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Preaching and practicing multicultural education: Predicting students' outgroup attitudes from perceived teacher norms and perceived teacher–classmate relations

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ABSTRACT

Research on the role of teachers in bringing about positive interethnic attitudes among their students has largely focused on the norms teachers express about cultural diversity in the classroom without considering teacher's enactment of these norms in their relationships with students. The current study assessed to what extent students' ethnic outgroup attitudes are affected by perceived positive teacher norms about cultural diversity, together with perceived positive teacher-classmate interactions that may serve as an example to students. We investigated whether and how teacher norms and practices interact to affect students' attitudes, and whether these effects may differ for minority and majority students. Data was gathered in two waves among 186 native (majority) Dutch students, and 129 students with a Turkish-Dutch, or Moroccan-Dutch (minority) background in 29 4th–6th grade classrooms. Results showed that both majority and minority students expressed more positive attitudes towards ethnic outgroups when they perceived their teacher to have a positive relationship with their majority classmates, but only when supported by positive teacher norms. Ethnic majority students had more favorable outgroup attitudes when perceiving positive teacher relationships with minority classmates, but only in the absence of positive teacher norms. These results indicate that students in culturally diverse classrooms consider their teachers' interpersonal relationships with classmates to inform their own attitudes about ethnic outgroups.

1. Introduction

An important question in today's ethnically diverse societies is how to foster positive interethnic attitudes in young people. There is ample evidence that the effects of experiencing prejudice and discrimination are psychologically harmful (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014) and negative ethnic peer relations can undermine the psychological and academic adjustment of both minority and minority youths (Brown, 2017). Schools are vital contexts for advancing positive intergroup relations among children from an early age onwards, and many educational initiatives and intervention programs have been developed to improve interethnic attitudes in children and adolescents. There are different variants of this so-called diversity education, but multicultural education is the most important one in the US and relevant in Europe as well (for reviews, see Bigler, 1999; Ülger, Dette-Hagenmeyer, Reichle, & Gaertner, 2018; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). Multicultural education involves a range of different practices and ideas and prejudice reduction is one of its key components (Banks, 2004). Although some multicultural educational initiatives have positive effects on

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students' evaluations of ethnic outgroups (i.e., groups other than their own), overall they appear to be moderately successful and studies have also reported mixed or negative findings (Aboud et al., 2012; Stephan, Renfo, & Stephan, 2004). A possible explanation for these inconclusive findings is that the effects of multicultural education are teacher-specific as it is the individual teacher who is responsible for the implementation of multiculturalism (Stephan et al., 2004; Wubbels, den Brok, Veldman, & van Tartwijk, 2006).

Previous research has found individual variation in teachers' cultural diversity beliefs (Byrd, 2014; Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders, & Kunter, 2015) and shown that students' perceptions of multicultural teaching vary significantly from teacher to teacher (McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Vervaet, Van Houtte, & Stevens, 2018; Zinga & Gordon, 2016). Moreover, research has found that students often have more positive outgroup attitudes and more outgroup friendships when they perceive their teachers to express positive norms about diversity (see Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). However, this line of research has primarily focused on the (perceived) instructional content of diversity teaching (Byrd, 2014; Hachfeld et al., 2015; Rattan & Ambady, 2013; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004), and although there is excellent qualitative research on teachers' "dealings with diversity" (e.g., Gillborn, 1990) quantitative studies have neglected the interpersonal dimension of teaching diversity, i.e. the interpersonal interactions between teachers and students with different cultural backgrounds.

This dimension of diversity teaching has also received relatively little attention in the development of multicultural school programs. Various authors (e.g. Banks & Banks, 1995; Gay & Howard, 2000) have mentioned that multicultural education is predominantly conceptualized and studied in terms of the explicit curriculum, even though, in order to be successful, multicultural education should also entail pedagogical practices that enact its message. Instructing students about diversity and positive interethnic relations requires teachers to 'teach by example', by engaging in positive intergroup interactions in their classroom themselves. Students' interethnic attitudes are probably not only influenced by the diversity norms teachers communicate in their teachings, but also by the behavioral examples they set through their relationships with students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. However, to the best of our knowledge, this proposition has not been systematically addressed in quantitative research.

