitude items were introduced with the question 'How well does this statement apply to you?' An example DD-attitude statement is: 'Differences in cultures make life more enjoyable'. The mean score on this component was 2.71 (SD = .66; Cronbach's alpha = .85). The skills-items were accompanied by the question: 'How good are you at…', followed by, for example: 'adapting to other people's rules and habits'. Our respondents had an average score of 3.01 (SD = .46; Cronbach's alpha = .72) on the DD-skills items. Lastly, the reflection items started with the question: How often do you think about…?' A sample DD-reflection item is: 'why some students think better of themselves than of others.' The mean score of our respondents on the DD-reflection items was 1.97 (SD = .66; Cronbach's alpha = .90). See Appendix 1 for an overview of all items on DD attitude, skills and reflection.

Additionally, we checked whether the four DD-scales were equivalent across groups and, consequently, whether cross-group comparisons would be valid (Van de Schoot et al., 2012). To this end we performed multigroup factor analyses for migrant background (native and migrant background) and for educational track (vocational track and other track) on attitude, skills and reflection. We consecutively tested the configural, metric and scalar invariance in MPlus. The analysis showed that the model fits were acceptable, as in all models TLI was above .90 and CFI above .95 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Van de Schoot et al., 2012). In addition, ΔCFI (baseline – metric and metric – scalar) did not exceed the 0.01 threshold (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002) in any of the models. We used jMetrik 4.0.5 (Meyer, 2014) to test measurement invariance for the knowledge items (regarding sex, ethnic background, SES and educational level). Overall, based on the analyses, we concluded that measurement invariance was established for all DD components and consequently, that meaningful group comparisons could be made.

1 The cognitive items can be retrieved from the first author

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics for variables

| Variables | $\bar{X}$, proportion or % |
|---|---|
| *Outcome variables (n = 4,042)* | |
| DD – knowledge | .79 (1.29) |
| DD – attitude | 2.71 (.66) |
| DD – reflection | 1.97 (.66) |
| DD – skills | 3.01 (.46) |
| *School level (n = 62)* | |
| Ethnic school diversity | .32 (.22) |
| Diversity climate | |
| Teachers' diversity-related goals | 4.38 (.18) |
| Teachers' diversity-related practices | 3.43 (.22) |
| SES composition | |
| proportion low SES | .12 (.08) |
| Degree of urbanization | 3.55 (1.33) |
| School type | |
| vocational | 32% |
| School size | 846 (521) |
| *Individual level (n = 4,042)* | |
| | 22.8% |
| Ethnic background (migrant) | |
| Gender | 51.6% |
| female | |
| SES | 11.7% |
| low | 18.1% |
| missing | |
| Educational track | 44.2% |
| Vocational | |

*Note.* Standard deviations are in parentheses.

## Analyses

Firstly, given the hierarchical structure of our sample, with students in schools, taking a multilevel approach is the most appropriate for analysing the data (Hox, 2002; Snijders & Bosker 1999). Before actually proceeding with the multilevel analysis, we first inspected whether the amount of school-level variance was significant, which was confirmed (see Results section). Two-level models, with levels being schools and students, were specified in Mplus version 7.4 software (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Secondly, since we have multiple outcome variables

(DD-knowledge, DD-attitude, DD-reflection, DD-skills), multivariate multilevel analysis would have been the most appropriate way of analysing the data, as this leads to more statistical power and reduces the risk of Type I error (Hox, 2002). However, the number of parameters was greater than the number of schools in our sample, and therefore our analysis could have led to less reliable results. We have nevertheless conducted the multivariate analysis and as it did not yield different conclusions compared to univariate analyses, in this paper we will report the results of the univariate analyses. Lastly, possible outliers for both students and teachers were checked. The results of the analyses with and without possible outliers did not change the conclusions of the study. Therefore, in this article we will report on the results that include data on the outliers.

Variables included in the models at the school level were ethnic school diversity (predictor), teachers' diversity-related educational goals and practices (mediator), their interaction terms to examine moderation effects, and the control variables school SES composition, school type, school size and degree of urbanization. At the individual level the following variables were all included as control variables: educational track, gender, SES, SES missingness, and ethnic background. Ethnic school diversity, teachers' diversity-related educational goals and practices and the interaction terms were grand mean centred.

The model was built up in 5 steps. The first step refers to the null model, or intercept-only model, in which no predictor variables are included. In the second step, all control variables from both levels were entered simultaneously. Subsequently, in the third step, we entered ethnic school diversity to examine the relationship between school composition and DD (research question 1). To assess the relationship between school diversity and the diversity climate (research question 2), the diversity climate and DD (research question 3) and the mediating role of the diversity climate (research question 4) in the fourth step, we entered teachers' diversity goals and practices. In the final, fifth step, we investigated whether the diversity climate acts as moderator by entering the interaction terms, after having removed the mediating relationships from the previous step.

## Results

The correlations between individual level variables are presented in Table 3 and between school level characteristics in Table 4. As a first step in the multilevel analyses we commenced with an unconditional model to ensure that a multilevel approach was suitable. We used Satorra-Bentler difference test to compare model fits, which is similar to difference testing using loglikelihood but in this test a correction factor is applied to account for MLR estimation. For all four outcome variables, the addition of the school level resulted in a significantly better fit compared to the model where only variance on the student level was allowed (all TRd's exceeded the $\chi^2$ cut-off score (3.84) corresponding to $\Delta df = 1$, $p<.001$). As the model fit improved, both levels were included in the analyses. The multilevel analyses for each of the DD components are presented in separate tables in the next section. Table 5 refers to DD-knowledge. Table 6 presents the findings on DD-attitudes. DD-reflection is presented i Table 7 and DD-skills in Table 8.

**Table 3.** Correlations between individual level variables (n = 4,042)

| Measures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. SES | 1 | -.17** | .01 | .16** | .003 | -.11** | -.08** | -.04* | -.004** |
| 2. SES missing | -.17** | 1 | .12** | .22** | .05** | -.16** | -.07** | -.06** | -.04* |
| 3. Ethnic background | .01 | .12** | 1 | .12** | -.01 | -.10** | .16** | .13** | -.02** |
| 4. Educational track | .16** | .22** | .12** | 1 | .05** | -.41** | -.13** | -.02 | -.08** |
| 5. Gender | .003 | .05** | -.01 | .05** | 1 | -.16** | -.25** | -.09** | -.08** |
| 6. DD-knowledge | -.11** | -.16** | -.10** | -.41** | -.16** | 1 | .21** | -.06** | .18** |
| 7. DD-attitude | -.08** | -.07** | .16** | -.13** | -.25** | .21** | 1 | .30** | .27** |
| 8. DD-reflection | -.04* | -.06** | .13** | -.02 | -.09** | -.06** | .30** | 1 | .14** |
| 9. DD-skills | -.004** | -.04* | -.02** | -.08** | -.08** | .18** | .27** | .14** | 1 |

Note. Pearson's correlation coefficients are reported for the correlation between continuous and dichotomous variables and Phi coefficients are reported for the correlation between dichotomous variables.
*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01.

**Table 4.** Correlations between school level variables (n = 62)

| Measures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ethnic school diversity | 1 | .16 | .25* | -.09 | -.13 | .60** | .15 |
| 2. Teachers' diversity goals | .16 | 1 | .36** | .10 | -.19 | .06 | .00 |
| 3. Teachers' diversity practices | .25* | .36** | 1 | .14 | .02 | .15 | .09 |
| 4. School size | -.09 | .10 | .14 | 1 | -.37** | .22 | -.64** |
| 5. SES composition | -.13 | -.19 | .02 | -.37** | 1 | -.37** | .40** |
| 6. Degree of urbanization | .60** | .06 | .15 | .22 | -.37** | 1 | -.10 |
| 7. School type | .15 | .00 | .09 | -.64** | .40** | -.10 | 1 |

*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01.

### Research question 1

The first research question examined the direct relationship between school diversity and DD outcomes. In the first model, we entered control variables (see Table 5 to Table 8). In model 2, ethnic school diversity was added to the model to test its effect on DD outcomes. After controlling for several student characteristics, school diversity turned out to be positively related to DD-attitudes (standardized coefficient $\beta$ = .46, $p$<.01) and DD reflection ($\beta$ = .48, $p$<.001). Moreover, these relationships remained significant after including diversity climate in the models (see models 3 and 4). Thus, the more diverse schools are, the more students express positive attitudes about and contemplate about differences between people.



### Research questions 2, 3 and 4

Next, in Model 3, teachers' diversity goals and practices were added to the model to address the second, third and fourth research question. Concerning research question 2 (on the relationship between school diversity and the diversity climate, not presented in the tables), the findings indicate that ethnic school diversity is not associated with teachers' diversity goals, while a significant positive relationship was found between school diversity and teachers' diversity practices ($\beta$ = .25, $p$<.05). This means that the more diverse schools are, the greater the amount of the teaching of diversity is, as reported by the teachers. However, the results demonstrated neither an effect of the diversity climate on any of the DD-outcomes (research question 3, see Table 5 to Table 8), nor a mediating effect of the diversity climate (research question 4).

### Research question 4 (moderation)

Finally, in model 4, the interaction term was included to assess the moderating effect of the diversity climate. The results revealed that the interaction between school diversity and the diversity climate is nonsignificant. Thus, the diversity climate has no moderating effect in the relationship between school diversity and any of the DD components. In other words, the relationship between school diversity and DD did not change according to the levels of the diversity climate.

**Table 5.** Associations between ethnic school composition, school diversity climate and dealing with differences – knowledge

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Fixed* | | | | |
| Intercept | 1.62(.25)*** | 1.48(.21)*** | 1.48(.22)*** | 1.47(.21)*** |
| **School level** | | | | |
| Ethnic composition (Herfindahl index) | | | | |
| B | | -.44(.31) | -.33(.31) | -.34(.28) |
| β | | -.27 | -.20 | -.21 |
| School size | | | | |
| B | .00(.00)* | .00(.00) | .00(.00)* | .00(.00)* |
| β | .29 | .25 | .31* | .34* |
| Degree of urbanization | | | | |
| B | .02(.04) | .06(.03) | -.05(.04) | -.05(.04) |
| β | .07 | .23 | .19 | .18 |
| School type (vocational) | | | | |
| B | -.15(.12) | -.13(.12) | -.09(.12) | -.11(.12) |
| β | -.41 | -.36 | -.25 | -.31 |
| SES composition (proportion low) | | | | |
| B | -.98(.76) | -.99(.71) | -1.10(.75) | -1.07(.73) |
| β | -.22 | -.22 | -.25 | -.24 |
| School diversity climate | | | | |
| Diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | -.25 (.24) | -.43(.25) |
| β | | | -.13 | -.22 |
| Diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | -.20(.15) | -.06(.16) |
| β | | | -.12 | -.04 |
| Indirect effect | | | | |
| Ethnic composition=> Diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | -.03 (0.04) | |
| β | | | -.02 | |

**Table 5** - Continued

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnic composition=> Diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | -.05 (.04) | |
| β | | | -.03 | |
| Ethnic composition x diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | | -1.88(1.08) |
| β | | | | -.20 |
| Ethnic composition x diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | | 1.42(.74) |
| β | | | | .18 |
| **Individual level** | | | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| B | -.37(.05)*** | -.37(.05)*** | -.37(.05)*** | -.37(.05)*** |
| β | -.31*** | -.31*** | -.31*** | -.31*** |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| B | -.07(.05) | -.06 (.05) | -.05 (.05) | -.06 (.05) |
| β | -.06 | -.05 | -.05 | -.05 |
| Vocational track | | | | |
| B | -.70(.11)*** | -.70(.11)*** | -.70(.11)*** | -.70(.11)*** |
| β | -.59*** | -.59*** | -.59*** | -.59*** |
| SES low | | | | |
| B | -.16(.06)** | -.16(.06)** | -.16(.06)** | -.16(.06)** |
| β | -.14** | -.14** | -.14** | -.14** |
| SES missing | | | | |
| B | -.17(.05)*** | -.17(.05)** | -.17(.05)*** | -.17(.05)** |
| β | -.14** | -.14** | -.14** | -.14** |
| *Random* | | | | |
| $\sigma^2_{e\ (residual\ individual\ variance)}$ | 1.23(.04)*** | 1.23(.04)*** | 1.23(.04)*** | 1.23(.04)*** |
| $\sigma^2_{v0\ (residual\ school\ variance)}$ | .08(.03)** | .08(.02)** | .07(.02)*** | 0.07(.02)** |

**Table 5** - Continued

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRd | 229.09*** | 2.51 | 50.45*** | 9.41 |
| Δ*df* | 9 | 1 | 8 | 4 |
| ICC level 2 | 0.08 | 0.08 | 0.08 | 0.08 |

*Notes.* Standard errors are in parentheses.
In model 4, the diversity climate as a mediator ( from model 3) was removed and included as a moderator. Thus, both models 3 and 4 are compared with model 2.
ICC of the null-model: 0.22
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p <.001.

**Table 6.** Associations between ethnic school composition, school diversity climate and dealing with differences – attitude

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Fixed* | | | | |
| Intercept | 3.20(.07)*** | 3.27(.07)*** | 3.27(.07)*** | 3.27(.07)*** |
| **School level** | | | | |
| Ethnic composition (Herfindahl index) | | | | |
| B | | .22(07)** | .24(.07)** | .25(.08)** |
| β | | .46** | .50** | .52** |
| School size | | | | |
| B | .00(.00)* | .00(.00)* | .00(.00) | .00(.00) |
| β | -.44** | -.36* | -.32 | -.33 |
| Degree of urbanization | | | | |
| B | .04(.01)** | .02(.01) | .02(.01) | .02(.01) |
| β | .48** | .21 | .19 | .19 |
| School type (vocational) | | | | |
| B | -.06(.05) | -.07(.05) | -.06(.05) | -.07(.05) |
| β | -.60 | -.65 | -.59 | -.62 |
| SES composition (proportion low) | | | | |
| B | -.29(.23) | -.27(.22) | -.29(.22) | -.28(.23) |
| β | -.23 | -.21 | -.23 | -.22 |
| School diversity climate | | | | |
| Diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | -.04(.08) | -.03(.09) |
| β | | | -.07 | -.06 |
| Diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | -.04(.07) | -.03(.07) |
| β | | | -.09 | -.06 |
| Indirect effect | | | | |
| Ethnic composition=> Diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | -.01(.01) | |
| β | | | -.01 | |

**Table 6** - Continued

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnic composition=> Diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | -.01(.02) | |
| β | | | -.02 | |
| Ethnic composition x diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | | -.19(.42) |
| β | | | | -.07 |
| Ethnic composition x diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | | -.08(.36) |
| β | | | | -.03 |
| **Individual level** | | | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| B | -.32(.02)*** | -.32(.02)*** | -.32(.02)*** | -.32(.02)*** |
| β | -.49*** | -.49*** | -.49*** | -.49*** |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| B | .23(.02)*** | .21(.03)*** | .21(.03)*** | .21(.03)*** |
| β | .36*** | .33*** | .33*** | .33*** |
| Vocational track | | | | |
| B | -.10(.03)** | -.10(.03)*** | -.10(.03)** | -.10(.03)** |
| β | -.15*** | -.16*** | -.16** | -.16*** |
| SES low | | | | |
| B | -.14(.03)*** | -.14(.03)*** | -.14(.03)*** | -.14(.03)*** |
| β | -.21*** | -.21*** | -.21*** | -.21*** |
| SES missing | | | | |
| B | -.12(.02)*** | -.12(.02)*** | -.12(.02)*** | -.12(.02)*** |
| β | -.18*** | -.18*** | -.18*** | -.18*** |
| *Random* | | | | |
| $\sigma^2_{\text{e (residual individual variance)}}$ | .38(.01)*** | .38(.01)*** | .38(.01)*** | .38(.01)*** |

**Table 6** - Continued

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $\sigma^2_{v0\ (residual\ school\ variance)}$ | .01(.002)*** | .01(.002)** | .01(.002)** | .01(.002)** |
| TRd | 427.55*** | 5.21* | 47.01*** | 1.51 |
| Δ*df* | 9 | 1 | 8 | 4 |
| ICC level 2 | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.03 |

*Notes.* Standard errors are in parentheses.
In model 4, the diversity climate as a mediator ( from model 3) was removed and included as a moderator. Thus, both models 3 and 4 are compared with model 2.
ICC of the null-model: 0.06
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p <.001.

**Table 7.** Associations between ethnic school composition, school diversity climate and dealing with differences – reflection

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Fixed* | | | | |
| Intercept | 2.04(.09)*** | 2.13(.08)*** | 2.14(.08)*** | 2.15(.08)*** |
| **School level** | | | | |
| Ethnic composition (Herfindahl index) | | | | |
| B | | .29(.10)** | .26 (.10)** | .29(.10)** |
| β | | .48*** | .43** | .48*** |
| School size | | | | |
| B | .00(.00)* | .00(.00) | .00(.00)* | .00(.00)* |
| β | -.29* | -.21 | -.27* | -.28 |
| Degree of urbanization | | | | |
| B | .05(.02)** | .02(.02) | .03(.02) | .03(.01) |
| β | .53*** | .24 | .25 | .25 |
| School type (vocational) | | | | |
| B | .00(.06) | -.01(.06) | -.02(.05) | -.03(.05) |
| β | .003 | -.07 | -.14 | -.21 |
| SES composition (proportion low) | | | | |
| B | -.30(.27) | -.28(.24) | -.28(.26) | -.24(.24) |
| β | -.19 | -.17 | -.17 | -.15 |
| School diversity climate | | | | |
| Diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | .03 (.10) | .04(.12) |
| β | | | .04 | .06 |
| Diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | .09(.06) | .14(.08) |
| β | | | .14 | .23 |

**Table 7** - Continued

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indirect effect | | | | |
| Ethnic composition=> Diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | .004(.01) | |
| β | | | .01(.02) | |
| Ethnic composition=> Diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | .02(.02) | |
| β | | | .04(.03) | |
| Ethnic composition x diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | | -.67(.60) |
| β | | | | -.20 |
| Ethnic composition x diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | | -.18(.49) |
| β | | | | -.06 |
| **Individual level** | | | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| B | -.10(.03)*** | -.10(.03)*** | -.10(.03)*** | -.10(.03)*** |
| β | -.16** | -.16** | -.16*** | -.16** |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| B | .12(.03)*** | .10(.03)** | .10(.03)** | .10(.03)** |
| β | .18*** | .15** | .15** | .15** |
| Vocational track | | | | |
| B | .02(.04) | -.01(.04) | .01(.04) | .01(.04) |
| β | .02 | .02 | .02 | .02 |
| SES low | | | | |
| B | -.08(.03)* | -.08(.03)* | -.08(.03)* | -.08(.03)* |
| β | -.12* | -.12* | -.12* | -.12* |
| SES missing | | | | |
| B | -.13(.03)*** | -.13(.03)*** | -.13(.03)*** | -.13(.03)*** |
| β | -.21*** | -.21*** | -.21*** | -.21*** |

**Table 7** - Continued

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Random* | | | | |
| $\sigma^2_{\text{e (residual individual variance)}}$ | .41(.01)$^{***}$ | .41(.01)$^{***}$ | .41(.01)$^{***}$ | .41(.01)$^{***}$ |
| $\sigma^2_{\text{v0 (residual school variance)}}$ | .01(.004)$^{*}$ | .01(.004)$^{*}$ | .01(.003)$^{*}$ | .01(.003)$^{*}$ |
| TRd | 70.33$^{***}$ | 10.43$^{***}$ | 47.83$^{***}$ | 5.82 |
| Δ*df* | 9 | 1 | 8 | 4 |
| ICC level 2 | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.04 |

*Notes.* Standard errors are in parentheses.
In model 4, the diversity climate as a mediator ( from model 3) was removed and included as a moderator. Thus, both models 3 and 4 are compared with model 2.
ICC of the null-model: 0.06
$^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

**Table 8.** Associations between ethnic school composition, school diversity climate and dealing with differences – skills

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Fixed* | | | | |
| Intercept | 3.22(.06)*** | 3.18(.06)*** | 3.18(.06)*** | 3.18(.06)*** |
| **School level** | | | | |
| Ethnic composition (Herfindahl index) | | | | |
| B | | -.12(.07) | -.10 (.07) | -.09(.07) |
| β | | -.37* | -.31 | -.27 |
| School size | | | | |
| B | .00(.00) | .00(.00)* | .00(.00) | .00(.00)* |
| β | -.31 | -.35* | -.30 | -.31 |
| Degree of urbanization | | | | |
| B | .00(.01) | .01(.01) | .01(.01) | .01(.01) |
| β | .01 | .22 | .19 | .18 |
| School type (vocational) | | | | |
| B | -.04(.04) | -.04(.03) | -.03(.03) | -.03(.04) |
| β | -.55 | -.49 | -.39 | -.42 |
| SES composition (proportion low) | | | | |
| B | -.33(.20) | -.33(.19) | -.36(.20) | -.34(.20) |
| β | -.36* | -.37* | -.39* | -.37* |
| School diversity climate | | | | |
| Diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | -.05(.06) | -.03(.06) |
| β | | | -.12 | -.08 |
| Diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | -.04(.05) | -.03(.06) |
| β | | | -.12 | -.09 |

**Table 8** - Continued

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indirect effect | | | | |
| Ethnic composition=> Diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | -.01(.01) | |
| β | | | -.02 | |
| Ethnic composition=> Diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | -.01(.01) | |
| β | | | -.03 | |
| Ethnic composition x diversity goals | | | | |
| B | | | | -.14(.35) |
| β | | | | -.07 |
| Ethnic composition x diversity practices | | | | |
| B | | | | -.14(.29) |
| β | | | | -.09 |
| **Individual level** | | | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| B | -.07(.02)*** | -.07(.02)*** | -.07(.02)*** | -.07(.02)*** |
| β | -.15*** | -.15*** | -.15*** | -.15*** |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| B | -.002(.02) | .01(.02) | .01(.03) | .01(.03) |
| β | -.01 | .02 | .02 | .02 |
| Vocational track | | | | |
| B | -.03(.03) | -.03(.03) | -.03(.03) | -.03(.03) |
| β | -.07 | -.07 | -.07 | -.07 |
| SES low | | | | |
| B | .02(.03) | .02(.03) | .02(.03) | .02(.03) |
| β | .04 | .04 | .04 | .04 |
| SES missing | | | | |
| B | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) |
| β | -.04 | -.04 | -.04 | -.04 |

**Table 8** - Continued

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + diversity climate** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x diversity climate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Random* | | | | |
| $\sigma^2_{\text{e (residual individual variance)}}$ | .21(.01)*** | .21(.01)*** | .21(.01)*** | .21(.01)*** |
| $\sigma^2_{\text{v0 (residual school variance)}}$ | .004(.002)** | .004(.001)** | .004(.001)** | .004(.001)** |
| TRd | 33.82*** | 4.33* | 49.04*** | 2.88 |
| Δ*df* | 9 | 1 | 8 | 4 |
| ICC level 2 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.03 |

*Notes.* Standard errors are in parentheses.
In model 4, the diversity climate as a mediator ( from model 3) was removed and included as a moderator. Thus, both models 3 and 4 are compared with model 2.
ICC of the null-model: 0.03
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p <.001.

## Discussion and Conclusion

With this study, we aimed to gain insight in the relationship between ethnic school diversity, the diversity climate created by teachers and students' competences to deal with differences. Regarding the direct association between school diversity and DD outcomes, our analysis showed that ethnic school composition is related to DD-attitudes and DD-reflection. That is, students in more ethnically heterogeneous schools reported higher levels of positive attitudes towards differences and contemplating about differences. No association was found between school diversity and students' DD-knowledge and DD-skills.

Our result that school diversity is not related to DD-knowledge may be explained by the fact that civic knowledge is a cognitive citizenship outcome (Isac et al., 2014), and may therefore be influenced by cognitive abilities more than by other student and school characteristics. The observed effect of vocational track, which indicates cognitive abilities, supports this interpretation.

The absence of the relationship between ethnic school heterogeneity and DD-skills implies that students do not feel better equipped for acting in unfamiliar situations in more diverse schools. Apparently, being surrounded by diversity is associated with more positive feelings about diversity and thinking about diversity-related issues, but it does not necessarily influence the competence of acting adequately in unfamiliar situations and adjusting to others' desires or habits. In fact, as we used self-reports for assessing DD skills, this finding may reflect that students in more diverse schools are more aware of how complex dealing with differences in reality can be.

Regarding the second research question, our results indicate that the degree of diversity of schools is related to teachers' diversity-related practices, but not to their diversity-related goals. Concerning diversity practices, our findings are similar to the scarcely available studies showing that the school composition is positively related to multicultural educational practices reported by teachers (Agirdag et al., 2016; Vervaet et al., 2018b) or as perceived by students (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Moreover, our findings resemble the findings in our previous qualitative study showing that Dutch teachers, despite differences in school composition, did not differ that much concerning their attitudes towards diversity, being mostly embracing and positive (Sincer et al., 2019). However, when it comes to the teaching of diversity, teachers did employ diversity practices that they assumed to be tailored to the needs of the student population.

Furthermore, the data on diversity-related teacher goals were highly skewed, indicating that teachers on average, attach high importance to educational goals related to diversity. This could be explained in two ways. Firstly, the high scores on goals could be indicative of a social desirability bias. Secondly, it could be the case that all teachers, regardless of the student population, truly value diversity-related educational goals highly. However, the differences in teachers' practices according to the degree of school diversity, may indicate that actually putting diversity-related teaching into practice, is viewed more urgent and/or relevant in diverse schools. Teachers in such schools are probably more aware of or feel a stronger need to pay attention to diversity-related themes and may feel bound to address diversity to both create a harmonious school environment and prepare students for participation in a diverse society. Moreover, diversity-related matters may emerge more naturally in more diverse schools, as students may initiate diversity-related topics and questions in class.



Nevertheless, no association was found between the diversity climate and students' DD competences. Teacher goals that are not supplemented with practices are perhaps too distal to impact student learning. As regards teachers' diversity practices, a possible explanation is the way we operationalized teachers' diversity practices; it measures the quantity more than the quality of diversity teaching practices and therefore there is no assurance that the quality was high enough to have impact on DD competences. The possibility exists that the teaching quality in this area is low. This claim corresponds with teachers in diverse classes finding it difficult to discuss controversial issues in class (Radstake & Leeman, 2010), or have low self-efficacy in the area of cultural responsiveness (see e.g. Siwatu et al., 2016; Tucker et al., 2005).

Lastly, our findings did not show a mediating or moderating effect of the diversity climate on the association between school diversity and DD. In other words, neither teachers' diversity goals nor their diversity practices in any way account for (mediate) the relationship between ethnic school diversity and students' DD competences. In addition, the link between school diversity and DD remains unchanged, regardless of the levels of the diversity climate. Given the importance of DD in an increasingly diverse society, it is important to continue looking for possible school practices that enhance DD.

Before turning to the implications of our findings, some limitations of our study and suggestions for future research should be pointed out. Firstly, we used correlational data and observed that certain phenomena are associated but we

cannot conclude that one causes the other. Secondly, as mentioned previously, our measure of teachers' diversity practices captures the degree to which diversity is covered during classes, but it does not measure the quality of how and what teachers teach. Therefore, we encourage future research to include a quantitative or qualitative measurement of teachers' diversity practices that also covers the quality of teaching. Assessing DD competences by using students' self-reports (except for the knowledge component of DD) is another limitation of the current study. In future research additional, more objective measures could be applied, such as assessments by teachers.

The results of our study lead to some implications for teachers, schools and policy makers. Firstly, following Agirdag et al.'s (2016) conclusions, it is problematic that ethnic school diversity is significantly linked to diversity-related teaching practices, as the need for diversity teaching may be just as, or even more relevant, in less or non-diverse contexts (Agirdag et al., 2016). Given their context and personal backgrounds, students in more diverse schools probably have more awareness and experiences regarding diversity, while students surrounded by more homogeneity have less natural opportunities to familiarize with diversity (Agirdag et al., 2016). Therefore, especially school boards and teachers with less diverse or non-diverse populations should have a clear vision on the needs of their students in this regard and, consequently, take action to develop and offer diversity-related teaching. Secondly, the absence of an effect of diversity teaching on DD competences does not necessarily indicate that diversity teaching is useless or ineffective, but it does ask for a critical examination of the content and quality of teachers' diversity teaching. Improvement in this area may be needed as Dutch teachers are not extensively prepared for diversity as policy goals related to diversity are not included in a structural and integral manner in Dutch teacher education (Public Policy and Management Institute, 2017; Severiens et al., 2014). This leads to the ultimate recommendation that Dutch teacher education, and schools and teachers alike, regardless of the student body, should consider the quality of teaching diversity in more detail as well as their professional development programmes, in order to guarantee teaching quality and raise the awareness of the relevance of teaching in this area.

## Appendix 1. Items from the scales

***Diversity climate***

*a) Teachers' diversity-related educational goals*

1. Learning to deal with differences (e.g. social or ethnic differences between people)
2. Learning to interact with people with different ideas and views
3. Learning to be tolerant
4. Getting acquainted with the different cultures, religions and ethnic groups in the Netherlands

*b) Teachers' diversity-related teaching practices*

1. Learning about other cultures *(reversed*)
2. I discuss current affairs
3. I offer learning content or learning material that reflects multicultural society
4. Ethic/cultural diversity occurs rarely in the teaching materials I use (*reversed*)
5. I make my students aware of the discrimination problem

***DD - attitudes***

1. I am curious about how people in other countries live.
2. I like to learn about other cultures
3. I like knowing things about different religions
4. Differences in cultures make life more enjoyable
5. I like knowing people who have a different religion
6. I like hanging out with people who have different habits than me

***DD - skills***

1. Adapting to other people's rules and habits
2. Acting normally in an unfamiliar environment
3. Adapting your language use to the person you are speaking to
4. Taking into account other people's wishes when you have to make a decision together

***DD - reflection***

1. How often do you think about whether religion matters for who you are?
2. How often do you think about why some girls want to wear a headscarf?
3. How often do you think about why some parents forbid their children to hang out with children from another culture?
4. How often do you think about why some students think better of themselves than of others?
5. How often do you think about why people from different origins interact little with each other?
6. How often do you think about why you choose a particular student as a friend over another?
7. How often do you think about why some students do not want to interact with other students?
8. How often do you think about why there are some classes that consist of groups that do not want to have much to do with each other?

# 4

# Sense of school belonging: the role of ethnic school composition and open classroom climate

This chapter has been submitted as:

Sincer, I., Volman, M., Meeuwisse, M., & Severiens, S. (submitted). Sense of school belonging: the role of ethnic school composition and open classroom climate.

## Abstract

As potential mini-societies, schools are important contexts to foster human beings' need to belong. However, school characteristics that are associated with students' sense of school belonging (SSB) have received little attention in research. This study examines whether ethnic school composition and open classroom climate (OCC) are related to SSB. Furthermore, the study explores whether OCC moderates the association between ethnic school composition and SSB. Multilevel analyses of data from 5,046 students in 75 Dutch secondary schools reveal that higher degrees of ethnic school diversity are associated with lower levels of SSB. Moreover, the results show that OCC is positively related to students' SSB. However, the findings indicate that the level of OCC does not change the relationship between ethnic school composition and SSB. The findings suggest that schools and teachers should aim for open classroom climates to enhance SSB, irrespective of the ethnic diversity of the student body.

## Introduction

Based on the human need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000) it is imperative that citizens feel connected to the smaller and larger communities of which they are part. The school is potentially one such small community, as societal life is also taking place in schools. As Flanagan et al. (2011) state, schools are 'mediating institutions', where the economic and political structure of a society is reflected and where 'citizens' actions both shape and are shaped by the political order'. Accordingly, the school may operate as a micro-society in which students are considered citizens (Dutch Education Council, 2003). Students' feeling of being part of this potential micro-society can be denominated as their *sense of school belonging* (SSB). SSB can be considered to be dependent on practices and relationships in school, which form the basis of the way the school space is organized (Dadvand & Cuervo, 2019).



Given this consideration; within the school as a mini-society, the make-up of the student body may be associated with students' SSB (e.g. Demanet & Van Houtte, 2014). Schools differ in their compositional features and this may create unique contexts in which SSB is shaped. For example, students' SSB may be shaped differently in ethnically diverse, large urban schools compared to small-sized, ethnically homogenous rural schools. However, the association between the student body composition and SSB may not be a given fact; it may also be influenced by climate characteristics that schools and teachers create. An important aspect of classroom climates is the extent to which teachers give room for openness, in the sense of students feeling free to express their opinions, and for the respectful discussion of conflicting viewpoints (Campbell, 2008; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). In other words, open classroom climate (OCC) may be a climate characteristic that affects the relationship between school composition and SSB.

In this study, we scrutinize how a school compositional characteristic, i.e. the student ethnic composition, is related to SSB. We additionally explore whether OCC is associated with SSB, and whether OCC acts as a moderator in the relationship between school composition and SSB. Schools and teachers potentially have control over processess and practices taking place in schools (Marcoulides et al., 2005). Therefore, insights regarding classroom and school processes that might change the relationship between the school composition and SSB in a positive way, could provide necessary tools for schools to implement interventions in this area.

## Theoretical Background

### *School belonging*

In this paper the focus is on a *general sense of school belonging* (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012; Goodenow, 1993), referring to students' overall feelings towards their school as a whole (García-Moya et al., 2018). A general SSB encompasses students' feelings of being part of the school, feeling accepted and included, and feeling home at school. The need of having a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000), in combination with the fact that children and youngsters spend a significant part of their waking hours in school, indicates that attaining a SSB is important in itself.

Previous research has demonstrated that SSB is indeed highly relevant in students' school experience, as SSB has been shown to be positively associated with several school-related outcomes, such as academic achievement, mastery goal orientations, socio-emotional outcomes and behavioural engagement ( for a meta-analytic review see Korpershoek et al., 2020). Next to its benefits on the individual level, it could be argued that SSB has an impact on a societal level. Firstly, SSB is positively related to students' civic commitments (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Secondly, a positive association has been found between principals' perceptions of students' sense of school belonging and civic knowledge in some countries (Schulz et al., 2010). Thirdly, as mini-societies (Dutch Education Council, 2003), schools are sites where students practice and experience being part of a society on a small scale, with daily school-based citizenship examples of rules, interactions and power relations. This may shape students' perception of what it means to function in a community. In fact, in previous literature, SSB has been linked to the notions of 'community' and 'social cohesion' (Battistich et al., 1997). Accordingly, the level of students' sense of belonging at the school is of great importance, as this may be a prospect of their current and future sense of belonging and inclusion in society at large.

While fostering a sense of belonging within the school is desirable for the reasons mentioned above, it is not yet clearly understood how schools influence students' SSB. Past research has predominantly examined individual student characteristics that are related to SSB, finding positive associations with e.g. gender (higher scores for girls; Anderman 2003; Osterman 2000) and grade point average (McNeely et al., 2002). A meta-analysis by Allen et al. (2018) on the effects of several individual and school level factors on SSB, reveals similar results concerning gender, albeit reporting weak associations. When it comes to the

relationship between individual ethnic background and SSB, a more inconsistent picture emerges. That is, in one study it was found that ethnic minority pupils (African American) had higher levels of SSB than ethnic majority (White) pupils (Voelkl, 1997) while in another study the opposite was found (McNeely et al., 2002). In contrast to both aforementioned studies, Singh et al. (2010) did not find an association between ethnic background and SSB. Correspondingly, in their meta-analysis, Allen et al. (2018) indicated that arriving at general conclusions on the effect of race/ethnicity is difficult.

### *School composition and school belonging*



According to Allen et al. (2016) a socio-ecological framework should be applied when studying ways to foster students' SSB. Based on Bronfenbrenner (1979), their framework takes into account the different interconnected levels of influence surrounding the student. As such, the school forms an ecological environment with several layers, including relationships with teachers and peers (microsystem) and school practices (mesosystem), potentially influencing SSB. From the perspective of this framework, to gain a better understanding of how school contextual variables relate to students' SSB, we focus on the ethnic school composition as a determinant of SSB. The specific make-up of the student body may create unique dynamics within each school (D'hondt et al., 2015), which warrants the investigation of the relatonship between ethnic school composition and SSB.

One theory that may shed light on the relationship between school composition and SSB is *constrict* theory (see Putnam, 2007). This theory posits that in contexts that are characterized by diversity, people tend to withdraw themselves from any relationship with others. In such contexts, there is less solidarity, people are less trusting of others and people tend to "pull in like a turtle" (p. 149) (albeit on the short term). Thus, diverse contexts are assumed to prompt social isolation. This means that people isolate themselves from others in general, regardless of whether others belong to their 'in-group' or 'out-group'. While constrict theory was originally studied in neighbourhoods, our focus is on the school context, which is a rare, but slowly emerging unit of analysis as regards constrict theory (see e.g. Agirdag et al., 2011; Demanet et al., 2012). Based on constrict theory, it could be expected that the more ethnically diverse a school is, the less social bonds students tend to form and, in turn, the less attached students will feel to the whole school context. Consequently, in more ethnically heterogeneous schools students may demonstrate lower levels of general SSB.

### *Previous studies*

Constrict theory suggests a relationship between school composition and SSB. This relationship has received little attention, however, in prior educational research and the few studies that are available in this area report inconclusive findings (Van Der Wildt et al., 2017). Past research has shown that a higher proportion of ethnic minority students within the school, corresponds to lower levels of school emotional disengagement for ethnic minority students (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2014) and that higher proportions of same-ethnicity peers is associated with higher levels of SSB (Johnson et al., 2001). In other words, these studies suggest that higher proportions of students from possibly similar ethnic minority backgrounds is positively related to SSB. McNeely et al. (2002) showed a positive relation between ethnically segregated schools and SSB, whereas in mixed schools SSB appeared to be the lowest. In contrast, in other studies no relationship was found between school ethnic concentration, linguistic diversity or ethnic heterogeneity and SSB (Battistich et al., 1997; Van der Wildt et al., 2017; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009).

One explanation for the mixed picture may be the lack of consideration of possible mechanisms that affect the association between school composition and SSB. In other words, the influence of the make-up of the student body on SSB may not be fixed, but perhaps depends on mechanisms in school or classroom practices. Moreover, certain school or classroom practices could be especially relevant in schools with a certain student composition. Therefore, teaching and school practices that may interact with the school composition should also be taken into account when examining the relationship between school composition and SSB. In this study, we explore a possible mechanism influencing the association between school composition and SSB; namely open classroom climate (OCC).

### *The exploration of the role of an open classroom climate*

OCC refers to a climate in which students are encouraged to freely form and express their (divergent) opinions, and have the opportunity to hear and discuss opposing perspectives in a respectful atmosphere (Campbell, 2008; Torney-Purta et al,. 2001). Past research has well-established that an OCC fosters citizenship skills and attitudes, such as civic knowledge and the intention to vote ( for a review see Geboers et al., 2013). To our knowledge, OCC has not been linked to other outcomes in previous research.

Aside from its association with civic outcomes, we maintain that the openness of the classroom climate may also impact students' SSB, both directly and by interacting with school compositional features. That is, the degree to which schools and teachers create classrooms in which students perceive their (divergent) voices to be heard and the degree to which they feel that a free dialogue is allowed and discussions are stimulated (i.e. higher levels of OCC), may feed their needs of directing their own actions and having a choice (autonomy) (Deci and Ryan 2000). This in turn may enhance feelings of being accepted and included in the school (i.e. higher levels of SSB), and similarly in the opposite, negative direction. Moreover, the impact of the levels of OCC on SSB may interact with the student composition. Given the exploratory nature of our study, we consider several reasons that may support the expectation of OCC as a positive moderator on the one hand, and as a negative moderator on the other hand.



One might expect higher levels of OCC to be more influential for higher levels of SSB in more diverse and minority concentrated schools than in non-diverse and native concentrated homogenous schools (i.e. positive moderation), for the following reasons. Firstly, both inside and outside school, there may be large differences among youngsters in terms of their background and daily life experiences. A Dutch report on the subjective experience of discrimination in the Netherlands (Andriessen et al., 2014) showed that citizens with a Non-Western migrant background more frequently reported having experienced discrimination, compared to both citizens with a Western migrant background and native citizens. Consequently, it may be more likely that the number of students with such societal experiences are higher in diverse and minority concentrated schools. Secondly, in the Netherlands a high degree of incongruence exists between teachers' and students' ethnic background (Driessen, 2015; Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2015). This incongruence perhaps increases students' feelings of distance between students' and teachers' viewpoints and may enhance feelings of being deviant.

Taken together, the daily life experiences of students from diverse and minority concentrated schools and their perceived societal position, may increase the need for making students' voices heard and exchanging experiences and views in order to create a sense of belonging at school. In sum, when students in more minority concentrated and diverse schools do perceive an atmosphere that stimulates the expression and discussion of viewpoints (i.e. OCC), this could have a more beneficial influence on their feelings of being included and accepted (i.e. SSB), compared to the SSB of students in mixed and/or Dutch ethnic majority schools.

However, OCC may also negatively moderate the relationship between school composition and SSB. In other words, as the level of diversity and minority concentration in schools increases, the degree to which open discussions take place, may be more detrimental for students' feelings of inclusion and acceptance (i.e. their SSB). If students feel that their opinions are contested, expressing them may actually be distressing and give rise to conflicts. In that way, discussions can underscore differences between peers and this may enhance feelings of division. Thus, high levels of OCC may be associated with lower levels of SSB as the degree of diversity and minority concentration increases.

### *Research questions*

In sum, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between ethnic school composition and sense of school belonging?
2. What is the relationship between open classroom climate and sense of school belonging?
3. Is the relationship between ethnic school composition and sense of school belonging moderated by open classroom climate?

## Methods

### Sample and procedure

Data collection took place between February 2016 and June 2016, as part of a large-scale research project titled '*Understanding the effects of schools on students' citizenship*' (ESC). The ESC project examines the influence of schools on students' citizenship competences in Dutch secondary education. In total, 82 schools agreed to participate in the ESC research project, of which 52 schools were part of a random sampling procedure. These 52 schools derived from a stratified sample of 100 schools, based on a full list of Dutch secondary education schools. A division of schools was made based on track (vocational, general and mixed tracks). First and second replacement schools were approached in case where the first selected schools rejected participation. For the purpose of achieving sufficient power, another 30 schools were obtained through social networks of the research team members. The sample was largely representative of Dutch secondary education schools, with a slight overrepresentation of public schools and schools in the North-Holland Province and a slight underrepresentation of schools providing only lower level vocational education.

As part of the overall ESC project, in each school, anonymous online questionnaires were filled out by school leaders, team leaders, teachers and 9th grade students. For this study, data of the students were used. The schools were instructed to randomly select three 9th grade classes. Students' parents received a letter - describing the aims and procedure of the study – and were asked to indicate when they did not want their child to participate in the study. One of the initial 82 schools decided to cease participation during the study for unknown reasons. Altogether, a total of 5,297 students from 240 classes across 81 secondary schools participated in the study.

Two online questionnaires were administered to students during two regular classes, under supervision of a trained test leader. For the current paper, we analyzed data from the first questionnaire only. This questionnaire involved items on students' background (e.g. ethnic background), school and classroom (climate) factors (e.g. OCC, SSB) and attitudes related to several social tasks. The latter attitude items were part of the Citizenship Competences Questionnaire (CCQ) (for an extensive description, see Ten Dam et al., 2011). The two questionnaires were administered in a fixed order; first questionnaire 1, followed by questionnaire 2.



We included students, classes and schools in the analysis of the current paper who met all of the following four criteria: a) students who at least completed the items on student background variables and on open classroom climate, b) classes in which at least 10 students had filled in the questionnaire, c) classes in which at least 60% of the students had filled in the questionnaire, and d) schools with at least two of the three classes remaining, after the exclusion of classes based on criteria b and c (otherwise the school was excluded from the analysis). The criteria were established to ensure representative school and classroom composition measures. These criteria resulted in the exclusion of three schools from the analysis. Independent of these criteria, we additionally identified three schools that were excluded from the analysis. Two of these schools shared the same building, which made it difficult to assess the schools' degree of interrelatedness. The third school was excluded because it could be classified as a special needs school, which did not fit the school type characteristics of the overall sample. Based on all criteria, ultimately, 5,046 students (with a mean age of 14,9 years) from 222 classes across 75 secondary schools were included in the data analysis.

## Measures

### *Sense of school belonging (SSB)*

Students' SSB was measured with the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale developed by Goodenow (1993) and a Dutch translation by Agirdag et al. (2014) of the PSSM scale. We selected 5 items from the original 18 items of the PSSM scale that tap a general sense of school belonging, which involves students' feelings towards the school as a whole. An example item is "I feel like a real part of this school". Negatively formulated items were recoded. Respondents could answer on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree; 5 = totally agree). Scores on the five items were averaged to a scale ($M$ = 3.63, $SD$ = 0.75; Cronbach's alpha = .79).

We additionally performed multigroup factor analyses for SSB to determine whether the same underlying construct is measured across groups and whether valid cross-group comparisons can be made (Van de Schoot et al., 2012). The assessment of measurement invariance consisted of the consecutive testing of increasingly restrictive models (testing configural, metric and scalar invariance). Multigroup factor analyses were performed for native and migrant background students. Overall, the model fits were appropriate (Comparative Fit Index [CFI] were all greater than .95 and the Tucker Lewis Index [TLI] was .95 in the scalar model) (Hu & Bentler 1999; Van de Schoot et al., 2012). Moreover, the model fits did not get worse by more than .01 in the more restrictive models (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Therefore, it was concluded that the SSB construct is invariant across native and migrant backgroud students.

### *Individual-level variables*

Four individual-level variables were included as control variables in the analysis. We used parents' country of birth to assess *ethnic background* (information provided by the student). Following the definition of Statistics Netherlands (2016a), if either of the parents were born abroad, the student was classified as having a migrant background. If data on both parents were missing, we used the student's country of birth. Accordingly, we created a dichotomous variable for ethnic background (1 = migrant background, 0 = native).

We used parental education level as an indicator of students' *socioeconomic status* (SES), based on the parent with the highest educational level or the parent from whom information was available (provided by the student). A dummy variable was set up for low SES (1 = low SES, 0 = not-low SES). The low SES

category included educational levels up to secondary vocational education. In our sample, 18.4% of the students had a missing score on SES. To prevent listwise deletion, we additionally created another dummy for missingness on SES (1 = SES missing, 0 = SES known). Within the sample, 11.9% of the students had a low SES background (see Table 1).

With respect to *gender,* both males (= 1) and females (= 0) were equally well represented as 51.7 % of the respondents were female. Finally, we also categorized students according to the *educational track* they attended (1 = vocational track, 0 = other tracks). The vocational track was attended by 42.8% of our respondents (see Table 1).



### *School-level variables*

In line with previous research (Agirdag et al., 2011; Van Houtte & Stevens 2009), we operationalised *ethnic school composition* in two ways, as these indicators may have differential effects on SSB. First, we used the proportion of students in school with a migrant background. For this purpose we aggregated students' ethnic background (1 = migrant background, 0 = native) to the school level. The 75 schools covered a broad range of ethnic compositions, from a proportion of .01 to .97 migrant background. The mean of this measure was .26 (SD = .27; Table 1). Secondly, following earlier studies, we assessed *ethnic school diversity* by using the Herfindahl index (Agirdag et al., 2011; Dronkers, 2010; Lancee & Dronkers, 2011; Putnam, 2007), which indicates the total number and share of different ethnic groups[2]. For the calculation of the Herfindahl index we assigned the students to nine broad ethnic groups based on their parents' country of birth. Students with a migrant background of whom both parents were born outside of the Netherlands, were assigned to their mothers' country of birth. If information on one of the parents was missing, we used the information of the parent from whom information was available. If data on both parents were missing, we used the student's country of birth. The nine ethnic groups were as follows: Native-Dutch (75.4%), Turkish (4%), Moroccan (5.5%), former Dutch colonies (Surinam, Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, 2.9%), European (North, West, South 3.3%), Mid- and Southeast European and other Western (2.0%), Middle Eastern (1.4%), Asian (2.8%), Sub-Saharan African and other Non-Western (2.7%). An index of 0 corresponds to no diversity, whereas an index of 1 represents total diversity.

2 The index is calculated as: (proportion ethnic group 1)$^2$ + (proportion ethnic group 2)$^2$ + · · · + (proportion ethnic group n)$^2$. As the original index developed by Putnam (2007) reflects the degree of homogeneity, we subtracted the index from 1 to obtain the degree of heterogeneity.