The present study sought to make an original contribution to the literature by simultaneously examining the effects of perceived normative and relational multicultural teaching practices on children's ethnic outgroup attitudes. We focused on ethnic minority and ethnic majority students (Grades 4–6) from different classrooms in different parts of the Netherlands. These students typically have one or two teachers for the whole year and they are in late childhood (9–13 years) which is an important period for the development of ethnic attitudes. In late childhood, children acquire more flexible ways of thinking about ethnic group boundaries, and thus develop a more complex understanding of ethnic groups (Aboud, 1988). Moreover, research has shown that outgroup attitudes become increasingly context-dependent after middle childhood (see Raabe and Beelmann (2011) for a meta-analysis), and according to Social Identity Development Theory (SIDT; Nesdale, 2004) social norms play a crucial role in this regard.

1.1. Teacher norms in multicultural education

Forms of multicultural education (particularly in the European context, though less so in the US) often consists of curricula and instructional practices aimed at promoting positive views regarding cultural diversity and intergroup relations (McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013; Vervaet et al., 2018). These instructional practices seek to inform students about cultural differences and also have a strong normative component as they convey what 'ought to be done' when it comes to dealing with cultural 'others' (see Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). More specifically, multicultural education teaches that discrimination is morally unacceptable and that people from different cultures should be treated with respect (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). Teachers can be particularly powerful in prescribing these social norms to students, as they are important authority figures for children (Dunbar & Taylor, 1982; Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

For assessing the normative impact of teachers on students' attitudes it is reasonable to rely on children's subjective perceptions, as social norms can be assumed to exert their influence through children's awareness and understanding of them (see e.g., Tropp et al., 2016). Previous studies have shown that preadolescents' perceptions of their teachers' multicultural norms are associated with positive, privately reported ethnic outgroup attitudes (for a review, see Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). These studies are consistent with SIDT's claim that group attitudes are dependent on the normative context (Nesdale, 2004) and indicate a process of social influence whereby individuals internalize the messages of important others because they are convinced by them (Kelman, 1958; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). Based on these findings and theoretical notions it can be expected that students' outgroup attitudes are more positive if they perceive their teacher to express positive norms about cultural diversity.

However, the effect of perceived teacher norms may also depend on students' ethnic background. On the one hand, it could be argued that these norms are particularly important for ethnic minority students. When teachers prescribe positive multicultural norms, this could make minority students feel supported by their ethnic majority teacher and this may make them more positive about the ethnic majority outgroup in general. This support may also be needed among these ethnic minority students in particular, because ethnic minority children experience more ethnic derogation (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002).

On the other hand, based on a social identity approach on normative influence, it has been argued that people are more likely to become convinced and thus influenced by norms if these norms are displayed by ingroup rather than outgroup members (Smith & Louis, 2008; Terry & Hogg, 1996). And, empirical studies have, indeed, shown that attitudes and behavior of people are more strongly influenced by social norms expressed by ingroup members than outgroup members (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996; Smith & Louis, 2008; Wilder, 1990). Given that ethnic majority teachers are outgroup members for ethnic minority students, we may expect norms expressed by these outgroup teachers to be less influential. Contrary, ethnic majority teachers are ingroup members for majority students and as such, the teacher norms may be more influential for these students. Such differential effects of group norms have already been shown with regards to the effect of peer group norms, which have been found to have a stronger effect on the

willingness to interact with ethnic outgroups for majority students than ethnic minority students (Tropp et al., 2016). We could, therefore, also expect teacher norms to be less effective on the outgroup attitudes of minority student than ethnic majority students.