The 75 schools in our sample had an average diversity index of .34 (SD = .23). We then correlated ethnic diversity with the proportion of students with a migrant background, and obtained a correlation of .93 ($p < .001$). This indicates that in our data set schools with a high proportion of students with a migrant background are also highly diverse and that the two operationalisations of ethnic composition are measuring similar things. We therefore decided to omit the proportion of students of migrant background, and only included the degree of ethnic diversity in the analysis.

To measure *open classroom climate*, we used a translated Dutch version of a scale developed for the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) study (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Respondents could answer on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = (almost) never; 5 = (almost) always). The items were introduced with the following phrase: "When topics relating to society or politics are discussed in class…" An item example is "Teachers try to ensure that students voice their own opinion". A scale of the 6 items was constructed by averaging the responses (Cronbach's alpha = .80).

It is important to note that, as we were interested in school characteristics, we considered the concept of OCC at the school level. Thus, although OCC is measured by the perceptions of students and the items pertain to the classroom climate, we consider OCC to be a characteristic that belongs to the school. Openness of the classroom climate is created by teachers, and is experienced throughout the school. For this purpose, we aggregated the individual student perceptions to the school level, using the mean of students' perception in each school. The mean of the 75 schools was 3.35 (*SD* = .17; see Table 1).

Finally, *school SES composition, school size, degree of urbanisation* and *school type* were added as control variables. For *SES composition* we calculated the proportion of low SES students, by aggregating students' individual SES to the school level. The mean of the proportion of students with a low SES was .17 (*SD* = .11; see Table 1). *School size* was established based on the total number of students, retrieved from a dataset of the Education Executive Agency (2015). School size varied from 153 to 2511 with an average of 872 in our sample (*SD* = 529: see Table 1).

The *degree of urbanisation* of the school location was determined through data published by Statistics Netherlands (2012). The degree of urbanisation consists of 5 categories (1= rural; 5 = highly urban) that refer to the number of home

addresses per postcode area. On average, the degree of urbanisation of the school location was 3.56 (*SD* = 1.30; see Table 1). Moreover, schools were categorized according to their *school type*. In the Netherlands, some schools are 'categorial', providing education in a specific track only (e.g. vocational or pre-university education only), whereas others are 'comprehensive schools' where more than one, or all tracks are offered. Thus, a student in the vocational track for example, can either be in a 'categorial' vocational school type or in a 'comprehensive school' that students of other tracks are also attending. To compare categorial vocational schools to other school types, we created a dummy variable (1 = vocational school type, 0 = other school type). In our sample, 32% of the schools were of the categorial vocational type (see Table 1).



**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for variables

| **Variables** | **$\overline{X}$, proportion or %** |
|---|---|
| *Dependent variable (n = 5,041)* | |
| General school belonging | 3.63 (.75) |
| *School level (n = 75)* | |
| Open classroom climate | 3.35 (.17) |
| Ethnic composition | |
| proportion migrant background | .26 (.27) |
| ethnic diversity (Herfindahl index) | .34 (.23) |
| SES composition | |
| proportion low SES | .17 (.11) |
| Degree of urbanization | 3.56 (1.30) |
| School type | |
| vocational | 32% |
| School size | 872 (529) |
| *Individual level (n = 5,046)* | |
| Ethnic background | |
| migrant | 24.6% |
| Gender | |
| female | 51.7% |
| SES | |
| low | 11.9% |
| missing | 18.4% |
| Educational track | |
| Vocational | 42.8% |

*Note.* Standard deviations are in parentheses.

### Analysis

Due to the nested structure of our sample (students in classes in schools) we aimed to use a multilevel approach (Hox, 2002; Snijders & Bosker, 1999). We determined that there was indeed a significant amount of class- and school-level variance (see Results section) and therefore conducted multilevel regression analyses. We estimated three-level models using MPlus version 7 software. The predictors were entered in four steps. First we entered all the individual-level control variables (Level 1; ethnicity, educational track, gender and SES) and school-level control variables (Level 3; school size, degree of urbanisation, school type and SES school composition). In the second model we added ethnic school diversity to see whether there is an association between school composition and SSB, after having taken into account other school and student characteristics. Next, in the third model, we established whether there is a main effect of school average OCC. Finally, we included an interaction term between ethnic school diversity and school average OCC, to assess whether the association between ethnic school diversity and SSB varied by degree of school OCC. Ethnic school diversity, school OCC and the interaction term (school diversity x school OCC) were grand mean centered.

## Results

Table 2 and 3 present the correlations between the variables of the study. There were significant correlations between all measures, although the strength of the correlations varied from weak to strong. Table 4 shows the results of the multilevel analyses. We first examined whether a multilevel analysis was appropriate by establishing whether our data indeed had a multilevel structure with three levels (student, Level 1; class, Level 2; school, Level 3). We applied Satorra-Bentler difference test for the comparison of model fits. This approach is similar to difference testing using loglikelihood, however, due to MRL estimation, in this test a correction factor is applied. Adding the class and school level in consecutive order resulted in a significantly improvement of model fit compared to the model with variance only on the student level (all TRd's (Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test) exceeded the $\chi^2$ cut-off score (3.84) corresponding to $\Delta df = 1$, $p<.001$). As the model fits improved, all three levels (students, classes and schools) were included in the analyses.

The first model in Table 3 shows that there is a significant negative association between some of the individual level control variables and SSB (gender,

standardized coefficient β = -.10, $p$<.01; ethnicity, β = -.11, $p$<.01; educational track, β = -.18, $p$<.01). On the school-level there is a significant negative association between degree of urbanisation and SSB (β = -.31, $p$<.05). Hence, SSB scores were lower for boys, students with a migrant background, students in the vocational track and for schools in more urban areas. Model 2 (research question 1) indicates that ethnic school diversity is significantly negatively associated with SSB (β = -.64, $p$ <.001). This means that students in more diverse schools report a lower SSB. This association does not disappear when OCC is added to the model (Model 3). The inclusion of school average OCC in Model 3 (research question 2), demonstrated a significant positive direct effect of school OCC on SSB (β = .61, $p$ < .001). Thus, the higher the school OCC, the higher the levels of students' SSB. Hence, main effects were found for both ethnic school diversity and school OCC. Lastly, in the final model (Model 4) we assessed whether school OCC acts as a moderator in the association between school composition and SSB (research question 3). Model 4 shows that the interaction is nonsignificant, meaning that the level of school OCC does not change the relationship between ethnic school diversity and SSB (β = -.04, $p$ = .664). In other words, this finding suggests that the role of school OCC in explaining differences in SSB is similar for students in different school compositions.

Although our focus is on the main effects and interaction effects, the results additionally show that two of the control variables (gender and educational track) remain significantly negatively associated with SSB after having included all variables in the final model (Model 4). This means that boys and students in the vocational track report lower levels of SSB than girls and students in the other tracks, after taking into account the degree of school diversity and the levels of the average school OCC.

**Table 2.** Correlations between individual level variables (n = 5,046)

| Measures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. low-SE | 1 | -.17** | .02 | .15** | .001 | -.02 |
| 2. SES missing | -.17** | 1 | .12** | .19** | .04** | -.04** |
| 3. Migrant background | .02 | .12** | 1 | .08** | -.03 | -.13** |
| 4. Educational track | .15** | .19** | .08** | 1 | .05** | -.12** |
| 5. Gender | .001 | .04** | -.03 | .05** | 1 | -.05** |
| 6. Sense of school belonging | -.02 | -.04** | -.13** | -.12** | -.05** | 1 |

*Note.* Pearson's correlation coefficients are reported for the correlation between continious and dichtomous variables and Phi coefficients are reported for the correlation between dichotomous variables.
*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01.

**Table 3.** Correlations between school level variables (n = 75)

| Measures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ethnic school diversity | 1 | -.03 | -.01 | .58** | .07 | -.29* |
| 2. School size | -.03 | 1 | -.48** | -.25* | -.58* | -.09 |
| 3. SES composition | -.01 | -.48** | 1 | -.28* | -.36** | .53** |
| 4. Degree of urbanization | .58** | -.25* | -.28* | 1 | -.14 | .006 |
| 5. School type | .07 | -.58* | -.36** | -.14 | 1 | -.29* |
| 6. Open classroom climate | -.29* | -.09 | .53** | .006 | -.29* | 1 |

*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01.

**Table 4.** Associations between ethnic school composition, school open classroom climate and sense of school belonging

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + OCC** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x OCC** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Fixed* | | | | |
| Intercept | 4.07(.11)*** | 3.87(.12)*** | 3.81(.10)*** | 3.81(.10)*** |
| **School level** | | | | |
| Ethnic composition (Herfindahl index) | | | | |
| B | | -.53(.15) | -.34(.15) | -.35(.16) |
| β | | -.64*** | -.41* | -.41* |
| School size | | | | |
| B | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) |
| β | .04 | -.12 | -.03 | .03 |
| Degree of urbanization | | | | |
| B | -.05(.02) | .01(.03) | .00(.03) | .00(.03) |
| β | -.31* | .09 | -.01 | -.02 |
| School type (vocational) | | | | |
| B | -.07(.09) | -.06(.08) | .00(.07) | .00(.07) |
| β | -.36 | -.30 | -.01 | -.00 |
| SES composition (proportion low) | | | | |
| B | -.53(.30) | -.45(.27) | -.14(.25) | -.14(.25) |
| β | -.31 | -.26 | -.08 | -.08 |
| Open classroom climate | | | | |
| B | | | .71(.11) | .72(.12) |
| β | | | .61*** | .63*** |
| Ethnic composition x Open classroom climate | | | | |
| B | | | | -.15(.34) |
| β | | | | -.04 |
| **Individual level** | | | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| B | -.07(.03) | -.07(.03) | -.07(.03) | -.07(.03) |
| β | -.10** | -.10** | -.10** | -.10** |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| B | -.08(.03) | -.06(.03) | -.06(.03) | -.06(.03) |
| β | -.11** | -.08 | -.08 | -.08 |

**Table 4** - Continued

| | **Model 1: control variables** | **Model 2: + ethnic composition** | **Model 3: + OCC** | **Model 4: + ethnic school composition x OCC** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vocational track | | | | |
| B | -.13(.04) | -.13(.04) | -.12(.04)$^{**}$ | -.12(.04) |
| β | -.18$^{**}$ | -.18$^{**}$ | -.18$^{**}$ | -.17$^{**}$ |
| SES low | | | | |
| B | .02(.04) | .02(.04) | .02(.04) | .02(.04) |
| β | .03 | .02 | .02 | .02 |
| SES missing | | | | |
| B | .01(.03) | .01(.03) | .01(.03) | .01(.03) |
| β | .02 | .02 | .02 | .02 |
| *Random* | | | | |
| $\sigma^2_e$ | .48(.02)$^{***}$ | .48(.02)$^{***}$ | .48(.02)$^{***}$ | .48(.02)$^{***}$ |
| $\sigma^2_{u0}$ | .03(.01)$^{***}$ | .03(.01)$^{***}$ | .03(.01)$^{***}$ | .03(.01)$^{***}$ |
| $\sigma^2_{v0}$ | .03(.01)$^{***}$ | .02(.01)$^{**}$ | .01(.01) | .01(.01) |
| TRd | 43.60$^{***}$ | 7.46$^{**}$ | 16.08$^{***}$ | .19 |
| Δ*df* | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| ICC level 2 | .05 | .05 | .05 | .05 |
| ICC level 3 | .07 | .07 | .07 | .07 |

*Notes.* Unstandardized coefficients *(B),* standardized coefficients *(β)*, Standard errors (in parentheses).
$\sigma^2_e$ represents the variance of the individual level residual errors, $\sigma^2_{u0}$ symbolizes the variance of the class level residual errors, and $\sigma^2_{v0}$ represents the variance of the school level residual errors.
ICC's of the null model for respectively level 2 and level 3: .06 and.09
$^{*}p \leq .05$. $^{**}p \leq .01$. $^{***}p \leq .001$.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was, firstly, to examine the relationship between ethnic school composition and students' sense of general school belonging (SSB). Secondly, we were interested in the association between the average school open classroom climate (OCC) and SSB. Finally, we explored whether school OCC moderates the relationship between school composition and SSB.

As regards our first research question, we found a significantly negative main effect of ethnic school diversity on SSB. Thus, the higher the degree of diversity within the school, the lower students' SSB levels are. This finding is in line with constrict theory (Putnam, 2007) which indicates that in more diverse environments, there is less trust among people which gives rise to social isolation. Accordingly, based on constrict theory, the findings could be explained in the sense that the more ethnically diverse a school is, the less social connections are established. And, in an environment with higher levels of social isolation, students report lower levels of SSB. In recent years, however, constrict theory has received some criticism (see, for example, Abascal & Baldassarri, 2015; Van der Meer & Tolsma, 2014) as Putnam's findings could not be consistently replicated in subsequent studies. However, these studies, just as Putnam's analysis, focus on neighbourhoods as the unit of analysis. School contexts unequivocally lead to other kind of dynamics among people, compared to neighbourhoods. As constrict theory has received less attention within the educational context, more research is needed in this area (Demanet et al., 2012). Overall, this result shows that it is important to take into account school contextual variables and more specifically, to consider school compositional features when examining SSB.

Concerning our second research question, our results revealed a significant positive main effect of average school OCC on SSB. This means that higher levels of perceived school OCC correspond to higher levels of SSB. With this finding, our study has made a contribution to the literature on both OCC and SSB, as we have uniquely linked the two concepts. In this way, our results extend the findings of research on OCC and civic outcomes (see Geboers et al., 2013). Finally, as an answer to our third research question, we did not observe a moderating role of school OCC. Hence, the impact of the level of the average school OCC on SSB does not differ for schools with varying school compositions.

The fact that we did not find an interaction effect, may be explained in two ways. Firstly, there truly may not be an interaction between ethnic school diversity and

school average open classroom climate. It could be the case that a higher school OCC level is actually equally important for students' SSB in any kind of school composition. This could be due to the current Dutch societal climate, characterized by its increasing frictions. Especially in recent years the debates have become more heated and Dutch society is showing more signs of polarisation between different groups, around, for example, the topic of Black Pete[3] and the more recent influx of refugees (e.g. from Syria). In fact, a recent large-scaled international study on civic and citizenship education (ICCS) has shown that Dutch secondary education students score significantly lower on endorsement of equal rights for all ethnic groups and for people with a migrant background, compared to students in other countries (Munniksma et al., 2017). Thus, it may well be that feelings of 'us' versus 'them' are amplified in the current climate, and that students attending Dutch ethnic majority schools or less diverse schools feel rather threatened by other 'groups' in society. Consequently, due to this cultural threat perception, in Dutch majority as well as less diverse schools, it may be equally important for students to perceive a classroom climate where they can express their viewpoints freely and where their voices are taken seriously, for them to have a higher SSB.

Secondly, there actually may be an interaction, but we may have been unable to detect it. It should be noted that in our sample there was a paucity of diverse schools that have high levels of experienced school OCC. More specifically, our sample contained only 4 to 5 schools that were highly diverse and that scored high on school average OCC. The occurrence of all combinations of degrees of school diversity and school OCC is not a prerequisite for testing an interaction effect, but the fact that we did not have that many schools that are both diverse and report high average OCC levels, may explain why we have not been able to uncover an interaction effect. Thus, the scarcity of the combination of highly diverse schools and high levels of school OCC possibly hampered a true comparison with less or non-diverse schools with high OCC.

3 The traditional Black Pete figure is part of Dutch festivities in December where Saint Nicholas, or Santa Claus, gives children presents, helped by his mischievous servants (Black Petes), wearing black make-up, bright red lipstick and having a big curly black hair wig. Although the Black Pete tradition has been a controversy in the past, especially in more recent years it had sparked annual protests, as some groups in society believe that Black Pete refers back to slavery and the Dutch colonial past and is an example of racism. In fact, in 2013 a UN Working Group has sent a letter to the Dutch government where they put forward questions regarding the Black Pete tradition. As a result of the debate in recent years, the appearance of Black Pete has been somewhat changed (not an entirely black face, but covered with soot and no more red lips and golden earrings). On the other hand, there is also a large group in society that feels that Dutch culture is losing its values and customs because of people with a migrant background and wishes to keep Black Pete in its traditional form. In short, the Black Pete tradition is dividing the population.

Research on the relationship between school composition and OCC is limited and inconclusive. Previous studies demonstrated either a negative association between classroom diversity and political discussions in the classroom (Campbell 2007) or no effect of school composition on OCC (Claes et al., 2017). Concerning classroom discussions, Radstake and Leeman (2010) demonstrated that teachers in diverse classes experienced difficulties in discussing controversial issues. Although their study did not measure student perceptions of an OCC, teachers' experienced difficulties in fostering political discussions do point in the direction of lower levels of an open classroom climate. In any case, future studies should focus more specifically on the relationship between school composition and OCC and its underlying mechanisms.



We would like to point out that, taken together, our results are encouraging as they show that higher levels of school OCC are associated with higher levels of SSB, irrespective of the make-up of the student body. Although only 9% of the variance of SSB was situated at the school level, affecting this small part lies within schools' power. In sum, on average, fostering an OCC is equally important for schools with different school compositions. This practically implies that for the sake of SSB, schools should commit themselves to fostering or improving open classroom climates within the whole school. For this purpose, teachers should receive support in the acquisition of the necessary skills to create an open classroom climate, irrespective of the subject they teach.

There are some limitations to our study that should be considered. Firstly, the use of correlational data does not allow for causal inferences. Accordingly, we are not able to conclude that ethnic school diversity causes lower SSB, or that higher OCC levels causes higher SSB, we can only state that these factors are associated. Second, we only considered student perspectives in measuring OCC. Including others' views, such as those of teachers, may provide a more valid picture of the OCC level in a school. Moreover, discrepancies between students' and teachers' perceptions could be informative for teachers when they reconsider the ways in which they establish an OCC. In line with the previous limitation, a third limitation is the fact that we only used self-report measures. This limitation may especially hold for OCC, due to our reliance on students' memory and their ability to compare different teachers to reach an average impression, as students had to report on 'teachers' instead of 'the teacher'.

Therefore, in future studies, next to self-reports, other measures of OCC could be considered, such as classroom observations, to increase validity by triangulation. Future research should additionally examine whether there are differential effects for students according to their individual ethnic background, as the association between school composition, OCC and SSB may not be similar for students with and without a migrant background. The only two studies that we know of that examine differential effects concerning the effects of school composition on general SSB (or a comparable concept), is that of Demanet and Van Houtte (2014) and Van Houtte and Stevens (2009). As these are the only two studies reporting on the association, with contradictory results, further research is needed. Furthermore, another direction for future studies on school composition and SSB would be to take into account the multidimensional character of students' backgrounds. To illustrate, our study has demonstrated that besides ethnic school diversity, gender and educational track are related to students' SSB. These background characteristics could be considered in an intersectional way to create a deeper understanding of the school composition, doing more justice to the multifaceted nature of students' backgrounds. Lastly, in accordance with Allen et al.'s (2016) socioecological framework of school belonging, we would suggest future research to take into account other school climate factors as well, when studying SSB. This includes aspects that are present at various moments and places within the school, aside from the classroom, such as the school's codes of conduct policy.

Overall, the results suggest that schools should focus on school and classroom practices that could improve the affective schooling experience of their students. Tying this suggestion in with our findings, schools and teachers should endeavour to create classroom climates that are open, where students' voices are heard and acknowledged, in order to improve students' SSB.

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# 5

# Students' citizenship competences: the role of ethnic school composition and perceived teacher support

This chapter is currently under review for publication as:

Sincer, I., Volman, M., Van der Veen, I., & Severiens, S. (under review). Students' citizenship competences: the role of ethnic school composition and perceived teacher support

## Abstract

The current study examined the effects of ethnic school composition and teacher-student relationships (teacher support) on students' citizenship outcomes. Additionally, this study investigated the moderating effect of teacher support on the relationship between ethnic school composition and citizenship competences. Citizenship was operationalized as competences and knowledge concerning acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences. Multilevel analyses among a sample of 4,942 students from 75 Dutch secondary schools showed that the degree of ethnic school diversity is positively related to competences in acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner and dealing with differences and negatively related to knowledge regarding acting in socially responsible manner and dealing with conflicts. Teacher support was positively associated with both competences and knowledge in all social tasks. Except for one outcome, no moderation effect of teacher support was found. The concluding section of the paper contains future study directions and implications.

## Introduction

In the past decades schools in many European countries have been legally designated to contribute to students' citizenship competences (Eurydice, 2017; Hahn, 2020). In light of the accumulation of worries regarding individualisation, civic involvement and social cohesion (Eurydice, 2017; Geijsel et al., 2012), schools' legal task is aimed at the promotion of 'active citizenship and social integration' (Dutch Ministry of Education, 2005). This means that schools should endeavour to cultivate citizens who are able and willing to actively contribute to their communities and society at large (Dutch Education Council, 2003; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007). In the Netherlands, where society is characterized by heterogeneity, it is additionally suggested that openness to diversity should be expected of citizens (Berlet et al., 2008). Therefore, emphasis is also placed on the importance of students' learning of dealing with diversity (Dutch Ministry of Education, 2005).



Although the effectiveness of schools as venues where citizenship is promoted has received substantial attention in the literature ( for a review see Geboers et al., 2013), previous research has largely neglected the school *context* within which students' citizenship competences are developed. In the Netherlands, the increasing diversity in society has resulted in more heterogeneous student populations, especially in urban areas. In general, it can be stated that in school - despite segregation - students are amid a more diverse population in comparison to their private networks (Eidhof, 2019; Parker, 2005; Parker, 2006; Vermeij et al., 2009). The degree of ethnic school diversity may influence the opportunities that students have to practice and learn about citizenship, as the student composition determines the chances of meeting others with different customs, cultures and viewpoints (Parker, 2005). The first objective of this study is to add to the knowledge base on school composition and citizenship, by investigating whether the make-up of the student body is related to students' citizenship competences.

As a second objective of the study, we intend to examine one characteristic of the multidimensional social school and classroom climate that may affect the relationship between ethnic school composition and students' citizenship outcomes: the quality of teacher-student relationships (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Wang & Degol, 2016). In this study the quality of the teacher–student relationship is conceptualized as the amount of perceived *teacher support*, referring to the degree to which students' perceive that their teachers appreciate and form

personal relationships with them (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Earlier research shows a positive relationship between teacher-student relationships and student academic outcomes (Košir & Tement, 2014; Wang & Degol, 2016). It is important to investigate whether this positive association also holds true for students' citizenship competences, given the concerns relating to social cohesion in society and schools' task with regard to citizenship.

Moreover, positive teacher-student relationships may moderate the effect of ethnic school diversity on citizenship competences. This reasoning is based on potential differences in learning outcomes between students from different socio-cultural backgrounds background depending on teacher variables. For instance, it has been observed that teacher quality seems to have a larger impact on learning outcomes in schools with high proportions of minority and low-SES students (Payne, 2008; Presley et al., 2005). It could be conversely reasoned that the relationship between ethnic school composition and citizenship competences differs according to the level of perceived teacher support. One could hypothesize that higher levels of perceived teacher support may buffer a possible negative effect or may intensify a possible positive effect of school composition on citizenship competences.

## Theoretical background

### *Young peoples' citizenship and the school*

In general, the aim to prepare young people for societal life is based on the classical assumption that young people are future citizens or 'citizens in the making' (Marshall, 1950, p. 25). However, young people are already learning and participating in society given the daily social practices in which they interact with others in different settings, such as within family and school, through media use and during leisure time (Lawy & Biesta, 2006). The concept of 'citizenship-as-practice' (Lawy & Biesta, 2006) taking place within the school could be referred to as 'school citizenship' (Dutch Education Council, 2003, 2012). Being part of a school community therefore is a double-layered phenomenon; firstly, students are *practicing for citizenship,* in the future or for communities outside school, and secondly, students are *enacting citizenship,* currently and in school. In school, students may encounter different lifestyles and perspectives (Parker, 2005). In line with this, the composition of the student population may play a role by providing opportunities and barriers to simultaneously enact and practice for citizenship.

To conceptualise enacting and practicing for citizenship more concretely, citizenship of young people can be observed in 'social tasks' that they execute in their daily lives (Ten Dam et al., 2011; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007). Ten Dam et al. (2011) distinguish four types of such social tasks, being acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences. Examples of such tasks are the ability to consider different viewpoints and news sources, the will to stand up for others, having knowledge of (cultural) differences and having the skills to resolve conflicts. Thus, citizenship is conceptualised broadly and comprehensively, reflecting a broad array of social situations that young people are confronted with.

### *School composition and citizenship competences*

When students' citizenship is conceptualized in terms of the aforementioned daily social tasks, contradictory outcomes may be expected concerning the influence of the student composition, according to the mechanism that is assumed to be at play (Dijkstra et al., 2015). On the one hand, following Dijkstra et al.'s expectation (2015), who draw on functional community theory (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987) and the ecological development model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), consistency and congruence between different social settings in which the person moves, such as home, the neighbourhood and school, may lead to a more fruitful context for citizenship learning and development. Uniform contexts usually show higher degrees of social cohesion (Dijkstra et al., 2015). Consequently, a homogenous setting may be more conducive to the learning of certain aspects of citizenship, such as shared norms and conduct rules. On the other hand, more heterogeneous environments may be more advantageous in other regards. Such environments could bolster out-group trust (Dijkstra et al., 2015). Moreover, they may offer more opportunities to gain access to new information, different attitudes and behaviour options (Cochran, 1990). This results from the fact that in (non-familial) networks, members come from a broader spectrum of different contexts (Cochran, 1990). In line with this observation, diversity within the school context may be beneficial for the opportunity to learn in cases of dissimilarities, that is, to handle differences and conflicts (Dijkstra et al., 2015), which are important aspects of citizenship (see Ten Dam et al., 2011).

Previous research on ethnic school composition and students' citizenship outcomes is often either narrow in terms of its conceptualization of citizenship or the measured concept is not defined explicitly as citizenship. Overall, prior studies are non-conclusive. Both positive (Janmaat, 2012) and negative

(Campbell, 2007) associations have been reported, and a great deal of the findings also indicate non-relationships (e.g. Keating & Benton, 2013). The only study that we know of with a more comprehensive scope is a study by Dijkstra et al. (2015), which, amongst others, examined the association between school composition and pupils' citizenship competences in the final year of primary education. In their study, citizenship competences are conceptualized as the knowledge, skills, attitude and reflection that young people need in order to function adequately in light of the social tasks that we discussed above (see Ten Dam et al., 2011). Dijkstra et al.'s (2015) findings revealed that ethnic school diversity was positively related to citizenship knowledge and reflection across the social tasks. In the current study, our objective is to add to the literature by using a similarly comprehensive conceptualisation of citizenship competences but with a focus on secondary education. Moreover, we differentiate between the social tasks rather than between knowledge, attitude, skills and reflection across the social tasks. As the degree of heterogeneity of the school context may result in contrasting effects on citizenship, depending on the specific task that is measured, it seems more relevant to consider the contents of the social tasks instead of their components.

### *The quality of teacher-student relationships*

A school community does not merely consist of dynamics within the student population but is also dependent on other features of the school social climate, such as teacher-student relationships (Wang & Degol, 2016). Teachers' behaviour towards students plays a critical role in the classroom learning environment (Baker, 1999). It has been found that warm and caring relationships between students and teachers contribute to an environment that promotes learning (Wang & Degol, 2016). Past studies have shown that favourable teacher-student relationship indicators – for instance teacher support and trust - are positively associated with student achievement and motivation (e.g. Berkowitz et al., 2017; Cornelius-White, 2007; Goddard et al., 2001; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005) and negatively related with psychological and behavioural outcomes such as depression and misconduct (Wang et al., 2013). In short, a growing body of research has demonstrated that students benefit from teachers with whom they have positive relationships.

Similarly, we expect that high-quality teacher-student relationships elevate student outcomes in the area of citizenship. Flanagan (2013) argues that young people's perception of society is shaped in indirect ways by their interactions in

so called "mediating institutions" such as schools (Flanagan, 2013; Flanagan et al., 2007). Through their experiences in these small-scaled communities that are close to them, students create images of what it means to be a member of the more distant broader society. In such a context, teachers may serve as an example in their role as "proximate authority figures" (Flanagan, 2013; Flanagan et al., 2007) or "civic role models" (Campbell, 2008) and may be decisive in students' development of citizenship skills. After all, teachers inevitably and continuously transfer values to students (Sandström Kjellin et al., 2010). Taken together, this means that students' ideas, knowledge and attitudes about citizenship-related phenomena such as relations to authority, power structures and attitudes toward society may be amongst others based on students' interactions with closer authorities such as teachers (Cook, 1985; Flanagan, 2013; Flanagan et al., 2007). This coincides with the finding that receiving respect from and having a good relationship with teachers, promotes students' view of schools as sites where opinions can be freely expressed and debated with those with differing opinions (Maurissen et al., 2018). Moreover, having a sense of being cared about by teachers stimulates students to engage in classroom activities (Wentzel, 1997).



The little research available in the domain of citizenship demonstrates that teacher-student relationships are – albeit weakly- positively related to attitudes towards conventional citizenship (e.g. voting) and social-movement related citizenship and, remarkably, negatively related to civic knowledge (Isac et al., 2014). In Isac et al.'s (2014) study, no association was found between teacher-student relationships and students' future intention to participate in society. Thus, although two of the four outcomes in this study are positively associated with student-teacher relationships, the findings are still rather indistinct and puzzling. Two other studies have also found a positive link between teacher-student relationship and societal involvement (Wanders et al., 2020a; Wanders et al., 2020b). Moreover, in a sample of immigrant students, Rutkowski et al. (2014) found that good student-teacher relationships are positively associated with involvement in the school and community and trust in civic institutions. In our study, the objective is to investigate the association between teacher-student relationships and students' citizenship competences in the social tasks that young people encounter in their daily lives (see Ten Dam et al., 2011). As the literature points to a positive direction, a similar positive association may be expected between teacher-student relationships and our conceptualization of citizenship competences.

Finally, we intend to investigate possible interactions between the school composition and teacher-student relationships. It has been previously stated that teacher quality may have more impact in schools were minority and low-SES students are overrepresented (Payne, 2008; Presley et al. 2005). Similarly, positive teacher-student relationships may play a more crucial role in heterogeneous schools and classes compared to less diverse ones. Conversely reasoned, the effects of school composition on citizenship competences may depend on the levels of teacher support.

In this study, we explore whether a positive link between ethnic diversity and citizenship competences becomes stronger when teacher-student relationships are positive. Contrastingly, in the opposite direction, in the case of a negative association, good teacher-student relationships may mitigate or protect against the negative effects of diversity on citizenship outcomes. Managing a classroom is a complex and challenging teaching activity, sometimes even more so in multicultural settings (Milner IV & Tenore, 2010; Van Tartwijk et al., 2009), as teachers have to navigate a variety of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. In such a multi-faceted context, establishing positive teacher-student relationships may have extra impact, either by further strengthening a positive relationship or by mitigating the possibly negative influence of high diversity. In other words, we will investigate whether the effects of a more diverse school composition could be respectively offset or enhanced by positive teacher-student relationships.

In short, in this article we, firstly, address the question of whether ethnic school composition and teacher-student relationships are related to students' citizenship competences, and, if so, whether there is an interaction between school composition and perceived teacher support in their relationship with students' citizenship competences.

## Methods

### Research design

We used data collected in 2016 from a sample of Dutch secondary education schools that took part in the large-scale ESC research project (*Understanding the Effects of Schools on students' Citizenship*). This project investigates citizenship education in secondary schools and 9$^{th}$ grade students' competences in the citizenship domain (also see Sincer et al., 2020). In total, 82 schools confirmed

their participation in the study. These schools were recruited in two ways: 1) a random sampling procedure (n = 52)[4] and, 2) through research team members' social networks (to increase statistical power, n = 30). In the sample, secondary education schools across the Netherlands were largely represented, with public schools and schools in the North-Holland province slightly overrepresented. Schools providing only lower level pre-vocational education were slightly underrepresented. One of the schools ceased participation at the initial stage of the study for unknown reasons. Therefore, ultimately, the sample consisted of 81 secondary schools, 240 classes and 5,297 students.

Data for the overall ESC project were collected through anonymous online questionnaires, filled out by 9th grade students, teachers, team leaders and school leaders. For the present study, we used student data. In order to randomly select three 9th grade classes, schools received written instructions from the research team. Prior to administering the questionnaires, students' parents received a letter with an explanation of the study aims and procedures, in response to which they could reject their child's participation. Students filled out two questionnaires in two regular classes, during which a trained test leader was present.



The first questionnaire contained questions about student background characteristics and school characteristics referring to school climate and/or citizenship education. Additionally, for practical reasons, the first questionnaire contained a few items from the Citizenship Competences Questionnaire (CCQ, for an extensive description see Ten Dam et al., 2011). The second questionnaire consisted of the vast majority of the CCQ, next to newly constructed knowledge items (see below for a description).

Several criteria were set up for the inclusion of students, classes and schools in the analysis; a) students had to have completed most of the relevant items on student background variables, and all items on teacher support and the CCQ; b) a minimum of 10 students per class had to have filled out the questionnaires; c) a minimum participation rate of 60% per class was required, and d) based on criteria c and d, only schools with a maximum of one eliminated class were

4 To this end a stratified sample was used based on educational tracks of the schools (a division was made between vocational, general and mixed school tracks). For this, 100 schools were drawn from a list of all Dutch secondary education schools that include 9th grade classes. If the first approached school did not want to participate, a first or second replacement schools was approached.

included in the analysis. Based on these criteria, three schools were excluded from the analysis. Additionally, two schools that shared the same school building were also excluded from the analysis, as there was no clarity on their degree of interrelatedness. A third school, that had a high share of special needs students, was not aligned with the characteristics of the overall sample and was therefore omitted from the analysis. Altogether, data were available from 4,942 students from 75 schools. Additionally, potential multivariate outliers were investigated. In this paper we report the findings excluding the cases (n = 40) containing multivariate outliers.

## Variables

### *Outcome variables: students' citizenship competences*

We used the Citizenship Competences Questionnaire (for an expanded description, see Ten Dam et al., 2011) to measure students' citizenship competences. The CCQ has been developed for young people between the age of 11 and 16, comprising items that correspond with youngsters' daily citizenship practices. These practices are operationalized as the following four social tasks: acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences. The competences needed for each of these social tasks consists of four components: knowledge, attitude, skills and reflection (see Appendix A for a table containing the conceptualizations of the social tasks and the components of the citizenship competences they require). For the ESC study, we constructed new citizenship knowledge items, to ensure a more balanced distribution of item difficulty levels and to add the possibility to differentiate between the separate social tasks. For the purpose of parsimony, for each social task we incorporated the components attitude, skills and reflection into a single construct of citizenship competences. Knowledge is a different kind of component and is therefore operationalized separately (see Ten Dam et al., 2011 for a more detailed explanation)[5]. Following Ten Dam et al. (2011), we fitted a second-order factor model to examine whether combining attitude, skills and reflection (henceforth Competence) for each social task would be appropriate. The modelfits were acceptable as for all social tasks it was found that TLI $\geq .90$, CFI $\geq .91$ and RMSEA $< .08$ (Van de Schoot et al., 2012). Therefore, for each social task we created one score for Knowledge and one for Competence.

5 Although knowledge is also considered an aspect of competence, as stated, it differs in nature from the other components. For the sake of readability, we will therefore refer to the three combined components as 'Competence' and to the knowledge component as 'Knowledge'. Thus, this only indicates a distinction of assigned labels.

The Knowledge scores were calculated based on item response theory analysis (IRT) and the Competence scores were determined by averaging the scores on the corresponding items. To measure Knowledge, a multiple-choice test containing three response options was used. For the measurement of Competence, survey items were used that were scored with 4-point Likert scales. See Appendix B for Cronbach's alpha's, mean scores and standard deviations of the components of the social tasks and see Appendix C for item examples.

Furthermore, we executed multigroup factor analyses to determine whether valid group comparisons could be made (Van de Schoot et al., 2012). Ethnic background (migrant and native background) and educational track (pre-vocational and other track) were included for testing measurement invariance of attitude, skills and reflection for all social tasks. Configural, metric and scalar invariance were sequentially tested in MPlus. In all models ΔCFI (configural compared to metric and metric compared to scalar) stayed within the 0.01 threshold (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Thus, it was concluded that group comparisons using this model are valid comparisons. The same holds for the knowledge component of the social tasks, based on a measurement invariance test conducted in jMetrik 4.0.5 (Meyer, 2014).



### *Individual-level variables (control variables)*

Control variables were added to the analyses, both on the individual level and the school level. Some of these variables have been previously demonstrated to be related to certain citizenship outcomes (see e.g. Munniksma et al., 2017; Schulz et al., 2010; Wanders et al., 2020a; Wanders et al., 2020b). On the student-level the control variables were as follows. *Migrant background* was defined as a dichotomous variable (1 = migrant background, 0 = native), based on information from the student questionnaire. Following Statistics Netherlands' (2016a) definition, if either of the parents was born outside The Netherlands, the student was classed as having a migrant background. In case of missing data on the parents, the student's country of birth was used for the classification. Approximately a quarter of the students in our sample had a migrant background (23.9%).

Parents' educational level served as an indicator for students' *socioeconomic status* (SES). Based on information provided by the student, SES was determined according to the parent with the highest educational level. It has been previously found that there is a positive association between the educational level of

parents and citizenship outcomes (Schulz et al. 2010; Wanders et al., 2020a). This result may stem from a richer learning environment provided by high-educated parents (Wanders et al., 2020a). Accordingly, we conversely expected students from low-educated families to be more disadvantaged in terms of citizenship. Consequently, we created a dummy variable for SES (1 = low SES, 0 = not-low SES). Educational levels up to secondary vocational education were assigned to the low-SES group. Low-SES students constituted 11.7% of our sample. Furthermore, a variable for missingness on SES was created (1 = missing, 0 = not missing) in order to include students in the analysis for whom SES was not known (18%).

Finally, *gender (*male = 1, female = 0) and *educational* track (1 = pre-vocational track, 0 = other track) were added as control variables on the individual level. In our sample, 51.7% of the respondents were female. The pre-vocational track students accounted for 42 % of the sample.

### *The teacher-student relationship*

In this study the quality of the teacher–student relationship is measured as the perceived amount of *teacher support* (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). To measure students' perception of teacher support we used a scale adapted from Malecki and Elliott (1999). The adapted scale consists of 8 items with response options ranging on a 5-point Likert scale ( from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'). Examples of the items are: "My teachers care about me" and "My teachers treat me in a good and fair way". For the scale construction responses were averaged (Cronbach's alpha = .87). In our sample, the average score was 3.65 (SD = .57).

### *School-level variables*

Ethnic school composition was operationalized as the degree of *ethnic school diversity*. To this end, following previous studies, a Herfindahl Index was calculated (Dijkstra et al., 2015; Lancee & Dronkers 2011; Putnam 2007). This index indicates the total number and size of ethnic groups[6]. To illustrate; a completely homogeneous environment has an index of 0, whereas an entirely diverse context results in an index of 1. To calculate the index, students were assigned to nine large ethnic groups, depending on parent's country of birth. In case of both parents being born abroad, mothers' country of birth was used for

6 Calculation of the index is as follows: (proportion ethnic group 1)$^2$ + (proportion ethnic group 2)$^2$ + ⋯ + (proportion ethnic group n)$^2$. The index developed by Putnam (2007) represents the degree of homogeneity. To obtain the degree of heterogeneity, we subtracted the resulting index from 1.

the classification. Missing information on one parent led to using information of the other parent. If no information was available on either parent, we considered the students' country of birth. We constructed the following nine groups: Native-Dutch (75.9%), Turkish (4.0%), Moroccan (5.1%), former Dutch colonies (Surinam, Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, 2.9%), European (North, West, South, 3.3%), Mid- and Southeast European and other Western (2.0%), Middle Eastern (1.4%), Asian (2.7%), Sub-Saharan African and other Non-Western (2.8%). Creating more specific groups was not possible due to the small numbers of students within certain groups. On average, the diversity index in our sample was .34 (SD = .23).

We included *school SES composition, school size, degree of urbanization* and *school type* as control variables. SES composition was constructed by aggregating individual SES to the school level by calculating the proportion of students with a low-SES background. The average proportion of students with low-SES in schools was .12 (SD = .08). We obtained information on the number of students per school location (school size) from a dataset of the Education Executive Agency (2015). The mean school location size was 872 (SD = 529).

The *degree of urbanization* of the school location was operationalized according to data from Statistics Netherlands (2012). Five categories were classified (1= rural, 5 = highly urban) using the number of home addresses per postal code area. In more urban locations people may be challenged more in terms of enacting and practicing for citizenship due to the complexities of the environment (see e.g. Geijsel et al., 2012; Zwaans et al., 2008). In our sample, the mean degree of urbanization was 3.56 (SD = 1.30).

Finally, schools were classified based on their *school type*. Dutch schools are either 'categorial', meaning that the school provides education for a specific track (e.g. for the pre-vocational track), or 'comprehensive', which means more than one track is available. It could be argued that students in the categorial pre-vocational schools are potentially more disadvantaged concerning learning opportunities for citizenship, as they are both in a lower educational track and isolated from students from other tracks. Pre-vocational categorial schools accounted for 32% of the sample.

### *Analyses*

To account for the hierarchical data structure (students in schools), multivariate multilevel analyses were carried out using Mplus 8.1 (Hox, 2002; Snijders & Bosker 1999). When analysing multiple dependent variables, as is the case in this study, it is most suitable to conduct multivariate multilevel analysis in which all outcome variables are included concurrently. This type of analysis increases statistical power and results in lower chances of a Type I error (Hox, 2002). Notwithstanding, in our model the number of parameters outnumbered the number of schools, increasing the risk of a somewhat unreliable analysis. Consequently, we performed multivariate multilevel analyses per social task. Thus, per social task we included Competence and Knowledge simultaneously in the analysis.

The following variables were added to the models at the school level: ethnic school diversity, and the control variables school SES composition, school type, school size and degree of urbanization. Variables at the individual levels were perceived teacher support, and included as control variables: educational track, gender, low-SES, SES missingness, and ethnic background. Grand mean centering was applied for ethnic school diversity, teacher support and their interaction term.

In the first step, no predictor variables were included in the model, also known as the null model. This step was taken to ensure the appropriateness of the multilevel analysis. In Model 1 the control variables from both the individual and school level were added. In Model 2, ethnic school diversity was included to investigate its association with the outcome variables. Next, Model 3 included teacher support to examine its main effect on the outcome variables. Lastly, in Model 4, the cross-level interaction between ethnic school composition and teacher support was added. The next section provides the results of the analyses.

## Results

Table 1 and 2 show the correlations between the variables on the individual and school level. As part of the multilevel analyses we compared model fits of the successive models. The model fits significantly improved in each consecutive step for all models (also see Tables 3 to 6). Additionally, for all significant results, effect sizes were calculated (see Appendix D).

**Table 1.** Correlations between individual level variables ($n$ = 4,902)

| Measures | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. | 10. | 11. | 12. | 13. | 14. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SES | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SES missing | -.17** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic background | .01 | .12** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Educational track | .14** | .19** | .08** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | .001 | .04** | -.02 | .05** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Teacher support | -.009 | -.01 | -10** | .02 | -.06** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Act. democratically-Competence | -.04* | -.06* | .14** | -.07** | -.05** | .16** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Act. democratically-Knowledge | -.12** | -.14** | -.16** | -.42** | -.13** | .14** | .12** | 1 | | | | | | |
| Act. socially respons.-Competence | -.02 | -.06** | .09** | -.07** | -.23** | .19** | .69** | .09** | 1 | | | | | |
| Act. socially respons.-Knowledge | -.07** | -.11** | -.14** | -.30** | -.19** | .16** | .07 | .55** | .07** | 1 | | | | |
| Dealing with conflicts-Competence | -.04** | -.09** | .02 | -.13** | -.20** | .24** | .60** | .20** | .75** | .20** | 1 | | | |
| Dealing with conflicts-Knowledge | -.08** | -.10** | -.10** | -.34** | -.20** | .14** | .07** | .54** | .09** | .51** | .21** | 1 | | |
| Dealing with differences-Competence | -.06** | -.09** | .17** | -.09** | -.21** | .10** | .64** | .09** | .70** | .08** | .58** | .09** | 1 | |
| Dealing with differences-Knowledge | -.10** | -.14** | -.07** | -.37** | -.17** | .13** | .12** | .60** | .09** | .52** | .20** | .55** | .11** | 1 |

*Note.* Pearson's correlation coefficients are reported for the correlation between continuous and dichotomous variables and Phi coefficients are reported for the correlation between dichotomous variables.
*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01.

**Table 2.** Correlations between school level variables ($n$ = 62)

| Measures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ethnic school diversity | 1 | | | | |
| 2. School size | -.03** | 1 | | | |
| 3. SES composition | -.08 | -.38** | 1 | | |
| 4. Degree of urbanization | .58** | .25* | -.31* | 1 | |
| 5. School type | .07** | -.58** | .40** | -.14 | 1 |

*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01.

## Acting democratically: Competence and Knowledge

Table 3 shows the results of the stepwise multilevel analysis concerning acting democratically. Ethnic school diversity demonstrated a significant positive relationship with Competence (β = .11). However, no significant relationship was found with Knowledge (β = -.28). Thus, the more diverse schools are, the better students perceive their Competences to be in acting democratically. It should be noted that the positive relationship between ethnic diversity and Competence was revealed only after adding teacher support to the model (see Model 3). This may indicate a suppressing effect of teacher support. Teacher support itself was positively associated with both Competence (β = .12) and Knowledge (β = .24). In other words, students who perceive to receive more teacher support, report higher levels of Competence and Knowledge in acting democratically. Lastly, there was no significant cross-level interaction between school composition and teacher support for neither Competence nor Knowledge.

## Acting in a socially responsible manner: Competence and Knowledge

The results for acting in a socially responsible manner are presented in Table 4. It shows that ethnic school diversity is significantly positively related to Competence (β=.11) and significantly negatively related to Knowledge (β=-.52). A change in the school composition effect on Competence has been observed after inclusion of teacher support. That is, the non-effect of degree of school diversity on Competence in Model 2 became significantly positive after adding teacher support in Model 3. In addition, there was a positive association between teacher support and both Competence (β = .14) and Knowledge (β = .29). A negative cross-level interaction effect between the degree of ethnic school diversity and teacher support was found only for Competence (β = -.13). This indicates that the more teacher support students perceive to receive, the less they benefit from being in a more diverse school.

### Dealing with conflicts: Competence and Knowledge

In Table 5 the results are presented for dealing with conflicts. Ethnic school composition showed no significant association with Competence (β = .04). A significantly negative relationship was found between the degree of ethnic school diversity and Knowledge (β = -.43). Again, it was found, that the more teacher support students perceived to receive, the higher their levels of Competence (β = .19) and Knowledge (β = .26). Finally, there was no cross-level interaction between ethnic school diversity and teacher support.

### Dealing with differences: Competence and Knowledge

In Table 6 the results are summarized for dealing with differences. The results showed that ethnic school diversity is significantly positively related to Competence (β = .21). No significant relationship was found between degree of school diversity and Knowledge (β = -.27). In accordance with the other social tasks, it was found that teacher support is positively associated with both Competence (β = .10) and Knowledge (β = .26). Again, no cross-level interaction effect between ethnic school diversity and teacher support was found.