1.2. Teacher-classmate relationships in multicultural classrooms

Although research on multicultural education has examined how teachers promote positive norms about ethnic diversity, less is known about how they enact these norms in their pedagogical practices and interpersonal relationships with students from different ethnicities (Banks et al., 2015; Banks & Banks, 1995). According to social referencing theory (Feinman, 1982; Walden & Ogan, 1988) children gauge the behavior of important others in search for cues on how to behave in social situations, and a growing body of literature suggests that students turn to their teacher for this (Hughes, Im, & Allee, 2015). Specifically, it has been shown that students use their observations of the interactions between teachers and classmates for evaluating the latter, and that children's like or dislike of their classmates partly depends of the perceived quality of those interactions (Hendrickx, Mainhard, Boor-Klip, & Brekelmans, 2017; Hughes, Cavell, & Willson, 2001; Hughes, Im, & Wehrly, 2014; Hughes, Zhang, & Hill, 2006).

These social referencing processes have special relevance in ethnically diverse classrooms and may not only affect the evaluation of particular peers but also the evaluation of the ethnic groups these peers belong to. A common assumption in studies on intergroup relations is that attitudes towards specific outgroup members tend to generalize to the outgroup as a whole (Brown & Hewstone, 2005) and research has supported this attitude generalization in school-aged children (Stark, Flache, & Veenstra, 2013). Hence, it can be anticipated that students' perceptions of favorable interactions between teachers and ethnic outgroup classmates increases their liking for those peers and generate a more positive stance towards the ethnic outgroup in general. This process should hold for ethnic majority and minority students alike: Ethnic minority children who perceive positive interactions between their teachers and majority classmates may develop more positive attitudes about the majority outgroup, and ethnic majority children who perceive such interactions between their teacher and minority classmates may become more positive about minority outgroups. Unfortunately, some research indicates that teachers appear to experience less favorable relationships with students from some ethnic minority groups (e.g., African-American, or Moroccan-Dutch) compared to students from ethnic majority groups (e.g., Spilt, Hughes, Wu, & Kwok, 2012; Thijs, Westhof, & Koomen, 2012). As such, students' perceptions of these relationships may not always be positive, and this may negatively affect majority children's evaluation of ethnic minority outgroups.

In addition to social referencing theory (Feinman, 1982; Walden & Ogan, 1988), extended contact theory (Wright et al., 1997) can be used to understand the potential impact of teacher-classmate relations on children's ethnic attitudes. This theory argues that the mere knowledge that ingroup members have positive interactions with outgroup others increases one's positivity towards the outgroup. There is empirical support for this expectation in research among children (Feddes, Noack, & Rutland, 2009; Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007; Vezzali, Giovannini, & Capozza, 2012). In the Dutch context, as in many other Western countries, most teachers have an ethnic majority background (e.g., Thijs et al., 2012) and this makes them ethnic ingroup members for their majority students. Thus, children may regard the interactions between their majority (ingroup) teachers and minority (outgroup) classmates as forms of extended intergroup contact and just as would be predicted by social referencing theory, the perceptions of these interactions could increase their outgroup positivity. However, for ethnic minority students, extended contact theory suggests an additional, complementary possibility. Research has shown that majority teachers are important contact figures for these children (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2012), which means that the perception of positive interactions between their majority teachers (outgroup) and their co-ethnic minority students (ingroup) could have positive effects on their evaluation of the majority outgroup. Given the ethnic majority background of the participating teachers (all the teachers in the present study were native Dutch), we therefore expected ethnic minority children to have more positive outgroup evaluations if they perceive their teacher to have more positive relations with their co-ethnic minority classmates.

In short, we hypothesized that, for both ethnic majority and ethnic minority students, the number of perceived positive relations between children's teacher and their minority classmates positively predicts their ethnic outgroup evaluations. Additionally, we anticipated that perceiving positive interactions between teachers and majority students positively affect outgroup evaluations of ethnic minority students.

1.3. Alignment of teacher norms and teacher-classmate relationships

According to Banks and Banks (1995), multicultural education should consist of various teaching practices to ensure that cultural responsiveness is engrained in all aspects of teaching. As such, teachers should not only address cultural diversity in their curricula but also in their pedagogical practices. The assumption is that multicultural education will be most effective when both content and practices communicate the same message about diversity. This implies that views and norms about cultural diversity as portrayed in the curriculum are most successfully conveyed to students when teachers' interpersonal behavior communicates the same message ('practice what they preach').