**Table 3.** Multilevel analysis – acting democratically (Competence & Knowledge)

| | Competence | | | | Knowledge | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** | **Model 4** | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** | **Model 4** |
| Intercept | **2.71(.03)** | **2.72(.04)** | **2.70(.04)** | **2.70(.04)** | **1.96(.24)** | **1.82(.23)** | **1.77(.22)** | **1.77(.22)** |
| **School level** | | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic composition (Herfindahl index) | | .05(.04) | **.11(.04)** | **.11(.04)** | | -.38(.21) | -.26(.21) | -.28(.21) |
| School size | **.00(.00)** | **.00(.00)** | **.00(.00)** | **.00(.00)** | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) |
| Degree of urbanization | **.03(.01)** | **.03(.01)** | **.03(.01)** | **.03(.01)** | **-.04(.01)** | .01(.04) | .00(.04) | .00(.04) |
| School type (vocational) | -.01(.03) | -.01(.03) | -.01(.03) | -.01(.03) | -.10(.12) | -.10(.12) | -.10(.12) | -.10(.12) |
| SES composition (proportion low) | **-.39(.11)** | **-.39(.11)** | **-.36(.11)** | **-.36(.11)** | **-1.80(.74)** | **-1.75(.71)** | **-1.69(.68)** | **-1.66(.68)** |
| **Cross-level** | | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic school composition * Teacher support level 1 | | | | n.a. | | | | .10(.17) |
| **Individual level** | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | **-.04(.01)** | **-.04(.01)** | -.03(.01) | -.03(.01) | **-.26(.04)** | **-.26(.04)** | **-.24(.04)** | **-.24(.04)** |
| Ethnicity (migrant) | **.10(.02)** | **.09(.02)** | **.09(.02)** | **.09(.02)** | **-.24(.04)** | **-.23(.04)** | **-.22(.04)** | **-.22(.04)** |
| Pre-vocational track | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | **-.72(.09)** | **-.72(.09)** | **-.72(.09)** | **-.72(.09)** |
| SES low | -.03(.02) | -.03(.02) | -.03(.02) | -.03(.02) | **-.17(.05)** | **-.17(.05)** | **-.17(.05)** | **-.17(.05)** |
| SES missing | **-.07(.01)** | **-.07(.01)** | **-.06(.01)** | **-.06(.01)** | **-.10(.04)** | **-.10(.05)** | **-.10(.05)** | **-.10(.05)** |
| Teacher support | | | **.12(.01)** | **.12(.01)** | | | **.24(.03)** | **n.a.** |
| Improvement fit (TRd) | **484.82** | **6.71** | **182.08** | **12.01** | | | | |
| Δ*df* | 20 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | | | |

*Notes.* Standard errors in parentheses.
ICC's of the null model for respectively Competence and Knowledge: .06 and .27
Significant effects are presented in bold, with $p<.05$.

**Table 4.** Multilevel analysis – acting in a socially responsible manner (Competence & Knowledge)

| | Competence | | | | Knowledge | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** | **Model 4** | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** | **Model 4** |
| Intercept | **2.85(.04)** | **2.87(.04)** | **2.84(.04)** | **2.84(.04)** | **2.18 (.23)** | **1.95(.21)** | **1.89(.21)** | **1.90(.21)** |
| **School level** | | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic composition (Herfindahl index) | | .06(.04) | **.12(.04)** | **.11(.04)** | | **-.64(.24)** | **-.49(.24)** | **-.52 (.24)** |
| School size | **.00(.00)** | **.00(.00)** | **.00(.00)** | **.00(.00)** | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | **.00(.00)** | .00(.00) |
| Degree of urbanization | **.02(.01)** | **.02(.01)** | **.02(.01)** | .02(.01) | **-.07(.03)** | .00(.04) | .00(.04) | .00(.04) |
| School type (vocational) | -.01(.03) | -.01(.03) | -.01(.03) | -.01(.03) | -.09(.12) | -.07(.12) | -.08(.12) | -.07(.12) |
| SES composition (proportion low) | **-.28(.11)** | **-.28(.11)** | **-.24(.11)** | **-.24(.12)** | -1.28(.76) | -1.21(.68) | -1.13(.65) | -1.16(.67) |
| **Cross-level** | | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic school composition * Teacher support | | | | **-.13(.05)** | | | | -.00(.17) |
| **Individual level** | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | **-.17(.01)** | **-.17(.01)** | **-.16(.01)** | **-.16(.01)** | **-.47(.04)** | **-.47(.04)** | **-.45(.04)** | **-.45(.04)** |
| Ethnicity (migrant) | **.05(.01)** | **.05(.02)** | **.05(.02)** | **.05(.02)** | **-.18(.05)** | **-.15(.05)** | **-.15(.05)** | **-.15(.05)** |
| Pre-vocational track | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | **-.56(.10)** | **-.56(.09)** | **-.55(.09)** | **-.56(.09)** |
| SES low | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | -.02(.02) | -.01(.02) | -.09(.05) | -.09(.05) | -.09(.05) | -.09(.05) |
| SES missing | **-.06(.01)** | **-.06(.01)** | **-.05(.01)** | **-.05(.01)** | -.09(.05) | -.09(.05) | -.08(.05) | -.08(.05) |
| Teacher support | | | **.14(.01)** | **n.a.** | | | **.29(.04)** | **n.a.** |
| Improvement fit (TRd) | **563.70** | **10.71** | **183.93** | **41.76** | | | | |
| Δ*df* | 20 | 2 | 2 | 4 | | | | |

*Notes.* Standard errors in parentheses.
ICC's of the null model for respectively Competence and Knowledge: .04 and .17
Significant effects are presented in bold, with $p<.05$.

**Table 5.** Multilevel analysis – dealing with conflicts (Competence & Knowledge)

| | Competence | | | | Knowledge | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** | **Model 4** | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** | **Model 4** |
| Intercept | **3.05(.04)** | **3.04(.05)** | **3.00(.04)** | **3.00(.04)** | **2.07(.21)** | **1.86(.19)** | **1.81(.19)** | **1.81(.19)** |
| **School level** | | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic composition (Herfindahl index) | | -.04(.04) | .05(.04) | .04(.04) | | **-.56(.22)** | **-.43 (.22)** | **-.43(.22)** |
| School size | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) |
| Degree of urbanization | .01(.01) | .02(.01) | .01(.01) | .01(.01) | -.04(.03) | .02(.03) | .02(.03) | .02(.03) |
| School type (vocational) | -.01(.03) | .01(.03) | .01(.03) | .00(.03) | -.15(.11) | -.13(.11) | -.14(.11) | -.14(.11) |
| SES composition (proportion low) | **-.27(.14)** | **-.27(.14)** | -.21(.13) | -.22(.13) | **-1.39(.67)** | **-1.33(.60)** | **-1.25(.58)** | **-1.26(.58)** |
| **Cross-level** | | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic school composition * Teacher support | | | | -.06(.06) | | | | n.a. |
| **Individual level** | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | **-.16(.02)** | **-.16(.02)** | **-.15(.02)** | **-.15(.02)** | **-.48(.04)** | **-.48(.04)** | **-.46(.04)** | **-.46(.04)** |
| Ethnicity (migrant) | .02(.02) | .03(.02) | .03(.02) | .03(.02) | **-.11(.05)** | -.08(.05) | -.07(.05) | -.07(.05) |
| Pre-vocational track | **-.07(.02)** | **-.07(.02)** | **-.08(.02)** | **-.07(.02)** | **-.58(.10)** | **-.58(.10)** | **-.58(.10)** | **-.58(.10)** |
| SES low | **-.03(.02)** | **-.03(.02)** | **-.03(.01)** | **-.03(.02)** | -.08(.05) | -.08(.05) | -.07(.05) | -.07(.05) |
| SES missing | **-.07(.01)** | **-.07(.01)** | **-.07(.01)** | **-.07(.01)** | -.03(.05) | -.03(.05) | -.03(.05) | -.03(.05) |
| Teacher support | | | **.19(.02)** | **n.a.** | | | **.26(.03)** | **.26(.03)** |
| Improvement fit (TRd) | **595.04** | **10.74** | **303.91** | **16.90** | | | | |
| $\Delta df$ | 20 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | | | |

*Notes.* Standard errors in parentheses.
ICC's of the null model for respectively Competence and Knowledge: .04 and .17
Significant effects are presented in bold, with $p<.05$.

**Table 6.** Multilevel analysis – dealing with differences (Competence & Knowledge)

| | Competence | | | | Knowledge | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** | **Model 4** | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** | **Model 4** |
| Intercept | **2.66(.04)** | **2.72(.04)** | **2.70(.04)** | **2.70(.04)** | **1.83(.22)** | **1.69(.20)** | **1.64(.20)** | **1.63(.20)** |
| **School level** | | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic composition (Herfindahl index) | | **.17(.04)** | **.22(.04)** | **.21(.05)** | | -.38(.23) | -.26(.23) | -.27(.23) |
| School size | **.00(.00)** | **.00(.00)** | **.00(.00)** | **.00(.00)** | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) | .00(.00) |
| Degree of urbanization | **.04(.01)** | **.02(.01)** | **.02(.01)** | **.02(.01)** | -.01(.03) | .03(.03) | .02(.03) | .03(.03) |
| School type (vocational) | -.02(.03) | -.02(.03) | -.03(.03) | -.03(.03) | -.05(.12) | -.04(.12) | -.05(.11) | -.05(.12) |
| SES composition (proportion low) | **-.33(.14)** | **-.35(.14)** | **-.32(.14)** | **-.31(.15)** | **-1.50(.71)** | **-1.46(.66)** | **-1.39(.64)** | **-1.33 (.63)** |
| **Cross-level** | | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic school composition * Teacher support level 1 | | | | -.08(.06) | | | | .06(.15) |
| **Individual level** | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | **-.17(.02)** | **-.17(.02)** | **-.16(.02)** | **-.16(.02)** | **-.38(.04)** | **-.38(.04)** | **-.36(.04)** | **-.36(.04)** |
| Ethnicity (migrant) | **.13(.02)** | **.12(.02)** | **.12(.02)** | **.12(.02)** | -.03(.05) | -.02(.05) | -.01(.05) | -.00(.05) |
| Pre-vocational track | -.03(.02) | -.02(.02) | -.03(.02) | -.02(.02) | **-.71(.10)** | **-.71(.10)** | **-.71(.10)** | **-.72(.09)** |
| SES low | **-.08 (.02)** | **-.08 (.02)** | **-.07 (.02)** | **-.07 (.02)** | **-.18(.05)** | **-.18(.05)** | **-.18(.05)** | **-.18(.05)** |
| SES missing | **-.11(.02)** | **-.11(.02)** | **-.10(.01)** | **-.10(.01)** | **-.15(.04)** | **-.15(.04)** | **-.14(.04)** | **-.15(.04)** |
| Teacher support | | | **.10(.02)** | **n.a.** | | | **.26(.04)** | **n.a.** |
| Improvement fit (TRd) | **617.62** | **15.81** | **101.42** | **33.55** | | | | |
| Δ*df* | 20 | 2 | 2 | 4 | | | | |

*Notes.* Standard errors in parentheses.
ICC's of the null model for respectively Competence and Knowledge: .08 and .20
Significant effects are presented in bold, with p<.05.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, our aim was to gain understanding of the association between the degree of ethnic school diversity, teacher support and students' citizenship competences. To this end we, firstly, investigated the extent to which ethnic school composition and perceived teacher support were related to students' citizenship competences, and, secondly, we examined whether ethnic school composition and perceived teacher support interacted in their association with students' citizenship competences. Students' citizenship outcomes were operationalized in terms of their scores on Competences and Knowledge concerning four social tasks that represent young people's daily life citizenship reality (cf. Ten Dam et al., 2011).

Concerning the direct relationship between school composition and citizenship competences our analyses showed that ethnic school composition is significantly positively related to competences in acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner, and dealing with differences. Thus, the more ethnically diverse schools are, the higher the levels of competences in these three domains. There was no relationship between school composition and competence in dealing with conflicts.

The positive relationships confirm the assumption that, in comparison to less or non-diverse schools, students in more heterogeneous schools experience more encounters in which they can practice the social tasks (cf. Agirdag et al., 2016; Geijsel et al., 2012). This may either enhance students' actual capacity to function adequately or it may lead to more positive self-assessments. It is also possible that both reasonings are valid.

The explanation of the lack of relationship between school composition and competences in dealing with conflicts may be sought in the nature of this particular social task. Estimating one's own ability to deal with conflicts requires the imagination of a situation in which a negative condition has already emerged. More importantly, in such a situation people's personal interests are at stake or jeopardized more urgently and to a higher degree, compared to conditions relating to the other social tasks. Therefore, showing the competence to deal with conflicts may be a challenge for all students, regardless of the school composition. Consequently, it could also be that all schools pay attention to dealing with conflicts.

When it comes to ethnic composition in relation to knowledge, no effect was found on acting democratically and dealing with differences, while a negative relationship was demonstrated with acting in socially responsible manner and dealing with conflicts. In other words, in schools that are more diverse, students have less knowledge on acting in a socially responsible manner and dealing with conflicts. Against the background of the diverse character of society at large, it may perhaps be the case that in all schools, irrespective of the student body, more focus is placed on the discussion and teaching of democratic issues and dealing with diversity. This may explain the non-effect of student composition on knowledge in the aforementioned areas, but it does not explain the negative relationship with knowledge of acting in a socially responsible manner and dealing with conflicts. Furthermore, it should be additionally mentioned that the relationship between the degree of ethnic diversity and knowledge of acting democratically and dealing with differences also pointed in a negative direction, albeit not significant. Altogether, the findings may also suggest that more diverse schools direct their attention more towards the development of competences rather than to knowledge, resulting in lower scores on knowledge for students in more diverse schools.



In line with the above, what stands out in these findings are the differential effects on competences and knowledge within and across the social tasks. Although it is difficult to interpret this observation content-wise per social task, it does coincide with the finding that the knowledge component of citizenship is of a different kind compared to its other components (Ten Dam et al., 2011). Our findings are therefore also another validation for the distinct analysis of Components and Knowledge.

Overall, it could be stated that the findings reported above are only partly in line with the theory and previous findings discussed in the introduction. As we took on a rather explorative approach, we did not formulate clear-cut hypotheses prior to the analyses on the relationship between school composition and each of the social tasks. The main point of consideration was the differential role that homogeneity, consistency and heterogeneity within contexts might play for human learning and development (Cochran, 1990; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Dijkstra et al., 2015). Complying with Dijkstra et al.'s reasoning (2015), we expected that more heterogeneous environments could be specifically favourable to learn about issues that have to do with contrasts between people, as is mostly the case when one handles conflicts and differences. This was only partly confirmed based on our findings.

As stated previously, to our knowledge the study by Dijkstra et al. (2015) is the only study that investigated the relationship between school diversity and citizenship competences in a comprehensive manner. In their study, a positive relationship was demonstrated between degree of school diversity and citizenship knowledge and reflection. As we used the same questionnaire (CCQ, see Ten Dam et al., 2011) as Dijkstra et al (2015), but with a different operationalization for citizenship outcomes, it is somewhat difficult to compare the results. However, the most striking divergence is the fact that we found either a negative or non-effect of diversity on Knowledge depending on the social task, while Dijkstra et al. (2015) reported a positive effect on knowledge overall. It should be noted however, that Dijkstra et al. (2015) used the CCQ for the measurement of knowledge, while we used newly constructed knowledge items. Although both studies provide valuable insights, to further expand our knowledge on the association between ethnic school diversity and citizenship outcomes more research in this area is warranted.

Regarding teacher support, positive associations were found with all social tasks, and for both competence and knowledge. These findings are in accordance with our expectation that students who perceive their teachers to be caring, fair and interested in forming relationships with them (Ryan & Patrick, 2001), will learn more in the citizenship domain. The results additionally correspond to theoretical assumptions in the area of learning in general and the citizenship-related domain in particular (Cook, 1985; Flanagan, 2013; Flanagan et al., 2007; Wang & Degol, 2016). Finally, our findings are consistent with previous research on the relationship between teacher-student relationships and citizenship-related outcomes (Isac et al., 2014; Rutkowski et al., 2014; Wanders et al., 2020a, 2020b).

Another result that is noteworthy in relation to teacher support, is that in our analyses it appeared that inclusion of teacher support in the models of acting democratically and acting in a socially responsible manner, changed the effects of the school composition. That is, school composition became a significant predictor only after adding teacher support to the analysis. This provides an important direction for future research. Nonetheless, the results underscore the importance of establishing good teacher-student relationships, in which students feel supported by their teachers.

Interestingly, no moderation effect of teacher support was found, except for one outcome. A significantly negative interaction effect was demonstrated between

school composition and teacher support on acting in a socially responsible manner. This indicates that the more students feel supported by their teachers, the less they profit from being in school that is highly diverse, compared to students who perceive less teacher support. Or interpreted conversely, the less diversity in schools, the more positive the relationship becomes between teacher support and competence in acting socially responsible. The question remains whether the absence of a moderation effect for the other social tasks indicates an actual non-existing interaction. It could be the case that we would have been able to detect such a significant effect with a larger sample size, with more schools that are at the high end of degree of diversity.

Some limitations of our study should be considered, before turning to the implications of our findings. Firstly, the results are based on correlational data, which only enables the observation of a relationship between variables, without any indication of causation. Future studies should take on a longitudinal approach to enhance insights on causal relationships and the developmental trajectory of citizenship competences. Secondly, we used student self-reports for the measurement of both teacher support and citizenship competences. In future studies, for the assessment of citizenship, perceptions of other informants, such as teachers, parents and peers should be included (Geijsel et al., 2012). Such an approach could further broaden our understanding of young people's citizenship competences. Moreover, our findings reveal the importance of the amount of *perceived* teacher support. Follow-up research could additionally focus on teachers' views of the support they provide, along with qualitative observational data.



In conclusion, our results implicate that educational policy, schools and teachers should pay attention to the characteristics of the student body and teacher support in their attempts to promote students' citizenship competences. Although variance at the school level was rather low, this study showed that the degree of ethnic school diversity and perceived teacher support make significant differences in students citizenship competences. Building strong teacher-student relationships appears meaningful for students' capacities to carry out the social tasks that reflect their daily citizenship. Additionally, as one of the few studies that have linked school composition to a comprehensive measure of young people's citizenship, our study showed that there is a discrepancy in the effect that school composition has on student citizenship. While students in more diverse schools scored higher on most of the competences within social tasks, they scored lower on two out of four knowledge components. These findings

show the potential of schools as mini-societies and practice grounds. Therefore, schools and teachers should take on the opportunity to contribute to students' citizenship competences and knowledge, considering the characteristics of the student population.

**Appendix A.** Definitions of citizenship competences in terms of components and social tasks (table taken from Ten Dam et al., 2011)

| **COMPONENTS** | **Knowledge** *knowing, understanding, insight* | **Attitudes** *thoughts, desires, willingness* | **Skills** *estimate of what one can do* | **Reflection** *contemplation of topics* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SOCIAL TASK** | A young person with such knowledge… | A young person with such attitudes… | A young person with such skills… | A young person with such reflection… |
| **Acting democratically** *Acceptance of and contribution to a democratic society* | … knows what democratic principles are and what acting in accordance with them involves. | … wants to hear everyone's voice, enter into a dialogue and make an active, critical contribution. | … is able to assert own opinion and listen to the opinions of others. | … thinks about issues of democracy, power/powerlessness, equal/unequal rights. |
| **Acting in a socially responsible manner** *Taking shared responsibility for the communities to which one belongs.* | … knows social rules (i.e., legal or unspoken rules for social interaction). | … wants to uphold social justice, is prepared to provide care and assistance, does not want to harm another or the environment as a result of his or her behaviour. | … can adopt a socially just position. | … thinks about conflicts of interest, social cohesion, social processes, group processes (e.g., inclusion, exclusion), and own contribution to social justice. |
| **Dealing with conflicts** *Handling of minor situations of conflict or conflicts of interest to which the child him/herself is a party.* | … knows methods to solve conflicts such as searching for win-win solutions, calling in help from others, admission of mistakes, prevention of escalation. | … is willing to explore conflicts, prepared to consider the standpoint of another, jointly searches for an acceptable solution. | … can listen to others, put oneself in someone else's position, seek win-win solutions. | … thinks about how a conflict can arise, the role of others and oneself, and the possibilities to prevent or solve conflicts. |
| **Dealing with differences** *Handling of social, cultural, religious, and outward differences.* | . . . is familiar with cultural differences, has knowledge of rules of behaviour in different social situations, knows when one can speak of prejudice or discrimination. | . . . has a desire to learn other people's opinions and lifestyles, has a positive attitude towards differences. | . . . can adequately function in unfamiliar social situations, adjust to the desires or habits of others. | . . . thinks about the nature and consequences of the differences between people and cultural backgrounds for behaviour and processes of inclusion and exclusion. |

**Appendix B.** Reliability coefficients, mean scores, and standard deviations of the components of the two components of the social tasks (CCQ)

| | Number of items | Cronbach's α | Mean score | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Acting democratically** | | | | |
| Knowledge | 77 | .94 | .97 | 1.20 |
| ASR | 18 | .83 | 2.67 | .38 |
| **Acting in a socially responsible manner** | | | | |
| Knowledge | 23 | .85 | .94 | 1.30 |
| ASR | 17 | .83 | 2.59 | .39 |
| **Dealing with conflicts** | | | | |
| Knowledge | 24 | .86 | .86 | 1.28 |
| ASR | 19 | .90 | 2.77 | .43 |
| **Dealing with differences** | | | | |
| Knowledge | 39 | .90 | .79 | 1.26 |
| ASR | 18 | .87 | 2.44 | .45 |

**Appendix C.** Item examples of the CCQ and newly constructed knowledge items

| Component and social task | Introduction phrase | Item example | Response options (correct answer in bold) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Knowledge* | | | |
| Acting democratically | Instruction to choose the best option | "Laws.." | **A. Are rules about what is and what is not allowed in a country**<br>B. Are made by the Senate<br>C. Are only valid if all residents of a country agree to it |
| Acting in a socially responsible manner | | "When you go on vacation it is best for the environment if you travel by.." | A. Car, then you can determine yourself which route to take<br>B. plane, as the journey is shorter compared to other means of transport<br>**C. train, as it uses less energy compared to other means of transport** |
| Dealing with conflicts | | "Anouk and Lilian are having a fight in class. Babette is a mediator. What does Babette do then? Babette… (choose the best answer) | **A. Tries to help find a solution**<br>B. Sees who is to blame in the fight<br>C. Tells Anouk and Lillian what to do |
| Dealing with differences | | "How is it that the Netherlands has become a multicultural society? That is because of…" | A. Segregation<br>**B. Migration**<br>C. Assimilation |

**Appendix C** - continued

| Component and social task | Introduction phrase | Item example | Response options |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Attitude* | | | |
| Acting democratically | How well does this statement apply to you? | "People must listen carefully to each other, even if they differ in opinion" | 4-point Likert scale;<br>1) does not apply at all to me<br>2) does not apply much to me<br>3) applies a fair amount to me<br>4) applies completely to me |
| Acting in a socially responsible manner | | "If I have had a picnic with friends in the park, it is normal for us to clean up the mess" | |
| Dealing with conflicts | | "When I have a fight, I try to take the other person seriously" | |
| Dealing with differences | | "I am curious about how people in other countries live" | |

**Appendix C** - continued

| Component and social task | Introduction phrase | Item example | Response options |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Skills* | | | |
| Acting democratically | How good are you at..? | "Standing up for your opinion" | 4-point Likert scale;<br>1) not good at all<br>2) not very good<br>3) pretty good<br>4) very good |
| Acting in a socially responsible manner | | "Understanding what the other person feels" | |
| Dealing with conflicts | | "Coming up with a solution that everyone is satisfied with" | |
| Dealing with differences | | "Behaving normally in an unknown environment" | |

**Appendix C** - continued

| Component and social task | Introduction phrase | Item example | Response options |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Reflection* | | | |
| Acting democratically | How often do you think about…? | "Whether pupils are listened to at your school" | 4-point Likert scale;<br>1) (almost) never<br>2) only occasionally<br>3) fairly frequently<br>4) frequently |
| Acting in a socially responsible manner | | "Why some pupils bully" | |
| Dealing with conflicts | | "What you did wrong yourself, after a fight" | |
| Dealing with differences | | "Why people of different origins do not interact much" | |

**Appendix D.** Effect sizes of the significant primary independent variables

| | Acting democratically Competence | Acting democratically Knowledge | Acting socially responsible Competence | Acting socially responsible Knowledge | Dealing with conflicts Competence | Dealing with conflicts Knowledge | Dealing with differences Competence | Dealing with differences Knowledge |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Degree of diversity** | 0.28 | | 0.29 | -0.39 | | -0.34 | 0.47 | |
| **Teacher support** | 0.32 | 0.19 | 0.35 | 0.22 | 0.43 | 0.20 | 0.22 | 0.20 |
| **Degree of diversity x teacher support** | | | -0.32 | | | | | |

# 6

# Summary and General Discussion

The increasing diversity in many societies and its accompanying worries such as the deterioration of social cohesion, lack of concern for civic issues, and increasing individualism have led to a prioritization of preparing young people for participation and contribution to society (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2005; Eurydice, 2017; Geijsel et al., 2012). Supporting students' citizenship competences is a legal duty assigned to schools in many countries, with the aim of "bridging the gap between the individual and the community" and fortifying an inclusive society (Eurydice, 2017).

Parallel to society at large, the growth of heterogeneity has also become more and more visible in the make-up of the student body. Schools cater to varying student populations, and in that sense schools have the potential to be small-scaled societies, where students may meet different others, experience membership in a community and have a chance of encountering a democratic climate (Flanagan et al., 2007; Keating & Benton, 2013; Lenzi et al., 2014). Although schools may be fertile grounds for the development of citizenship competences, previous research suggests that the ethnic make-up of the student body may also pose some risks as regards co-existence within schools. For example, next to favorable outcomes, higher perceptions of conflict between students in heterogenous schools (Goldsmith, 2004), more peer victimization (see Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014) and more negative attitudes towards 'out-groups' in schools with higher proportions of students with a migrant background have been reported (Vervoort et al., 2011).

Despite these indications, we know little of whether differences in students' citizenship(-related) outcomes may be explained by schools' student composition. Moreover, while studies have focused on citizenship education (CE)-related school factors that may contribute to students' citizenship competences ( for a review, see Geboers et al., 2013), there is a scarcity of knowledge on what role particular CE-related school factors play in the association between school composition and students' citizenship(-related) outcomes. Therefore, the aims of this dissertation were: 1) to examine the extent to which school compositional characteristics are related to citizenship(-related) approaches and outcomes, and, 2) to investigate the role that a number of CE-related school factors (used interchangeably with the term 'school factors') play in this relationship. Different kinds of CE can be implemented by schools (Geboers et al., 2013). While the learning and teaching of citizenship can, for instance, be facilitated by a formal and explicit curriculum (Geboers et al., 2013), informal and less explicit approaches can also promote learning in the area of citizenship (Dijkstra et al., 2010).

Within the various possible approaches to CE, in this dissertation the main focus is on the latter mentioned.

For the first research aim the focal point was the ethnic make-up of the student body. To address the second aim, informal and climate-related aspects of citizenship education (CE) were studied: *teachers' context-related understandings and practices concerning diversity*, *schools' diversity climate*, *schools' open classroom climate* and *teacher support*.

In this chapter, first, the central findings of the studies will be presented and discussed. Next, we will discuss the strengths and limitations of our research. The chapter will finish with an overview of further considerations, suggestions for future research and implications.

## Summary of main findings



The study in **chapter 2** examined *teachers' context-related understandings and practices regarding dealing with diversity as part of citizenship education (CE)*. As sub-questions, *teachers' general CE understandings and practices*, *teachers' perceptions of their students in the area of citizenship and diversity* and *the kind of diversity-related activities that were offered* were investigated. For this purpose, interview data from 17 ninth grade teachers from three different schools were utilized. These schools differed substantially on several contextual features, such as the proportion of students with a migrant background, the degree of diversity, the socio-economic composition, the offered educational tracks and the degree of urbanization of the school location. The results revealed that the school context and the characteristics of the student population to a high extent shape the opportunities and the kind of diversity teaching that was offered, and, to a lesser extent, the way teachers interpreted the concept of diversity. Thus, diversity-related teacher practices were more context dependent than teachers' diversity-related understandings. These diversity-related understandings and practices were connected to teachers' perceptions of their students' needs and capacities, particularly in the area of citizenship and dealing with diversity. For example, the teachers in the school that catered to privileged students in higher educational tracks underscored their view of global citizenship and the opportunity to take international trips more strongly compared to the teachers in the other two schools. Moreover, the results suggest that the contextual and compositional features of schools play an interactive role in how teachers view

their students and talk about citizenship and diversity. Hence, when teachers expressed their perceptions of their students, they referred simultaneously or sequentially to multiple characteristics rather than to single features ( for example; the urban school location, and lower SES). Moreover, in general, teachers expressed both favorable and challenging aspects of their students' functioning and needs in the domain of citizenship and dealing with diversity, based on background characteristics of the students and the local context. Lastly, although teachers' interpretations of the meaning and need of dealing with diversity varied somewhat depending on the school context and student population, teachers, overall, commonly expressed positive notions regarding diversity. Teachers mostly focused on the development of students' social skills in dealing with diversity. That is, teachers' citizenship and diversity approaches seemed rather depoliticized and barely included emphasis on deep-rooted societal issues in relation to diversity.

**Chapter 3** built on chapter 2 by a quantitative assessment of the relationship between *the degree of ethnic school diversity, the diversity climate,* and *students' competences in dealing with differences* (Ten Dam et al., 2011). Several associations between the variables were examined. Firstly, the relationship between ethnic school diversity and students' competences in dealing with differences, and between ethnic school diversity and the school diversity climate were investigated. Next, it was examined to what extent the diversity climate is associated with students' competences in dealing with differences. Lastly, it was explored whether the diversity climate mediated or moderated the relationship between school diversity and dealing with differences. To examine these questions, data from 4,402 students and 535 teachers from 62 secondary education schools in the Netherlands were examined. Two-level (students in schools) multilevel analyses revealed a positive association between the degree of ethnic diversity and reflection and attitudes concerning differences between people. That is, students in schools that have a higher degree of diversity, assessed themselves as both reflecting more on and having more positive attitudes regarding differences between people. However, more diversity in schools was not related to students' knowledge and (self-reported) skills in dealing with differences. Further findings showed conflicting results concerning the two aspects of the diversity climate that were distinguished (the importance that teachers collectively attach to teaching about diversity as an educational goal and the degree to which the teaching of diversity is applied in practice). While teachers in more diverse schools reported more diversity-related practices, the degree of diversity was not associated with teachers valuing diversity-related

educational goals. In turn, the diversity climate did not contribute to students' competences in dealing with differences. Finally, the diversity climate neither explained (mediation) nor changed (moderation) the association between ethnic school diversity and students' competences to deal with differences.

The study in **chapter 4** addressed the question of whether there is an association between school composition and students' sense of school belonging (the sense of feeling at home in school) (Demanet & Van Houtte 2012; Goodenow, 1993). Apart from being a basic human psychological need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000), a sense of (school) belonging can be considered as a 'citizenship-related' outcome as it has previously been referred to together with notions of 'community' and 'social cohesion' (e.g. Battistich et al., 1997) and is positively related to civic commitments (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). It was additionally investigated whether (a school average) open classroom climate (OCC) – a frequently reported effective CE factor for citizenship (Geboers et al., 2013) - is related to a sense of school belonging and whether it affects the relationship between school composition and sense of school belonging. Data from 5,046 students across 75 Dutch secondary schools were used. Based on multilevel analyses, students in more diverse schools were found to have a lower sense of school belonging. In addition, a positive relationship was found between school average OCC and students' sense of school belonging. However, no moderation effect of school OCC was detected. In other words, the level of school average OCC did not affect the association between school composition and students' sense of school belonging.



Finally, the study presented in **chapter 5** investigated whether the degree of ethnic school diversity and perceived teacher support are associated with students' citizenship outcomes. Additionally, we investigated whether an interaction exists between degree of ethnic school diversity and perceived teacher support in their association with citizenship outcomes. These outcomes are conceptualized and operationalized as competences in *social tasks* that illustrate the type of citizenship or social tasks that youngsters come across in their everyday lives (see Ten Dam et al., 2011): *acting democratically*, *acting in a socially responsible manner*, *dealing with conflicts* and *dealing with differences*. Within these social tasks we differentiated between Competences (including attitudes, skills and reflection) and Knowledge. To answer our research questions, we performed multilevel analysis on a sample of 4,902 students from 75 Dutch secondary schools. The findings demonstrated that students in schools with a greater degree of diversity are more positive about their competences in acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner and

dealing with differences. However, in more diverse schools, students score lower on knowledge concerning acting in a socially responsible manner and dealing with conflicts. When it comes to teacher support, it was found that students who feel more supported by their teachers also score higher on competences and knowledge across all social tasks. A moderation effect, being a negative one, by teacher support was only found for the relationship between school composition and the Competence of acting in a socially responsible manner. This means that more teacher support is less beneficial for students in more diverse schools when it comes to their scores on acting socially responsible. Concludingly, overall, the degree of teacher support does not seem to be more relevant in more diverse schools.

## Overview and discussion of main findings

The aims of this thesis were to gain insight in the relationship between school composition and students' citizenship(-related) outcomes and to explore the role of citizenship education (CE)-related school factors in the potential association between school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes. In the following section, based on the findings summarized above, we will reflect on these aims and discuss the main findings.

### School composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes

Taking our findings together, both positive, negative and non-effects of the school composition on the outcome variables have been found. These varied results mirror former research on the association between school composition and particular sub aspects of citizenship, predominantly in the area of dealing with diversity and differences (e.g. Closson et al., 2014; Kokkonen et al., 2010; Vervoort et al., 2011).

While the quantitative studies revealed that the degree of ethnic diversity of the student composition is positively related to many of students' citizenship competences, negative relationships were found between the degree of school diversity and knowledge regarding acting in a socially responsible manner and dealing with conflicts. Next, school diversity appeared to be negatively associated with students' sense of school belonging. Although student outcomes were not directly measured by means of a questionnaire in the qualitative study, similar mixed perceptions of student capabilities and needs in the area of citizenship and dealing with diversity were observed on part of the teachers.

It is striking that students in more diverse schools assess themselves to be more competent in many of the social tasks compared to students in less diverse or largely homogeneous schools, while at the same time they score lower on knowledge regarding two out of four social tasks. A conceivable explanation for higher scores on competences would be that in more diverse schools, students experience more occasions to practice with citizenship and/or they may be more positive about themselves due to these practicing opportunities (cf. Agirdag et al., 2016; Geijsel et al., 2012). Interpreting the findings on knowledge is somewhat more difficult. A possible explanation could be that the knowledge component of citizenship is a different kind of citizenship outcome and contains a stronger cognitive element compared to other citizenship competences; a finding which confirms previous observations (Ten Dam et al., 2011). It should be mentioned though, that we have controlled for educational track in our studies and it is not assumed that students in more diverse schools have less cognitive abilities. Another explanation for the findings is the possibility that in diverse schools, the focus is more strongly laid on the promotion of competences (attitudes, skills and reflection) than on knowledge; resulting in higher scores in the former and lower scores in the latter domain (although the negative relationship between degree of diversity and knowledge was only statistically significant for two of the four social tasks).



Student competences and needs were also partly addressed in the qualitative study. Depending on students' backgrounds and the school environment, teachers mentioned different kinds of strengths and challenges for their students in the area of citizenship. In their expressions, teachers made a seemingly less sharp distinction between knowledge on the one hand and competences on the other hand. In short, the characteristics of the knowledge component of citizenship and the diversity in measurements between and within studies may serve as explanations for the mixed findings regarding differences between students in citizenship(-related) outcomes depending on school composition and school context.

At this point, given the mixed findings within and between the studies, a few words are in place regarding the theoretical implications of conceptualizing citizenship outcomes of young people as demarcated competences on four social tasks, which are in turn subdivided in four components (Ten Dam et al., 2011). The inconclusive findings reported above may not be only a matter of different measurement methods but could also suggest a re-evaluation of how citizenship outcomes are conceptualized and operationalized. Citizenship

knowledge, for instance, has received a great deal of attention in the citizenship literature (e.g. Schulz et al., 2010) and is perceived as a central precondition for citizenship. However, the studies in this dissertation have shown that students in more diverse schools can show better citizenship competences even when they have less knowledge of certain citizenship domains compared to students in less diverse schools. The question then rises how knowledge on the one hand and competences (attitude, skills and reflection) on the other hand theoretically relate to each other and to what degree one can exist without the other. Moreover, the qualitative study showed that teachers speak in less differentiated ways of students' competences and needs. This could mean two things; either teachers lack the appropriate theoretical language or vocabulary to describe their students' citizenship competences in specific ways, or knowledge and competences concerning different social tasks may in fact be more intertwined than the theoretical differentiation suggests.

Due to scarcity of previous research the studies in this dissertation were explorative, thus hampering the formulation of concrete hypotheses on the relationship between school composition and citizenship outcomes. The mixed findings, however, partly resonate with the general assumption addressed in the introduction chapter of this thesis that the characteristics of the environment in terms of homogeneity and diversity may be both beneficial and not, depending on the citizenship outcome under study (cf. Dijkstra et al., 2015). Based on the findings, it can be stated, at least, that larger degrees of ethnic diversity and other school contextual characteristics have both positive and negative effects on (perceived and self-assessed) citizenship(-related) outcomes. These findings are also in line with results of research that focuses on the effects of diversity on intergroup contact, which also shows both positive and negative outcomes simultaneously (see Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014). Taken together, our research indicates that the relationship between school composition and outcomes in the area of citizenship is complex, dynamic and multidimensional. This observation is congruent with complexity theory (Mason, 2008; Morrison, 2008), which refutes the idea that the social world and social organizations are systems that are simple, unidimensional, and develop and change in linear ways.

Another remarkable finding is that although the degree of diversity is positively associated with certain citizenship competences, students in more diverse schools experience a lower sense of school belonging. If one considers the school to be a small-scaled society where students are school citizens (Dutch Education Council, 2003) and where they learn to be part of a community, it

seems counterintuitive that students report better citizenship skills in an environment in which they feel less at home compared to their counterparts in less diverse or more homogenous schools. In the literature, sense of school belonging has been introduced together with concepts such as 'community' and 'social cohesion' (Battistich et al., 1997). Similarly, throughout this thesis it has been stated that the school environment is deemed to be a mini-society (Dutch Education Council, 2003). In the chapter on school belonging it has been argued that it is important to feel connected to the school as one is a citizen of that small community. Although limitedly available, previous research has shown a positive relationship between sense of school belonging and civic commitments (Kahne & Sporte, 2008) and between principals' perceptions of students' sense of school belonging and civic knowledge in some countries (Schulz et al., 2010). The results of our study - showing that students feel less at home *and* report higher levels of citizenship competences in more diverse schools - may indicate that lower levels of sense of school belonging may actually be compatible with a fruitful environment to enact citizenship. That is, it may be the case that students are actually more strongly called upon their abilities to co-exist peacefully in an environment to which they don't feel that connected. In the end, citizenship is not about being amicable per se, but concerns the competences to relate to others in cases where one has to step out of one's comfort zone.



### The role of CE-related school factors and their relationship with school composition

Our findings also point to a divergent picture when it comes to the effects of school factors on citizenship(-related) outcomes and their relationship with school composition. In two of the quantitative studies the CE factors open classroom climate and teacher support had positive effects on respectively sense of school belonging and students' citizenship competences. In the third quantitative study we found no effect of diversity climate on students' ability to deal with differences. Overall it could be stated that school and teacher approaches that can be classified as part of the 'pedagogical climate' (teacher support and open classroom climate) (Geboers et al., 2013) favor student outcomes in the area of citizenship. These findings are in line with previous research, as a review study by Geboers et al. (2013) shows that the pedagogical climate has small to large effects on certain citizenship outcomes. The fact that we did not find a similar effect for the diversity climate (the degree to which teachers value diversity-related educational goals and implement diversity-related practices) may be explained in several ways. Firstly, a difference in informants might be

the cause of the discrepancy in findings. That is, teacher support and open classroom climate were measured as perceived by the students, while the diversity climate measure was based on teacher reports of their own goals and practices. One may expect different results if the same type of respondents were used for all studies. However, this difference in informants does not seem to be a plausible explanation for the varying findings, as students can be expected to be more negative about the teaching they receive compared to teachers as the providers of that education. A second, more conceivable, explanation is that the measurement of the diversity climate provided information on the *extent* to which teachers valued diversity-related educational goals and implemented diversity teaching, rather than on the quality of the pursued goals and practices. One may speculate that if the *quality* of the diversity climate cannot be asserted, no impact on student outcomes may result. In any case, the findings reveal that schools can influence the promotion of students' citizenship-related capacities through school factors that are related to citizenship education. In particular, the establishment of schools and classrooms where students feel safe to explore and discuss different viewpoints and topics (OCC) and where they feel that teachers are interested and care about them (teacher support) can contribute to students' citizenship.

When it comes to mediation and moderation effects, somewhat similar to the findings reported above, mixed evidence was found. In chapter 3, a mediation effect of the diversity climate was not detected, nor was a direct relationship found between the diversity climate and students' abilities to deal with differences. However, the study did show that teachers in more diverse schools report paying more attention to the teaching of diversity. This finding is in line with the results of the qualitative study, which revealed that schools and teachers act upon their student population when talking about and teaching citizenship, and diversity in particular. Thus, the quantitative study indicates *more* diversity teaching based on the student composition, whereas the qualitative study suggests *adapted approaches* to diversity teaching. Taken together, the results cautiously indicate that there is a relationship between school compositional characteristics and schools' citizenship approaches, in particularly when it concerns diversity. In turn, the absence of a mediation effect (although only tested in one study) prompts the question of whether schools' and teachers' response to the student composition is actually adequate and serves the needs of the student population. However, the findings in this dissertation do not inform us on the exact ways in which teachers pay attention to diversity in particular.

Lastly, in the quantitative studies no empirical evidence was found that supports moderation effects of the scrutinized CE-related school factors, except for one outcome. Apparently, the positive or negative effects of the school composition cannot easily be respectively enhanced or downsized by CE-related school factors (or at least not by the measures included in this dissertation). However, as moderation effects can also be viewed as bidirectional interactions, it could also be stated that the effect of citizenship education is equal for students from schools with different kinds of compositions or that certain practices are not more relevant (either positively or negatively) in more diverse schools. To elaborate on this further, there may not be an interaction or the characteristics of our sample may not have allowed us to observe an existing interaction. While our sample was representative of Dutch secondary education schools to a large degree, the number of schools that are highly diverse is lower compared to moderately or non-diverse schools. To be able to make a comparison between these schools, we would need more schools in our sample that are both greatly heterogeneous and have high scores on the moderator variable. Furthermore, two out of four moderators in our studies were measured on the school level instead of on the student level, which reduces the amount of variance. This may have caused the absence of an interaction effect too. A final explanation may be that in this dissertation, more informal aspects of CE-related school factors have been scrutinized. It may be the case that other school factors, or more formal elements of CE, may yield different results.



The overall absence of an interaction effect does not confirm our assumption presented in the introduction chapter that particular school factors may have more impact in schools that are more diverse. Although the findings may imply that the effects of certain school and teacher practices are similar for students from different student compositions and contexts, it may not actually mean that students have similar needs regardless of the context in which they receive teaching. Certain school factors may not play a *larger* role in schools with a certain student composition, but perhaps it is important that *tailor-made* approaches are used. The qualitative study showed that teachers and schools do seem to act on their perceived needs of the student population. In any case, it implies that more research is needed regarding interaction effects.

All the findings reported above should be interpreted in light of the fact that much of the variance in citizenship outcomes was explained by student level differences; an observation that is in accordance with previous research (Dijkstra et al., 2015; Schulz et al., 2010). Nevertheless, echoing other research

(e.g. Coopmans et al., 2020; Dijkstra et al., 2015; Geboers et al., 2013; Keating & Janmaat, 2016), the studies reported in this dissertation reveal that schools do have impact on students' citizenship(-related) outcomes. In particular, the findings show that the main predictor - school composition - is both positively and negatively related to student outcomes in the citizenship domain (and 'non-effects' have been found as well). School composition hardly interacted with other CE school factors, but it could also be the case that we have been unable to detect such relationships with the measurement instruments and methods that were adopted in the studies. Nonetheless, given the tentative observation that schools do respond to their student population and context, the potential role of other school factors in relation with school composition should not be dismissed in its entirety. It would be too simplistic to say that only a direct relationship between school composition and citizenship outcomes matters, as it seems that schools and teachers take account of their student population and the context in which they teach. The fact that we did not find mediation or moderation effects may also be a signal that education approaches are not fully in accordance with the needs of the student population. Moreover, approaches and implementations of citizenship education, other than those studied in this dissertation are possible (Geboers et al., 2013). In short, the relationship between the school composition and CE school factors and their impact on citizenship(-related) outcomes should be further explored in future research.

### Strengths and limitations

One of the main strengths of this dissertation is its large sample that is predominantly representative of Dutch secondary education schools. A second strength of the research is its combination of a qualitative and quantitative approach. The qualitative data supplement the quantitative data by a thorough investigation of cases in their contexts, which is especially suitable when one does not want to disconnect the case from its context (Yin, 2003). This approach made it possible to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the role of the context of the school and school composition. In a similar vein, and as another strength of this dissertation, for the quantitative studies the nestedness and dependency of data was accounted for by using a multilevel approach (Hox, 2002).

When it comes to more content-related and conceptual matters, three aspects stand out. Firstly, we used a comprehensive measure of citizenship that is constructed especially for younger generations (see Ten Dam et al., 2011), taking account of how citizenship manifests itself in the daily lives of young people.

Secondly, the role of ethnic school composition and school context remains relatively unexplored in previous citizenship (education) research. With our research we add to the existing literature on school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes, by studying the relationship between these variables. Lastly, rather than a sole focus on the direct and/or mechanical relationship between school composition and citizenship(-related) outcomes, CE-related school factors were included for a more complete and encompassing picture.

While the conducted research contains strong elements, some of its limitations should also be recognized. Firstly, the research was based on cross-sectional and correlational data, which makes it difficult to deduce any causality. Secondly, for the quantitative studies self-reports were predominantly used. Although survey instruments that are based on self-reports are highly efficient as they allow for large-scale data collection and comparison between (international) respondents, at the same time they carry the risk of social desirability (Ten Dam et al., 2013). For the measurement of students' sense of belonging, self-report seems highly appropriate precisely as it maps students' personal feelings. Self-assessing citizenship competences on the other hand, may be more prone to social desirability. However, these concepts may actually be linked in essence (Ten Dam et al., 2013). In their study, Ten Dam et al. (2013) found a positive correlation between citizenship competences and social desirability. These correlations were higher for attitudes, skills and reflection than for knowledge (but all significant). Moreover, higher correlations were reported for elements pertaining to prosociality than for the more critical elements of citizenship. In all, their findings suggest that convergent validity may be present. Thus, students who are more aware of the desirability of certain behaviors in society may therefore also have better citizenship competences. In short, despite its shortcomings and although triangulation could be of added value, self-reports seem appropriate for measuring young people's citizenship competences.

A third limitation of this dissertation is the operationalization of ethnic school composition in the quantitative studies, which can be subdivided into two drawbacks. Firstly, for the quantitative studies the Herfindahl index (Dijkstra et al., 2015; Lancee & Dronkers 2011; Putnam, 2007) was used to give an indication of the degree of heterogeneity of the student population. Although frequently used, several researchers have pointed to the potential shortcoming of using such an index due to its 'color-blindness' (e.g. Dewulf et al., 2017; Dronkers et al., 2012; Gijsberts et al., 2012). This means amongst others that the index is not informative when it comes to the share of students with a migration and

native background. To illustrate; no difference can be observed in the degree of diversity in a school in which 30% of the students has a Moroccan and 70% has a Dutch background, compared to a school where the percentages of the two groups are the other way around (Dewulf et al., 2017; Dronkers et al., 2012). However, in our sample it appeared that there was a very strong correlation (around .93) between the degree of diversity and the proportion of students with a migrant background. This means that schools in our sample that were almost non-diverse also scored high on the share of students with a native background. Thus, in our sample, it does not seem problematic to have not included the share of students with a migrant background. A second possible pitfall, both empirically and conceptually, of using the Herfindahl index, is the fact that the calculation is based on the assignment of people to certain ethnic categories. Respondents were presented with a large list of countries of birth for themselves and their parents. In this way respondents could indicate their country of origin. Nonetheless, not all countries were equally represented in numbers, resulting in lumping together different countries in the same category. This approach is therefore a quite crude and somewhat imprecise way of assigning people to ethnic categories as it results in larger heterogeneity within some categories compared to others. This remains a complex issue for scientific research. Concerning this matter, Aspinall (2009) accordingly refers to a "trade-off of validity and utility".

The fourth limitation concerns the use of the same data set for the three quantitative studies. It is believed that in some cases such an approach can result in duplicate and redundant publications because of a scattered view of overall conclusions (Van Raaij, 2018). However, it is also acknowledged that as long as each study based on the dataset provides unique contributions in terms of for example, the research question(s), the studied variables and theories, the multiple use of the same dataset is acceptable (Kirkman, & Chen, 2011; Van Raaij, 2018).