Although there are qualitative studies on how teachers may teach about- and simultaneously practice multiculturalism in their classrooms (Gillborn, 1990; Meetoo, 2018; Roux, 2001), we do not know of any quantitative studies that have researched the interactions between multicultural teacher norms and enactment of these teacher norms. However, there is a large body of literature that theorizes about social norms and how these norms are portrayed in corresponding behavior. Often these studies distinguish between subjective or injunctive norms, which prescribe what ought to be done, and descriptive norms, which refer to perceiving behavior that would be in line with a social norm (Chung & Rimal, 2016). Research has found that when injunctive norms are supported by descriptive norms, these norms are likely to have a bigger impact on attitude change and the willingness to change

behavior (Smith & Louis, 2008; Staunton, Louis, Smith, Terry, & McDonald, 2014). Thus, when norms and the enactments of those norms correspond, their effects on attitudes are most pronounced. Studies among children have shown similar patterns, where verbalizations of prosocial norms were found to be less effective in influencing sharing behavior when these norms were not accompanied by behavior that aligned with that norm. Inconsistencies in norms and behavior, thus, seem to weaken the effectiveness of normative messages (Rice & Grusec, 1975; Rushton, 1975). Such inconsistencies in norms are argued to contribute to a cognitive dissonance among the perceiver of these norms. And this dissonance may be resolved by concluding inconsistency is socially acceptable, which makes it likely for people to not behave according to the group norm (Mckimmie, Terry, Hogg, Manstead, & Spears, 2003).

In the case of multicultural teacher norms, which portray positive messages about cultural diversity, teacher behaviors that would be in line with these norms would have to be expressed. As such, students would need to see their teacher interact in a positive way with minority classmates. Thus, it can be expected that both minority and majority students who perceive positive multicultural teacher norms together with positive interactions with ethnic minority classmates are most likely to express positive outgroup attitudes. Additionally, norm inconsistency might occur when students perceive their majority teachers to express a strong norm in favor of multiculturalism but have mainly positive interactions with ethnic majority students. This is likely to weaken the effect of the teacher norm on students' outgroup attitudes.

1.4. Personal relationships, ethnic composition, and parental norms

A proper evaluation of the impact of perceived teacher-classmate relations on children's ethnic attitudes requires that a number of alternative explanations are ruled out. First, research has shown considerable between-teacher variation in children's perceptions of their own relationships with their teachers (Koomen & Jellesma, 2015). This means that classmates can experience their teacher in the same way which implies the possibility of a confound between children's own experiences with their teacher and the teacher-peer relationships they observe in the classroom. Previous research has found that students who have positive relationships with their teacher tend to have more positive ethnic outgroup attitudes, because this relationship can involve the possibility of direct outgroup contact (in the case of an outgroup teacher; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2012), or provide students with the security and trust to approach outgroup others (Geerlings, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2017; Miklikowska, Thijs, & Hjerm, 2019). To examine the effects of social referencing and extended contact, the impact of these direct experiences should be controlled for.

Investigations of the extended contact potential of perceived teacher-classmate relations should also control for the possibility of direct peer contact and parental norms. In ethnically mixed classrooms children have more opportunities for interethnic peer contact than in ethnically segregated ones. Although outgroup presence does not guarantee optimal intergroup contact (Stark et al., 2013), students in mixed classrooms tend to have more positive outgroup attitudes (for reviews, see Thijs & Verkuyten, 2013; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). Moreover, despite a dearth of research on the ethnic norms of parents, research has supported their normative importance by demonstrating medium-sized parent-child similarity in outgroup attitudes (Degner & Dalege, 2013) and relations between children's outgroup relations and parents' acceptance of those (Munnikma, Flache, Verkuyten, & Veenstra, 2012). Thus, it is important to partial out the possible normative influence of parents on children's outgroup attitudes.