A final remark should be made regarding the measurement of individual SES and consequently, SES composition. The relevance of SES next to or above ethnicity has been debated in education research frequently (Coleman, 1966). In this dissertation, SES and SES composition were used as control variables and individual SES was operationalized by using student reports of parents' educational background. However, previous research shows that this kind of operationalization can be problematic as students may not always know their parents' educational level (Engzell & Johnsson 2015). Therefore, missing data and biased results may occur (Engzell & Johnsson 2015; Kreuter et al., 2010).

## Further considerations and future research

This dissertation suggests several questions to be addressed in future research. Some of these relate to methodological and some to conceptual issues, and some to both.

Firstly, future studies should adopt more qualitative or mixed-methods approaches when studying the relationship between school composition, citizenship education and citizenship(-related) outcomes. Qualitative research is of added-value as it illuminates the dynamics and context-dependency within a certain setting to a higher degree and in more detail than quantitative research (Yin, 2003). This matter is especially important for a topic such as citizenship, as specific contexts may require, enable or constrain certain attitudes and behaviors; a versatility which is more difficult to capture in quantitative research. The added value of qualitative research has also become visible in this dissertation as it yielded supplementary findings in addition to the quantitative studies, which has provided new insights. Moreover, it also uncovered that schools and teachers repeatedly denote the interrelatedness of several background characteristics of the student population, such as ethnicity, SES, educational background. Different combinations of these background characteristics create highly unique contexts for students in which they learn citizenship. Such a multidimensional and interactional approach could also inform quantitative studies.



Secondly, further research is needed on the role of social desirability in self-reports especially in relation to citizenship competences. Additionally, self-reports of citizenship competences could be supplemented by information provided by other informants, such as teachers, parents and peers. This suggestion can be further extended by raising the question of whether other or complementary instruments can be used to measure citizenship competences. Research shows that depending on the aim, different ways of assessment can be adopted and combined, for example, using student portfolio's or vignette assessments in combination with surveys (Daas et al., 2016).

The first two considerations and suggestions addressed above relate to *how* citizenship is assessed, while I would also like to draw attention to the question of *what* comprises citizenship and CE, especially in diverse societies. As has been outlined in the introduction chapter, citizenship is a normative concept and therefore it is inevitable that researchers make normative choices in the operationalization of this concept. Banks (2017) proposes a 'transformative'

approach to CE, where students learn how to question societal issues and bring about change in society. In line with this, the question should be raised to what degree such a *critical* approach to (the teaching of) diversity is actually adopted in schools. With a 'critical approach' I mean addressing and critically evaluating topics that have to do with the structure and organization of society, such as (roots of) (in)equality, social justice, power distribution, representation in institutions etc. Diversity is intrinsically linked to all such topics. Such an approach resembles the concept of 'critical consciousness', which can be understood as the 'ability to (1) read the economic, political, historical and social forces that contribute to inequitable social conditions and (2) become empowered to change these conditions' (Freire, 1973; Godfrey & Grayman, 2014). The question is whether such a critical approach receives enough attention in schools and in measurement instruments. Traditional approaches rather emphasize a more individualized and liberal way of thinking of citizenship, in the sense that individual efforts and behaviour and personal responsibility may contribute largely to solving societal issues. Although these may be minimal requirements for a well-functioning diverse society, preparing students for a society in which there is equality and unity within diversity should also entail the problematization of societal structures. Hence, research could be enriched by more prominently adding 'dealing with inequality' to 'dealing with differences' as both CE factors and citizenship outcomes. Next to Banks' transformative CE suggestion (2017) such an approach is also in accordance with research by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) who differentiate between the personally responsible citizen, participatory citizen and justice-oriented citizen.

Another matter that deserves attention in future research, and that is in accordance with the notion of critical consciousness and critical approach, is the examination of the degree to which young people have feelings of sociopolitical efficacy – believing that one has the capability to achieve change in social and political matters – (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014). Students may feel competent when it comes to the social tasks that they encounter in their daily lives, but if such competences are not accompanied by beliefs of being able to exert influence in larger society, the participation of young people may be undermined. Establishing sociopolitical efficacy may be especially important for the citizenship of groups that have been traditionally viewed as disadvantaged (cf. Godfrey & Grayman, 2014), as it may contribute to feelings of inclusion.

Next, relevant other school factors in relation to school composition and citizenship outcomes should be investigated. To this end, a comparison could be

made between, for instance, formal and informal citizenship education (Keating & Janmaat, 2016). While formal CE aspects have a more compulsory character (e.g. CE as separate subject) (Geboers et al., 2013; Keating & Janmaat, 2016), the informal learning of citizenship (e.g. participating in a 'buddy program') has a more voluntary basis (Hoskins et al., 2017; Reichert & Print, 2018). Moreover, it has been reported that students from affluent social milieus are more likely to participate in informal learning, such as political activities in schools (Hoskins et al., 2017). This line of research could be extended by including ethnic diversity and other compositional characteristics of schools. The distinction between formal and informal CE could uncover disparities in both voluntary participation as well as unequal access to citizenship (Hoskins et al., 2017). In a similar vein, previous research has revealed differentiated CE approaches based on educational level (Ho, 2012) and socioeconomic background (Wood, 2014). All in all, we still need a more thorough understanding of how schools and teachers exactly act upon the student population and school context, as different views and practices based on the student population may lead to different outcomes.



A final point that should be reflected on in research on citizenship in particular and social sciences in general is the measurement and description of the characteristics of populations. In this dissertation, many possibly relevant variables on both the individual and school level have been included to ensure that the effects that were found were truly ascribable to the degree of diversity within schools (and such effects were indeed present). However, I would still like to encourage a debate on how we as researchers in the field measure the make-up of the student population. Firstly, obviously, for statistical analyses, the construction of categories is inevitable. However as regards ethnicity, we might find ourselves on thin ice. Two issues arise here; categories lack nuance and multidimensionality and much focus is placed on ethnicity solely. The classification of people into ethnic categories or groups for conducting studies is arguable as it means that a statistical category is incontestably equated with a social category (Elrick & Schwartzman, 2015) and that all members within 'groups', including 'natives', are considered to be homogenous (Elrick & Schwartzman, 2015; Moffitt & Juang, 2019; Vertovec, 2011). It also assumes that ethnicity/culture is a demarcated, unchanging and reified phenomenon (Grillo, 2008; Vertovec, 2011).

Various solutions are possible to overcome the issues in research stated above. A first solution could be to be more precise regarding country of origin, by differentiating between different generations of people with a migrant

background. In the Netherlands, the third generation of people with a migrant background is steadily growing. The third generation constitutes people who themselves and their parents were born in Netherlands, while grandparents were born abroad (Statistics Netherlands, 2016a). Research exists that differentiates between the first and second generation (e.g. Sierens et al., 2020). However, this approach may also encompass some sort of a paradox, as on the one hand the operationalization of ethnic background becomes more accurate because of the differentiation, while on the other hand this may also intensify polarization and exclusion of ethnic minority groups. That is, it might intensify 'Othering' (Moffitt & Yuang, 2019), as the distinction between native and migrant background may continue from generation to generation, where one keeps being excluded from belonging to the native inhabitants of a country. El-Tayeb (2014) in this sense refers to the 'eternal migrant' and describes them to be 'read as having just arrived or even as still being elsewhere- if not physically, then at least culturally'. It should be noted, however, that the permanent heredity of migration that El-Tayeb (2014) opposes may actually manifest itself in the lived experiences of people with a migrant background. This would be an argument for the use of self-identification or ethnic identification measures in research (Agirdag et al., 2011; Zimmerman et al., 2007), which does more justice to the subjective experience of ethnic background.

A second issue is that people's plethora of background features that characterize them, are reduced to a single construct of ethnicity (Crul, 2016). In recent years, attention has been shifting to a phenomenon called 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007, 2011), which refers to a multidimensional approach to diversity, that takes into account the increasing number of diverse countries of origin, but also the diversity within ethnic groups and their specific migration patterns. Vertovec (2007) refers to characteristics such as educational level, legal status, access to employment, gender, transnationalism etc. Mapping super-diversity in quantitative research may cause a great amount of fragmentation, but if one takes super-diversity as a starting point, an alternative way of measuring school composition would be to use composite measures, for instance by combining SES and ethnic background into a single measure (see e.g. Driessen & Merry, 2014). Consequently, the share of students from a particular category could then be used as a school-level context variable.

To examine all our assertions postulated above and to broaden the perspectives on school compositional research, our overarching suggestion for future research would be to focus on comparisons between different kinds of operationalizations

(Jacobsen et al., 2012) of the student composition and context, to see whether this yields differentiated results in the area of (citizenship) education. For example, in a single study a comparison could be made between the differentiation of generations, self-identification and the use of composite measures.

## Conclusion and implications

The studies in this dissertation have shown that schools indeed play a role in students' citizenship(-related) outcomes. Based on the findings it can be concluded that school composition affects certain student outcomes directly, rather than in relation with the CE-related school factors diversity climate, school average open classroom climate and teacher support. The qualitative results indicate, however, that schools and teachers do act in accordance to the context in which they teach. Furthermore, the findings of this dissertation indicate that some of the effects of a diverse school composition are negative. Therefore, schools and teachers should carefully consider how they want to handle the importance and relevance of the school composition in the enhancement of students' citizenship(-related) outcomes. Accordingly, schools could make their vision on CE and diversity more explicit, and more specifically, their possibilities and ambitions to act on the characteristics of their student population and the context within which education takes place. This may also subside the risk of the 'civic opportunity gap' (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008) for specific school compositions and contexts. These suggestions are also compatible with the new citizenship education bill of the Netherlands (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2019), which will come into effect the coming months. This new law is, amongst others, intended to provide schools with more guidelines and to be more binding at the same time. For this purpose, schools are expected to develop and communicate their vision and policy on citizenship education (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2019).

The findings further provide directions for educational policy. If the new law is aimed at stimulating schools in focusing on democratic citizenship and creating a corresponding school culture, then it should be taken into account that schools cater to unique student compositions. This research has revealed that the characteristics of the student composition and context matter. Although these unique school contexts are touched upon in the new legislation, the importance of the compositional and contextual characteristics should be emphasized more in educational policy.

Although not a primary focus of this dissertation, the findings have additionally demonstrated that some aspects of the pedagogical climate are independently and positively associated with citizenship(-related) outcomes. Schools and teachers should be supported to stimulate the shaping of open classroom climates and the development of teacher support in order to enhance students' capabilities in the citizenship area.

Moreover, as was suggested in the introduction chapter, the results imply that students do indeed learn from a diverse context as regards certain citizenship competences. However, at the same time, in more diverse schools students have a lower sense of school belonging. Such a phenomenon is unfavorable and therefore schools should undertake action to stimulate students' feelings of belonging to the school and provide learning opportunities for citizenship at the same time.

In conclusion, citizenship education is about equipping students with a useful and adaptive set of competences to function in society (Eidhof, 2019). In a pluralistic society that is everchanging and dynamic, young people need to be able to navigate quickly and carry a miscellaneous repository of possible citizenship competences. This does not mean that students should be steered towards a certain citizenship orientation, but that they at least should have a broad repertoire of acting in society (cf. Eidhof, 2019). Accordingly, schools as potential mini-societies should create the circumstances for students to practice their role as citizens in an inclusive society and thereby contribute to the creation of such a society.

# 6

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# Samenvatting
# (Summary in Dutch)

In de afgelopen paar decennia zijn in veel landen, en ook in Nederland, zorgen ontstaan over maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen als afbraak van sociale cohesie, afnemende maatschappelijke betrokkenheid en toenemende individualisering en discriminatie (Eurydice, 2017; Geijsel et al., 2012; Nelson & Kerr, 2006; Onderwijsraad, 2003). Als reactie op deze ontwikkelingen kregen scholen in Nederland in 2006 de wettelijke taak om 'actief burgerschap en maatschappelijke integratie' te bevorderen (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2005). Scholen hebben hiermee de opdracht om leerlingen beslagen ten ijs te laten komen voor wat betreft hun deelname en bijdrage aan de maatschappij (Eurydice, 2017; Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2005), ook wel 'burgerschap' genoemd. Burgerschap is een normatief concept (cf. Eidhof et al., 2016; Osborne, 2000). Het omvat elementen zoals het hebben van maatschappelijke kennis, in staat zijn kritisch te denken, van perspectief kunnen veranderen, in staat zijn je mening te uiten, uiteenlopende meningen willen horen, verantwoordelijkheid nemen, solidariteit tonen binnen gemeenschappen en het vermogen hebben om te streven naar maatschappelijke verandering (Banks, 2004; Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Geijsel et al., 2012; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007; Torney-Purta, 2002).

Behalve dat jongeren voorbereid moeten worden om deel te nemen en bij te dragen als toekomstig burger, zijn ze ook al burger. Kansen om burgerschap te leren en te oefenen, manifesteren zich in settings waar jongeren met anderen omgaan, zoals met leeftijdsgenoten, familie, tijdens online activiteiten, in bijbanen en op school (Biesta et al., 2009; Lawy & Biesta, 2006). Bij het conceptualiseren van burgerschap voor jongere generaties is het daarom belangrijk om de aandacht niet alleen te richten op competenties die nodig zijn voor de toekomst, maar ook op kennis, reflectie, vaardigheden en houdingen die relevant en zinvol zijn in hun dagelijks leven hier en nu (Eidhof et al., 2016). Als ik het heb over de burgerschapscompetenties van jongeren als een uitkomstvariabele, doel ik daarom op competenties die nodig zijn voor *sociale taken* die jongeren dagelijks uitvoeren. In eerdere onderzoeken zijn vier soorten sociale taken geïdentificeerd (Ten Dam et al., 2011; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007): democratisch handelen, maatschappelijk verantwoord handelen, omgaan met conflicten en omgaan met verschillen.

Scholen hebben een gemeenschappelijke burgerschapsonderwijsplicht, terwijl ze aanzienlijk kunnen verschillen wat betreft hun context en leerlingpopulatie. De ene school staat bijvoorbeeld in een grote stad en heeft leerlingen van allerlei achtergronden, terwijl een andere school in de provincie is gelegen

en een minder gemêleerde populatie kent. Gegeven die verscheidenheid aan scholen, is de vraag relevant welke rol de schoolcontext speelt als het gaat om het voorbereiden van leerlingen op burgerschap. In dit proefschrift zijn verschillende aspecten van de schoolcontext in beschouwing genomen, maar de focus lag op de etnische schoolcompositie, d.w.z. de etnische samenstelling van de leerlingpopulatie. Het is denkbaar dat de context en leerlingpopulatie van een school bepaalde mogelijkheden en moeilijkheden met zich meebrengt als het gaat om de ontwikkeling van competenties die nodig zijn om je te verhouden tot anderen en de samenleving. Daarom was een van de belangrijkste doelstellingen van dit proefschrift om te onderzoeken in hoeverre schoolcompositie verband houdt met leerlingresultaten in het burgerschapsdomein.

Scholen kunnen ook verschillen op andere punten, zoals het schoolklimaat, pedagogische benaderingen, onderwijsvisie, enzovoort. Dit zijn schoolfactoren die potentieel veranderbaar zijn (Marcoulides et al., 2005). Het is cruciaal om met dergelijke factoren rekening te houden, aangezien ze van invloed zouden kunnen zijn op leerresultaten; onafhankelijk van of in wisselwerking met de contextuele kenmerken van de school. Het is goed mogelijk dat scholen verschillen op dit soort schoolfactoren, afhankelijk van de leerlingpopulatie, aangezien scholen en docenten (on)bewuste opvattingen kunnen hebben over de behoeften en capaciteiten van hun leerlingen (zie bijvoorbeeld Agirdag et al., 2013).

Als het gaat om het onderwijzen en aanleren van burgerschap, kunnen scholen en docenten diverse benaderingen hanteren, waarvan sommige niet direct onder de noemer 'burgerschapsonderwijs' (BO) hoeven te worden geplaatst. Zo kan burgerschap worden onderwezen en geleerd door middel van aparte BO-vakken, formele programma's en buitenschoolse activiteiten die door de school worden georganiseerd, maar ook door meer impliciete of informele praktijken (Dijkstra et al., 2010), zoals het creëren van een open klasklimaat (Eurydice, 2012; Geboers et al., 2013; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). In dit proefschrift zijn alle praktijken van docenten of processen op scholen - formeel dan wel informeel - die betrekking hebben op de bewuste of onbewuste bevordering van de burgerschapsuitkomsten van leerlingen geschaard onder de noemer 'BO-gerelateerde schoolfactoren' (omwille van de leesbaarheid ook wel aangeduid als 'schoolfactoren').

Samengevat waren de doelstellingen van dit proefschrift: 1) het onderzoeken van de mate waarin schoolcompositiekenmerken gerelateerd zijn aan burgerschaps(gerelateerde) benaderingen en uitkomsten, en, 2) het onderzoeken van de rol die een aantal BO-gerelateerde schoolfactoren spelen in deze relatie.

## De hoofdbevindingen

De studie in **hoofdstuk 2** richtte zich op context-gerelateerde opvattingen en praktijken van docenten met betrekking tot het omgaan met diversiteit als onderdeel van burgerschapsonderwijs (BO). Hiervoor werden interviewdata geanalyseerd van 17 docenten die lesgaven in het derde leerjaar van het voortgezet onderwijs en die afkomstig waren van drie verschillende scholen. Deze scholen verschilden substantieel wat betreft hun contextuele kenmerken, zoals het aandeel leerlingen met een migratieachtergrond, de mate van diversiteit, de sociaaleconomische samenstelling, het onderwijsniveau en de mate van stedelijkheid van de schoollocatie. Uit de resultaten bleek dat de schoolcontext en de kenmerken van de leerlingpopulatie in hoge mate bepalend zijn voor de mogelijkheden voor en het soort onderwijs op het gebied van diversiteit dat wordt aangeboden, en, in mindere mate, de manier waarop docenten het concept diversiteit interpreteren. Deze diversiteitsgerelateerde opvattingen en praktijken waren verbonden met de perceptie van docenten van de behoeften en capaciteiten van hun leerlingen, met name op het gebied van burgerschap en het omgaan met diversiteit. Zo legden de docenten van de school met havo/vwo-leerlingen uit overwegend welvarende gezinnen meer nadruk op een wereldburgerschapsvisie en de mogelijkheid om internationale reizen te maken, vergeleken met de andere twee scholen. De contextuele en compositorische kenmerken van scholen leken ook een rol te spelen in de manier waarop docenten hun leerlingen zien en praten over burgerschap en diversiteit. Bij het uiten van hun percepties over leerlingen verwezen docenten gelijktijdig of opeenvolgend naar meerdere in plaats van afzonderlijke kenmerken (bijvoorbeeld de locatie van de stedelijke school in combinatie met een lagere SES). Bovendien benoemden docenten in het algemeen zowel gunstige als uitdagende aspecten wat betreft het functioneren en de behoeften van hun leerlingen op het gebied van burgerschap en het omgaan met diversiteit, gebaseerd op achtergrondkenmerken van de leerlingen en de lokale context. Ten slotte uitten docenten in z'n geheel genomen positieve ideeën over diversiteit. Ondanks deze positieve perceptie was er ook enige variatie in de interpretatie van de betekenis en de noodzaak van omgaan met diversiteit, afhankelijk van de schoolcontext en de studentenpopulatie. Verder richtten docenten zich vooral op de ontwikkeling van sociale vaardigheden van leerlingen in het omgaan met diversiteit. In hun benadering van burgerschap en diversiteit leek aandacht voor diepgewortelde maatschappelijke kwesties in relatie tot diversiteit te ontbreken.

De studie in **hoofdstuk 3** bouwde voort op hoofdstuk 2 door middel van een kwantitatieve analyse van de relatie tussen de mate van etnische schooldiversiteit, het diversiteitsklimaat en de competenties van leerlingen om met verschillen om te gaan (Ten Dam et al., 2011). Met 'diversiteitsklimaat' wordt gedoeld op het belang dat docenten gezamenlijk hechten aan onderwijzen over diversiteit als onderwijsdoel en de mate waarin het onderwijs over diversiteit in de praktijk wordt toegepast. Ten eerste werd de relatie tussen etnische schooldiversiteit en de competenties van leerlingen om met verschillen om te gaan, en tussen etnische schooldiversiteit en het diversiteitsklimaat op scholen onderzocht. Vervolgens werd nagegaan in hoeverre het diversiteitsklimaat samenhangt met de competenties van leerlingen in omgaan met verschillen. Ten slotte werd onderzocht of het diversiteitsklimaat de relatie tussen diversiteit op scholen en het omgaan met verschillen modereert. Voor een antwoord op deze vragen zijn gegevens van 4.402 leerlingen en 535 docenten van 62 middelbare scholen in Nederland gebruikt. Multilevelanalyses op twee niveaus (leerlingen in scholen) lieten een positief verband zien tussen de mate van etnische diversiteit op school en reflectie en attitudes van leerlingen ten aanzien van verschillen tussen mensen. Dat wil zeggen: leerlingen op scholen met een hogere mate van diversiteit gaven aan meer te reflecteren op verschillen tussen mensen en waren ook positiever over verschillen. Meer diversiteit op scholen was echter niet gerelateerd aan de kennis van leerlingen en (zelfgerapporteerde) vaardigheden in het omgaan met verschillen. Er waren ook tegenstrijdige resultaten met betrekking tot de twee aspecten van het diversiteitsklimaat die waren onderscheiden (belang van onderwijs over diversiteit en de praktijk van onderwijs over diversiteit). Hoewel docenten op meer diverse scholen meer diversiteitsgerelateerde praktijken rapporteerden, was er geen verband tussen de mate van schooldiversiteit en het belang dat werd gehecht aan diversiteitsgerelateerde onderwijsdoelen. Het diversiteitsklimaat droeg op zijn beurt niet bij aan de competenties van leerlingen om met verschillen om te gaan. Ten slotte verklaarde (mediatie) noch veranderde (moderatie) het diversiteitsklimaat de relatie tussen etnische diversiteit op scholen en de competenties van leerlingen om met verschillen om te gaan.

Het onderzoek in **hoofdstuk 4** ging in op de vraag of er een verband bestaat tussen de schoolsamenstelling en het gevoel van verbondenheid met school (Demanet & Van Houtte 2012; Goodenow, 1993). Behalve dat het een fundamentele menselijke psychologische behoefte is (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000), kan een gevoel van (school) verbondenheid worden beschouwd als een 'burgerschapsgerelateerde' uitkomst (zie bijv. Battistich et

al., 1997). Ook is eerder gevonden dat een gevoel van schoolverbondenheid positief gerelateerd is aan maatschappelijke betrokkenheid (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). In hoofdstuk 4 werd daarnaast onderzocht of een open klasklimaat - een vaak gerapporteerde effectieve BO-factor (Geboers et al., 2013) – verband houdt met een gevoel van verbondenheid met school en of het de relatie beïnvloedt tussen de schoolsamenstelling en het gevoel van verbondenheid met school. Er is gebruik gemaakt van gegevens van 5.046 leerlingen op 75 Nederlandse middelbare scholen. Op basis van multilevel-analyses bleken leerlingen op meer diverse scholen een minder sterk gevoel van verbondenheid met school te hebben. Bovendien werd er een positieve relatie gevonden tussen het open klasklimaat op school en het gevoel van verbondenheid met de school. De mate waarin er een open klasklimaat was op school, had echter geen invloed op het verband tussen de schoolsamenstelling en het gevoel van schoolverbondenheid.

Ten slotte onderzocht de studie in **hoofdstuk 5** of de mate van etnische schooldiversiteit en de door leerlingen ervaren ondersteuning door docenten verband houdt met burgerschapsuitkomsten van leerlingen. Daarnaast werd onderzocht of er een interactie bestaat tussen de mate van etnische schooldiversiteit en de door leerlingen ervaren ondersteuning door docenten in de relatie met burgerschapsuitkomsten. Deze uitkomsten zijn geconceptualiseerd en geoperationaliseerd als competenties in *sociale taken* die het type burgerschap of de sociale taken illustreren die jongeren in hun dagelijks leven tegenkomen (zie Ten Dam et al., 2011): democratisch handelen, maatschappelijk verantwoord handelen, omgaan met conflicten en omgaan met verschillen. Binnen deze sociale taken hebben we onderscheid gemaakt tussen *competenties* (bestaande uit attitudes, vaardigheden en reflectie) en *kennis*. Om de onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden, zijn er multilevel analyses uitgevoerd op een steekproef van 4.902 leerlingen van 75 Nederlandse middelbare scholen. De bevindingen lieten zien dat leerlingen op scholen met een grotere mate van diversiteit positiever zijn over hun competenties in democratisch handelen, maatschappelijk verantwoord handelen en omgaan met verschillen. Op meer diverse scholen scoren leerlingen echter lager op kennis over maatschappelijk verantwoord handelen en omgaan met conflicten. Als het gaat om ondersteuning door docenten, bleek dat leerlingen die zich meer gesteund voelen door hun docenten, ook hoger scoren op competenties en kennis over alle sociale taken heen. Tot slot veranderde de mate van ervaren ondersteuning door docenten de relatie tussen schoolsamenstelling en burgerschapscompetenties niet, behalve voor de competentie om maatschappelijk verantwoord te handelen. Hier werd een negatief moderatie-effect gevonden, dat betekent dat hoe meer leerlingen

zich gesteund voelen door hun docenten, hoe minder ze er baat bij hebben om op een school te zitten die zeer divers is. Concluderend lijkt de mate van ondersteuning door docenten in z'n geheel genomen niet relevanter te zijn op meer diverse scholen.

De resultaten van dit onderzoek bevestigen wat ook ander onderzoek (bijv. Coopmans et al., 2020; Dijkstra et al., 2015; Geboers et al., 2013; Keating & Janmaat, 2016), laat zien: scholen hebben invloed op burgerschaps(gerelateerde) uitkomsten van leerlingen. In het bijzonder laat dit onderzoek zien dat, afhankelijk van de uitkomst waarnaar wordt gekeken, de schoolsamenstelling zowel positief als negatief en ook niet gerelateerd kan zijn aan leerlingresultaten in het burgerschapsdomein. Alles bij elkaar genomen geven de onderzoeksresultaten aan dat de relatie tussen schoolsamenstelling en resultaten op het gebied van burgerschap complex, dynamisch en multidimensionaal is. Deze observatie is in overeenstemming met de complexiteitstheorie (Mason, 2008; Morrison, 2008), die het idee weerlegt dat de sociale wereld en sociale organisaties systemen zijn die eenvoudig en eendimensionaal zijn en die zich lineair ontwikkelen en veranderen.

De bevindingen wijzen ook op een uiteenlopend beeld als het gaat om de effecten van schoolfactoren op burgerschaps(gerelateerde) uitkomsten en hun relatie met de schoolsamenstelling. In het algemeen laat mijn onderzoek zien dat benaderingen van scholen en docenten die kunnen worden geclassificeerd als onderdeel van het 'pedagogisch klimaat' (ondersteuning door docenten en open klasklimaat) (Geboers et al., 2013) de leerlingresultaten op het gebied van burgerschap bevorderen. Dus het tot stand brengen van scholen en klassen waar leerlingen zich veilig voelen om verschillende standpunten en onderwerpen te verkennen en te bespreken (open klasklimaat) en waar ze het gevoel hebben dat docenten geïnteresseerd zijn en om hen geven (ondersteuning door docenten leerkrachten), kan bijdragen aan het burgerschap van leerlingen.

## Conclusie en implicaties

De onderzoeken in dit proefschrift hebben aangetoond dat scholen inderdaad een rol spelen in de burgerschaps(gerelateerde) uitkomsten van leerlingen. Op basis van de bevindingen kan worden geconcludeerd dat de schoolsamenstelling rechtstreeks verband houdt met bepaalde leerlinguitkomsten, in plaats van in relatie met of via de BO-gerelateerde schoolfactoren diversiteitsklimaat,

schoolgemiddeld open klasklimaat en docentondersteuning. De kwalitatieve resultaten geven echter aan dat scholen en docenten in afstemming handelen met de context waarin ze lesgeven. Bovendien tonen de bevindingen van dit proefschrift aan dat sommige effecten van een diverse schoolsamenstelling negatief zijn. Daarom moeten scholen en docenten zorgvuldig overwegen hoe ze willen omgaan met het belang en de relevantie van de schoolsamenstelling bij het verbeteren van burgerschaps(gerelateerde) resultaten van leerlingen. Dienovereenkomstig adviseer ik scholen hun visie op BO en diversiteit te expliciteren, en specifieker, hun mogelijkheden en ambities om in te spelen op de kenmerken van hun leerlingenpopulatie en de context waarbinnen onderwijs plaatsvindt. Dit kan ook het risico van een kansenkloof op het gebied van leermogelijkheden voor burgerschap (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008) verkleinen voor specifieke schoolcomposities en contexten. Deze suggesties zijn ook verenigbaar met de nieuwe wet rondom burgerschapsonderwijs in Nederland (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2019), die de komende maanden in werking zal treden. Deze nieuwe wet is onder meer bedoeld om scholen meer richtlijnen te geven en tegelijkertijd bindender te zijn. Hiertoe wordt van scholen verwacht dat zij hun visie en beleid over burgerschapsonderwijs ontwikkelen en communiceren (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2019).

De bevindingen kunnen ook verder richting geven aan onderwijsbeleid. Als de nieuwe wet bedoeld is om scholen te stimuleren zich te concentreren op democratisch burgerschap en een daarbij behorende schoolcultuur te creëren, dan moet er rekening mee worden gehouden dat scholen unieke leerlingpopulaties bedienen. Uit de onderzoeken in dit proefschrift is gebleken dat leerlingcompositiekenmerken en context ertoe doen. Hoewel deze unieke schoolcontexten in de nieuwe wetgeving worden aangestipt, dient er in het onderwijsbeleid meer aandacht te zijn voor compositorische en contextuele kenmerken van scholen.

Hoewel het niet de primaire focus van dit proefschrift was, hebben de bevindingen bovendien aangetoond dat bepaalde aspecten van het pedagogisch klimaat op zichzelf positief geassocieerd zijn met burgerschaps(gerelateerde) uitkomsten. Scholen en docenten moeten worden ondersteund om een open klasklimaat en het ondersteunen van leerlingen te stimuleren, om zo het vermogen van leerlingen op het gebied van burgerschap te vergroten.

Zoals eerder vermeld impliceren de resultaten dat leerlingen inderdaad leren van een diverse context als het gaat om bepaalde burgerschapscompetenties.

Tegelijkertijd voelen leerlingen op meer diverse scholen zich minder verbonden met hun school. Een dergelijk fenomeen is niet wenselijk en daarom lijkt actie vanuit scholen nodig om het gevoel van de leerlingen bij de school te horen te stimuleren én tegelijkertijd leermogelijkheden voor burgerschap te bieden.
Concluderend gaat burgerschapsonderwijs over het toerusten van leerlingen met een nuttige en adaptieve reeks competenties om in de samenleving te functioneren (Eidhof, 2019). In een pluralistische samenleving die voortdurend verandert en dynamisch is, moeten jongeren snel kunnen navigeren en het beschikken over burgerschapscompetenties kan ze helpen om zich in de samenleving te bewegen. Dit betekent niet dat leerlingen moeten worden gestuurd in de richting van een bepaalde burgerschapsoriëntatie, maar dat ze een breed repertoire in huis moeten hebben (cf. Eidhof, 2019). In overeenstemming daarmee zouden scholen als mini-samenlevingen de omstandigheden voor leerlingen moeten creëren om hun rol als burger in een inclusieve samenleving te oefenen en zo bij te dragen aan de totstandkoming van een dergelijke samenleving.

# Curriculum Vitae

## Curriculum Vitae

Işıl Sincer was born in Pazarcık, Turkey, on February 28th 1986. At the age of 2 she emigrated to The Netherlands with her family. After completing her pre-university education at Erasmiaans Gymnasium in Rotterdam in 2003, she studied Psychology at Erasmus University Rotterdam and obtained a Master's degree in Educational & Developmental Psychology. During her Master's, Işıl did a research internship at Erasmus MC as part of the Generation R study. In the same year, she was nominated for the Echo Award (a prize for excellent students in higher education with a non-Western background). After graduation, Işıl moved for love to Istanbul and London, where she took on several (voluntary) jobs. Upon her return to The Netherlands in 2011 she started working at Erasmus University at the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences as a translator, and in 2012 she became an academic teacher/trainer. Her interest in conducting research remained undiminished in these years, which resulted in the commencement of a PhD trajectory at Erasmus University in 2013. Her research was part of a joint large-scale research project with University of Amsterdam on 'Understanding the effects of schools on students' citizenship'. Işıl's research project focused on the role of school composition and citizenship education(-related) school factors in promoting secondary education students' citizenship. During her PhD trajectory, Işıl coordinated practical courses, supervised bachelor and master theses and guided tutorial meetings and practical courses. She also received the 'Best Pitch Award' at the Graduate Research Day for PhD Candidates at the Department of Psychology, Education & Child Studies (DPECS). She additionally took part in other academic activities; Işıl was a member of the workgroup 'Citizenship' at the Municipality of Rotterdam, she co-organized a symposium on social inequality, hosted by Erasmus University Rotterdam, and she was involved with the organization of ORD 2016 (Onderwijs Research Dagen) on behalf of PhD candidates, hosted by Erasmus University Rotterdam. Currently, Işıl is working as a postdoctoral researcher at VU Amsterdam/LEARN! Institute. In this position, she works within a large-scale research project that evaluates catch-up programs targeted at repairing learning loss in the Netherlands due to COVID-19.

## Publications

**Sincer, I.,** Volman, M., Van der Veen, I., & Severiens, S. (2020). The relationship between ethnic school composition, school diversity climate and students' competences in dealing with differences. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1846508

**Sincer, I.,** Severiens, S., & Volman, M. (2019). Teaching diversity in citizenship education: Context-related teacher understandings and practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *78*, 183-192. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.11.015

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## Papers

**Sincer, I.,** Volman, M., Meeuwisse, M., & Severiens, S. (submitted). Sense of school belonging: the role of ethnic school composition and open classroom climate.

**Sincer, I.**, Volman, M., Van der Veen, I., & Severiens, S. (submitted). Students' citizenship competences: the role of ethnic school composition and perceived teacher support

## Presentations

Sincer, I. Volman, M.L.L, Meeuwisse, M. & Severiens, S.E. (2019, March 14). *Ethnic school composition and sense of school belonging: exploring the role of an open classroom climate as a moderator.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands, Graduate Research Day.

Sincer, I. Volman, M.L.L, Meeuwisse, M. & Severiens, S.E. (2018, September 7). *Ethnic school composition and sense of school belonging: the moderating role of an open classroom climate*. Bolzano, Italy, ECER 2018.

Sincer, I. Volman, M.L.L, Meeuwisse, M. & Severiens, S.E. (2018, August 31). *School composition and sense of school belonging: the role of an open classroom climate.* London, UK, ESA Mid-term conference.

Sincer, I, Severiens, S.E., & Volman, M.L.L. (2017, November 22). *Aandacht voor diversiteit in burgerschapsonderwijs: context-gerelateerde opvattingen en praktijken van docenten. Najaarsconferentie Burgerschap in het Onderwijs*: Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Sincer, I, Severiens, S.E., & Volman, M.L.L. (2017, August 31). *Teaching diversity in citizenship education: context-related teacher understandings and practices.* Finland, Tampere, EARLI 2017.

Sincer, I, Severiens, S.E., & Volman, M.L.L. (2017, November 14). *Teaching diversity in citizenship education: teachers' context-related understandings and practices.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands, Graduate Research Day.

Sincer, I. (2017, December 11). *Citizenship education in a diverse society.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands, Guest lecture, course Teaching & Learning in Diverse Settings, Department of Psychology, Education & Child Studies.

Sincer, I, Severiens, S.E., & Volman, M.L.L. (2016, May 26). *Docentvisies op de rol van schoolcompositie in relatie tot burgerschapsonderwijs.* Onderwijs Research Dagen: Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Sincer, I, Severiens, S.E., & Volman, M.L.L. (2016, January 19). *Effectieve schoolkenmerken in relatie tot burgerschapscompetenties: de ontwikkeling van een meetinstrument.* Amsterdam, The Netherlands, AMCIS-bijeenkomst.

Sincer, I, Severiens, S.E., & Volman, M.L.L. (2015, May 28). *School composition and citizenship.* London, UK, Amcis/LLAKES conference.

Sincer, I, Severiens, S.E., & Volman, M.L.L. (2014, November 14). The association between school composition and students' citizenship. ICO International Fall School: Blankenberge, Belgium.

## Courses

ICO Introductory Course (2014)

ICO International Fall School (2014)

Utrecht Summer School Survey Research: Statistical Analysis and Estimation (2015)

EGSH English Academic Writing Course (2015)

ICO An introduction to Multilevel Models with SPSS Course (2016)

EGSH Multilevel Modelling I Course (2016)

EGSH Professionalism and Integrity in Research Course (2017)

# Dankwoord
# (Acknowledgements in Dutch)

In de eindfase van m'n promotietraject heb ik mij regelmatig afgevraagd: als ik had geweten hoe het is om te promoveren, zou ik er dan alsnog voor gekozen hebben? Het antwoord daarop is gelukkig 'ja'. De weg was soms hobbelig maar ik zou het niet gemist willen hebben. Dat komt mede door de wetenschap dat ik gedurende deze vrij solitaire onderneming ondersteund, geholpen en gemotiveerd zou worden door veel waardevolle personen. Op deze plek wil ik graag iedereen bedanken die direct dan wel indirect heeft bijgedragen aan de totstandkoming van dit proefschrift.

Allereerst wil ik alle leerlingen, docenten, teamleiders, schoolleiders en overig onderwijspersoneel bedanken die hebben deelgenomen aan het onderzoek.

Ik wil mijn dank uiten aan mijn begeleiders, Sabine Severiens en Monique Volman. Ik ben blij dat ik in dit traject door jullie ben begeleid. Sabine, bedankt voor de fijne samenwerking en voor je betrokkenheid. Je hebt me altijd gestimuleerd om m'n eigen keuzes te maken, maar zag er ook op toe dat ik de hoofdlijnen en de focus niet uit het oog verloor. Een hilarische illustratie daarvan is jouw opmerking: 'jij moet soms juist oogkleppen op'. Je gaf me het gevoel dat ik altijd bij je terecht kon en dat je alle vertrouwen in me had. Ook heb ik je bescheiden opstelling altijd gewaardeerd; als je iets niet wist dan zei je dat ook gewoon. Daar kunnen velen in de academische wereld en daarbuiten een voorbeeld aan nemen. Monique, jouw kritische commentaar op m'n stukken leidden dikwijls tot frustratie, maar ik moest dan na even slikken vaak eerlijk aan mezelf toegeven dat het commentaar terecht was. Je daagde me daarmee uit om m'n argumentatielijnen duidelijker uit te werken en strakker te schrijven. Dat commentaar wist je overigens vaak heel constructief en vriendelijk te brengen. Geregeld kwam je schriftelijke feedback op tijdstippen waaruit bleek dat je er al een lange dag van mentale inspanning op had zitten en toch wist je dan bijna altijd toch nog een compliment of bemoedigend woord aan je mails toe te voegen. Dat doet een promovendus altijd goed. Bedankt voor je warme manier van ondersteunen.

Ook wil ik mijn collega-vriendin, Willemijn, bedanken. Bij een gezamenlijk project waarin je intensief samenwerkt moet je het net treffen met je naaste collega. Wat heb ik het getroffen met jou. Vooral in de beginjaren was er zoveel wat ik met plezier met je heb mogen delen: de 'kelder' op de UvA, deelname aan congressen, overnachtingen in 'de provincie' voor onze dataverzameling, frustraties over ons onderzoeksproject, etentjes, en nog veel meer. En wat hebben we veel gepraat: over grote burgers maar ook over (jouw) kleine burgers,

over wetenschappelijk onderzoek, werk, en alles daarbuiten. Steevast eindigden deze serieuze gesprekken in serieuze lachbuien. Het gezamenlijk reflecteren op ons onderzoek heeft meerdere malen bijgedragen aan het verfijnen van mijn ideeën en gedachten over mijn eigen onderzoeksproject. Bedankt voor jouw kritische blik, inzichten en je sierlijke manier van vertellen.

Ik ben dankbaar dat ik als lid van het ESC-onderzoeksteam samen heb mogen werken met collega's van de UvA en het Kohnstamm Instituut. Zonder dit team was er nooit een grootschalige dataverzameling geweest en lag dit proefschrift er nu niet. Geert en Anne Bert, hartelijk dank voor het delen van jullie kennis en ervaring op het gebied van (burgerschaps)onderzoek, en voor jullie interesse in de afzonderlijke onderzoeksprojecten. Ineke, geen vraagstuk was jou te complex; bij ieder idee konden we direct bij jou polsen of het analyse-technisch haalbaar zou zijn. Je zei altijd waar het op stond en was altijd bereikbaar voor vragen. Ik ben ook erg blij dat je co-auteur bent op een aantal van de artikelen. Ik heb veel van je geleerd over (multilevel) analyses en het helder rapporteren van resultaten. Femke, de samenwerking met jou was van korte duur, maar ik heb deze als zeer prettig ervaren. Anne, bedankt voor het aansturen van het project en voor je adviezen over promoveren. Daarnaast denk ik met veel plezier terug aan onze leuke gesprekken en de oprechte interesse die je altijd toonde. Ook bedank ik alle andere collega's die op welke manier dan ook betrokken zijn geweest bij het ESC-onderzoek: Miranda, Alies, Susanne, Yolande, Dorothé, Edgar en Manja. Het was me een waar genoegen om met jullie samen te werken. Ook veel dank aan alle studentassistenten, stagiaires en ambassadeurs die zich hebben ingezet voor het ESC-onderzoek.

Hoewel ik vanwege het gemeenschappelijke project af en toe naar Amsterdam reisde, was mijn eigen vaste werkplek op de EUR. Dat was als een warm bad. In het bijzonder wil ik mijn kamergenoten bedanken: Loïs, Rob, Eke, İldeniz, Tessa en Robert. Loïs en Rob, wij zijn samen opgegroeid in de kamer en jullie hebben mij gesteund door dik en dun. Jullie liefde werd me nog eens duidelijk toen jullie bereid waren om je vast te ketenen, uit protest tegen een mogelijke uitzetting van mij als illegale bezetter van de kamer. Ontzettend bedankt voor dat gebaar! Eke, bedankt voor de fijne gesprekken, je vurige betogen en je humor. İldeniz, wat was jij een vrolijke toevoeging op onze kamer. Altijd empathisch en je had altijd een luisterend oor. En wat was het fijn om herkenning te vinden in elkaars verhalen over hybride identiteiten. Tessa en Robert, ook al hebben we niet al te lang op een kamer gezeten; ik ben blij dat ik een kamer met jullie heb mogen delen. Bedankt voor alle gezelligheid en het meedenken over allerhande proefschriftgerelateerde vragen.

Niet alleen mijn fijne kamergenoten, maar ook de PhD-collega's van T16 maakten de werkomgeving en het leven als promovendus aangenamer. Willemijn, als één van de eerste PhD's van DPECS behoorden wij natuurlijk tot de 'harde kern'. Daardoor hebben we samen veel tijd doorgebracht op de afdeling, tot mijn genoegen. Ik denk met veel plezier terug aan alle gesprekken, lunches, jouw hulpvaardigheid en ons gedeelde plezier in pingpong. Sabrina, jou heb ik nog als student gekend; dat je ambitieus en ijverig bent viel toen al op. Ik leerde je ook van een andere kant kennen tijdens het ECER-congres in Bolzano en onze terugreis via Verona. Samen waren we steeds plannen aan het bedenken voor hoe we te voet zoveel mogelijk van de omgeving zouden kunnen verkennen. Wat hebben we veel moois gezien samen; een onvergetelijke tijd! Lara, bedankt dat je altijd de tijd nam om met volle aandacht een praatje te maken. Dat het met jou heel gezellig is heb ik mogen meemaken in Tampere. Dat zal me als een leuke herinnering bijblijven! Julia, wat heb jij een zachtaardig karakter, altijd maar bezig met het welzijn van anderen. Bedankt voor het luisteren en motiveren. Also, an expression of gratitude to all other T16-colleagues. You guys have contributed greatly to the social cohesion on our floor. During the lockdown - when I was writing up my thesis - I realized how much I missed our daily pingpong sessions. A heartfelt thanks to: Aike, André, Anniek, Arnout, Brechtje, Denise, Donna, Eline, Emily, Gloria, Ilse, Iris, Jacqueline, Job, Maike, Marcelo, Mehmet, Milou, Miranda, Nouran, Novika, Ömer, Peiqian, Wei, and Zhiqi.

Ik bedank ook al mijn overige collega's van DPECS voor het creëren van een fijne sfeer. Mijn speciale dank gaat uit naar Jacqueline. Niet alleen was jij mijn docent tijdens mijn studie Psychologie aan de EUR, jij was ook degene die het PhD-balletje aan het rollen heeft gebracht. Je liet mijn naam vallen bij Sabine en gaf me nog een extra duwtje in de rug door me bemoedigend toe te spreken over wat een promotietraject voor me zou betekenen. Dat zal ik nooit vergeten. Ook Joran wil ik bedanken. Van alle niet-PhD-DPECS-collega's heb ik jou misschien wel het vaakst gezien op onze kamer. Tussen je dagelijkse knuffelsessies en oneindige koffiemomenten met Rob door maakte je altijd wel tijd vrij om ons te begroeten, een praatje te maken of de spot met ons te drijven. Hoewel dat al veel van je tijd in beslag nam was je eigenlijk ook altijd bereid te helpen als het ging om statistiekvragen. En wat kreeg je die veel. Bedankt voor je behulpzaamheid! Marieke, jou wil ik ook bedanken, voor je ondersteuning, mensgerichtheid en inlevingsvermogen. Ik was zeer verheugd toen Sabine voorstelde om jou als co-auteur te vragen voor één van m'n papers. Ik vermoedde al dat jouw manier van werken me aan zou spreken en dat ik fijn met je zou kunnen samenwerken, daarin heb ik me niet vergist.

Verder bedank ik hierbij ook de UvA-collega's met wie ik (af en toe) op een kamer heb gezeten of feedback en ideeën heb uitgewisseld tijdens (burgerschaps) overleggen. Ik voelde me altijd welkom. Bedankt Frank, Remmert, Bram, Hessel, Mayke, Ellen, Anke en Semiha.

Om een promotietraject draaglijk te houden, moet je vooral ook kunnen terugvallen op mensen uit je privéleven. Ik wil al mijn vrienden en kennissen uit de grond van m'n hart bedanken die mij in de afgelopen jaren hebben bijgestaan, opgebeurd, gemotiveerd, afgeleid of hebben laten ontspannen door middel van gesprekken, uitjes, etentjes, maatschappelijke- en bestuursactiviteiten, wandelingen, knuffels, en talloze andere manieren waarop jullie je betrokkenheid en liefde hebben getoond.

Een woord van dank wil ik ook richten aan de mensen in mijn leven die - om Turkse beeldspraak te gebruiken - voor mij voelen als bergen en plataanbomen waar ik ongelimiteerd tegenaan kan leunen; m'n moeder, vader, zus en m'n man. Ik ben jullie oneindig dankbaar voor jullie onvoorwaardelijke liefde en steun. Kenan, bedankt voor je betrokkenheid. Çınar, mijn koedoekie, wat ben ik dankbaar dat jij ons zoveel vreugde brengt. Anne, baba, abla ve kumi: doktora yapma hayallerime her zaman destek oldunuz. Bana olan güveniniz ve inancınız bu yolculukta bana çok büyük güç kattı. Hepinize minnettarım ve hepinizi çok seviyorum.

Tot slot wil ik mijn Broers dubbel (!) bedanken. Zonder jullie had ik de finish van dit promotietraject niet gehaald. Niet alleen heb ik een mooier proefschrift kunnen schrijven door onze brainstormsessies, jullie wijze opmerkingen, interessante invalshoeken en resolute (PCA-)adviezen op knoopdoorhakmomenten, maar ik heb me ook gesterkt gevoeld door jullie empathie, zorg, oprechtheid, peptalks, relativeringsvermogen en alle tijd die we buiten werk samen hebben doorgebracht. Ik heb veel van jullie geleerd, ik heb bewondering voor wie jullie zijn en ben enorm dankbaar dat onze professionele verstandhouding zich heeft ontpopt tot een vriendschap.

Işıl, maart 2021

*Leven als een boom, alleen*
*en vrij*
*en als een bos in broederschap,*
*dit verlangen is het onze.*

- Nâzım Hikmet Ran
(Vertaling: Sytske Sötemann)