1.5. Present study

The goal of the present study was to examine how children's perceptions of their teachers' normative and relational multicultural teaching were related to their ethnic outgroup attitudes. We studied a group Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch (ethnic minority) and native Dutch (ethnic majority) students (aged 9–13 years) from ethnically diverse classrooms (Grades 4–6) in different parts of the Netherlands. Following previous research (see Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013), we asked them to report on the multicultural norms of their teacher (e.g., 'Does your teacher ever say it is wrong to discriminate?') and we used peer nominations to investigate students' perceptions of their teachers' relationships with minority and majority classmates. These relationship perceptions were included simultaneously to examine the behavioral aspects of how teachers themselves are seen to deal with diversity ('teaching by example'). Previous research typically assessed children's attitudes and norm perceptions at a single time point, which means that reversed causality cannot be ruled out (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). Specifically, it is possible that children project their own ethnic attitudes on their teacher and perceive stronger teacher norms against prejudice, for example if they have more positive attitudes themselves (see Thijs & Verkuyten, 2016). For this reason, we used a longitudinal design in which we predicted children's outgroup attitudes from the perceived teacher practices some 4.5 months earlier while controlling for their earlier outgroup attitudes.

Five hypotheses were evaluated. Our first hypothesis (H1) was that when students perceived positive multicultural teacher norms, they would evaluate outgroups more positively over time, and we explored whether this relation was different for ethnic minority versus ethnic majority children. Next, we hypothesized that the number of perceived positive relations between children's teacher and their minority classmates would positively predict their ethnic outgroup evaluations, for both ethnic majority and ethnic minority students alike (H2). Additionally, we anticipated that minority students who perceived positive relations between teachers and majority classmates would report stronger outgroup positivity over time (H3). Fourth, we expected that when majority and minority students perceived positive multicultural teacher norms together with positive interactions with ethnic minority classmates, they would be more likely to express positive outgroup attitudes (H4), because in that case teachers are seen to 'practice what they preach.' Finally, we tested whether the anticipated positive effect of the number of perceived positive relations between the teacher and ethnic majority classmates on the outgroup attitudes on minority students is weaker when teachers display strong multicultural norms, as such relations can be perceived to deviate from the prescribed norm (H5). In examining these hypotheses, we controlled for

children's personal relationship with their teacher, ethnic classroom composition, and perceived parental multicultural norms.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The current study focused on students in grades 4, 5, and 6 of primary school in the Netherlands. Our selection procedure was aimed at oversampling non-native Dutch students in order to be able to compare ethnic majority and minority groups. We, therefore, selected schools with a student population consisting of at least 10% minority students. In total 489 schools were contacted by email and phone, of which 18 participated in the study. This amounts to a low response rate (4%) which, unfortunately, is not uncommon for research in Dutch primary schools (Zee, Koomen, Jellesma, Geerlings, & de Jong, 2016). Within these 18 schools, 44 out of 81 4th to 6th grade teachers participated in the study. Non-participation was almost exclusively explained in terms of already strenuous workloads and/or engagement in other research projects.

Originally, 888 students participated in our study. However, the final group of participants consisted of 315 children (minority background, 50.3% female, M age = 10.51 SD = 1.02, range 9–13 years). The reason for this sample reduction was four-fold. First, we selected classrooms with both majority and minority students to ensure that we considered only those students who had the possibility of perceiving interactions between their teacher and ethnic ingroup and ethnic outgroup classmates. As such, two classrooms without students with a Dutch origin were excluded (39 students) as well as two classrooms with only students with a Dutch ethnic background (excluding 47 students). Second, because our measure of outgroup attitudes focused on native Dutch, Turks and Moroccans (the two largest migrant groups in the Netherlands), we further limited our sample to include only native Dutch (majority) students and students with a Turkish or Moroccan background, excluding 233 students with other ethnic origins. This makes it possible to conduct systematic analyses on the effects of perceived norms and teacher-classmate relations on outgroup attitudes. Third, students were only included if they had completed the survey at both waves of the study (59 students only participated in wave 1 or wave 2).

Finally, we applied listwise deletion of cases with missing values. Missing values were limited on most variables (n = 1–12), except for the measures for teacher-classmate relationships (n = 47) (between 0.3 and 12.5% missing values). The pattern of missing values was not found to be completely random (Little's MCAR test, χ^2 = 96.243, p = .030). Additional t -tests revealed that the excluded students did not differ significantly from the included students for age, gender, outgroup attitudes, or their perception of teacher norms and teacher-classmate relationships. However, they reported slightly less closeness with their teacher (ΔM = -0.27 , p = .035), and more often had a minority background (ΔM = -0.23 , p = .001). The 315 selected children resided in 29 classrooms (located in 15 schools) where, on average, 29.7% of the students were of Turkish or Moroccan origin. Four of the classrooms were taught by two teachers, and students in these classrooms answered the teacher-related survey questions for one randomly selected teacher.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Dependent variable

Children's *outgroup attitudes* (Time 1 and Time 2) were assessed using a Likert-type response format consisting of seven faces, ranging from very happy (0; big smile) to very sad (6; big frown), with a neutral mid-point (3; straight face). This "seven faces" response format (Yee & Brown, 1992) has been successfully used in previous studies among early adolescents from different ethnic groups (Sierksma, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2014; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2012). A recent study supported its concurrent validity by demonstrating a strong relation with group stereotypes (Geerlings et al., 2017). The scale was recoded so that a higher score indicates a more positive attitude. Students were asked to indicate how they feel towards Dutch, Turkish and Moroccan people. For students of Turkish and Moroccan descent, outgroup attitude represents the attitude expressed towards Dutch people. For native Dutch students, outgroup attitude consists of the attitudes towards Turkish and Moroccan people. These two attitudes were highly correlated (Time 1; r = 0.78, Time 2; r = 0.71) and therefore average scores were used at each time point.

2.2.2. Explanatory variables

2.2.2.1. Perceived teacher norm. Students' perception of multicultural norms was assessed by asking them how frequently their teacher expresses normative views on cultural diversity. The measure consisted of three items which have been successfully used in previous studies in the Netherlands (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2013): "Does your teacher ever say that all cultures should be respected?", "Does your teacher ever say that it is wrong to discriminate?", and "Does your teacher ever say that people from all cultures are equal?" These items, measured on 5-point Likert type scales ranging from 0 (*absolutely never!*) to 4 (*very often!*) loaded on a single factor (factor loading between 0.70 and 0.61). Given the hierarchical nature of the data, for the estimation of reliability we used omega's instead of Cronbach's alpha's (see Geldhof, Preacher, & Zyphur, 2014). This scale was estimated to be reliable at both the student and the teacher level (ω within = 0.70, ω between = 0.96). Previous research has supported the validity of this measure by showing that students in the same classroom agree on the norms of their teacher (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2012), that teachers who are seen to express those norms tend to have better relationships with ethnic minority students (Thijs et al., 2012), and that minority students who perceive such norms from their teacher have more positive self-feelings in classrooms where they are a numerical minority (Gharaei, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2019).

2.2.2.2. Perceived teacher-classmate relationships. Research on social referencing in classroom settings has used peer nominations to assess the relationships between teachers and classmates (Boor-Klip, Segers, Hendrickx, & Cillessen, 2017; Hendrickx et al., 2017). In line with these studies, we asked students to name classmates who “get along with the teacher well”. This was an open-ended question and the number of possible nominations was limited to ten classmates (a few students mentioned more than ten, in which case only the first ten students were recorded). On average students mentioned between two and four classmates. Our calculation is based on a measure of ethnic social standing developed by Bellmore, Nishina, Witkow, Graham, and Juvonen (2007) that divides the number of received nominations from students of the same and other ethnic groups by the total number of students with that same or other ethnic background in the classroom. Our focus is not on received nominations for assessing the social standing of individual students but rather on students' perceptions of the social standing of different ethnic groups in their relationships with the teacher. Therefore, we used a similar calculation but focused on nominations instead of received nominations. For this, the identification numbers of students were matched to the ethnic background of each nominated classmate. For each respondent, we then counted the number of nominations per ethnic origin (Dutch, Turkish and Moroccan), and the total number of classmates by ethnic background within each classroom (the respondent themselves not included). Subsequently, the proportion of majority group nominations was operationalized as follows:

$$\frac{N \text{ Nominated students with Dutch background}}{N \text{ Classmates with Dutch background}}$$

This means, for example, that students who nominated 5 out of 20 native Dutch classmates receive a score of 0.40 on this variable. The minority group nomination variable was calculated differently for the three respondent groups. For native Dutch respondents we computed the relative number of nominated classmates with a Turkish or Moroccan background using the following formula:

$$\frac{N \text{ Nominated students with Turkish or Moroccan background}}{N \text{ Classmates with Turkish or Moroccan background}}$$

And for respondents with a Turkish or Moroccan background the minority group variable was composed of nominations of students from their own (either Turkish or Moroccan) ethnic background:

$$\frac{N \text{ Nominated students with same ethnic background}}{N \text{ Classmates with with same ethnic background}}$$

It is important to note that the two parts upon which these measures of perceived teacher relationships are constructed, namely 1) the number of nominations per group, divided by 2) the number of classmates of that same group, are both in part determined by additional factors that are not accounted for in this measurement. More specifically, part one of the equation does not consider that students varied in the number of classmates they nominated. Nominating more classmates for positive teacher interactions may not only be a product of a student's actual perception of teacher relationships but may also reflect student's sociability. We therefore performed additional analyses in which we included a variable indicating the *number of nominations* and used this variable in interaction with the measures for perceived teacher-classmate relationships to test whether the effect of the perceptions depends on students' willingness to nominate classmates.

Additionally, the nominator in the equation (the number of classmates of the particular ethnic groups) does not take into account the fact that the size of the classrooms within our sample varied between 9 and 32 students. Yet, the possibility of nominating many or all classmates of a particular ethnic group is much greater in smaller classrooms. As a result, students in smaller classrooms are more likely to generate higher scores on the measures for teacher-classmate relationships. We, therefore, performed additional analyses in which we included *classroom size* (number of students in the classroom) and tested whether the effects of perceived teacher-classmate relationships exist independently of the size of the classroom.

Some students ($n = 63$) answered the nomination question with the statement ‘everyone’. Taken literally, this statement would indicate that these students mentioned all students of all ethnic backgrounds, warranting a score of one (meaning 100% on nominations of students of all ethnic backgrounds). However, the number of nominations was limited to 10, and as such, these students would not have been able to nominate all students in their class. We, therefore, interpreted the response ‘everyone’ as a nomination of 10 students (the maximum number) whose ethnicity is proportionate to the ethnic composition of the classroom. Thus, students answering ‘everyone’ in a classroom with, for instance, 45% Dutch majority students and 32% Turkish minority students, are assumed to have nominated 4.5 Dutch and 3.2 Turkish students within their 10 possible nominations. Like the students who did nominate individual students, this number of nominations per ethnic group was then divided by the total number of students of the same ethnic background in the classroom.¹

¹ Additional analyses were conducted to assess if our results differed when the answer ‘everyone’ was regarded as a missing value. These analyses yielded very similar results for all of our models. All the effects were in the same direction and were mostly found to be similarly significant. The two-way interaction between teacher norms and teacher-majority classmate relationships was marginally significant and in the same direction ($b = 0.100$, 95% CI [-0.142, 0.220]). However, the three-way interaction effect between student ethnicity, teacher-minority classmate relationships and teacher norms was in the same direction but not significant ($b = 0.039$, 95% CI [-0.142, 0.220]). In this analysis there also was a significant interaction effect between teacher norms and student ethnicity ($b = -0.215$, 95% CI [-0.426–0.003]) We decided to present the models with the students that answered ‘everyone’ included in the sample, as the smaller sample size resulting from leaving these students out ($N = 252$) would lead to the situation in which, in some cases, only one or two students would report on a teacher. This would make estimating multilevel models more difficult and may lead to spurious estimation of standard errors.

2.2.2.3. Minority versus majority status. Student ethnicity was coded using information on both countries of birth of the student's parents as indicated by the students, and ethnic self-identification. The open-ended self-identification question (Brown, Spatzier, & Tobin, 2010), was preceded by a short text explaining the concept of ethnic groups and then asking students to indicate which group they feel they belong to. Students were coded to be of native Dutch origin (code 0) if both their parents were born in the Netherlands and, additionally, identified themselves as Dutch. Students were labeled as being of an ethnic minority (Turkish or Moroccan) origin (coded 1) when at least one parent was born in Turkey or Morocco and/or the student self-identified as Turkish or Moroccan (such as Moroccan or Moroccan-Dutch). If students only answered one of the questions, this answer was used to indicate their ethnic background.

2.2.3. Control variables

2.2.3.1. Student-teacher relationship. The quality of the student-teacher relationship was assessed with the Closeness subscale from the Student Perception of Relationship with Teacher Scale (SPRTS; Koomen & Jellesma, 2015). This scale consists of 6 items (e.g. 'I feel at ease with my teacher', 'If I have a problem, I can talk to my teacher about it') and Koomen and Jellesma (2015) provided support for its validity by showing that it is positively related to teachers' perceptions of relational closeness. Responses were measured on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 0 (*No, absolutely not!*) to 4 (*Yes, absolutely!*). Confirmatory factor analysis revealed that all items formed a single factor that had a good model fit ($\chi^2(18) = 25.091, p = .12, RMSEA = 0.035, CFI = 0.986, SRMR_{within} = 0.035; SRMR_{between} = 0.408; loadings between 0.57 and 0.71$). Omega's indicated a reliable scale for both the student and the teacher level ($\omega_{within} = 0.80, \omega_{between} = 0.94$).

2.2.3.2. Parental norms. Students' perceptions of their parents' multicultural norms were assessed using the same three items and response scales measuring the perception of teacher norms (e.g. "Do your parents ever say that it is wrong to discriminate?") These items were estimated to load on a single factor (factor loading between 0.76 and 0.91) and formed a reliable scale ($\omega_{within} = 0.86$).

2.2.3.3. Additional measures. We further controlled for the *number of nominations* a student reported on the peer nomination measure of teacher-classmate relationships, and we estimated the effects of student *gender* (0 = male, 1 = female) and *age* (measured in years). On the teacher/classroom level we controlled for *classroom size* ($M = 22.15, SD = 4.95$) and the *ethnic composition of the classroom* which was calculated as the percentage of students in each classroom who were identified as either Turkish or Moroccan ($M = 32\%, SD = 23$). The latter variable was strongly and negatively related to the proportion of Dutch students ($r = -0.79$).

2.3. Procedure

Data were collected in two waves: Between January and March of 2014 (halfway through the school year) and in June and July (at the end of the school year). Prior to data collection, participating teachers and students' parents were provided with detailed information about the goals and proceedings of the study, as well of the confidential treatment of the data. Parents were asked to notify the teacher if their child should not participate in the study. Passive consent was obtained from 96% of the parents and all participating teachers signed a written informed consent form at the start of the study. Pen-and-paper surveys were distributed by a research assistant in the presence of the teacher. The research assistant informed students on the purpose of the study and its confidentiality. Students were shown how to fill in the survey using an unrelated sample question, and assistants were available to answer clarification questions.

2.4. Data analytic strategy

As the data for the students ($n = 315$) were nested within teachers ($n = 33$) we used multilevel regression models in Mplus 7.3 for our analyses (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). All models were estimated using the MLR estimator; a maximum likelihood estimator that uses a numerical integration algorithm with standard errors that are robust to non-normality and non-independence of observations. All explanatory continuous variables were centered on their mean to enhance the interpretation of the findings. Two-sided significance tests were used for all effects.

After a set of preliminary analyses, we proceeded with our main analysis which consisted of four steps. In the first step (Model 1, Table 3), we analyzed the direct effects of perceived teacher norms (H1) and perceived relations between the teacher and minority classmates (H2), and between the teacher and majority classmates. In so doing, we controlled for perceived parental norms, children's personal relations with their teacher, and the ethnic composition of the classroom. In Model 2, we added interaction effects between the variables for perceived teacher-classmate relations and teacher norms to assess whether perceived relationships have a different effect on outgroup attitudes when the perceived relations between teachers and minority classmates match the teacher norm (H4). In the third step of our analysis (Model 3), two-way and three-way interactions were added to assess whether the effects of norms and relations are conditional on student ethnicity (H3 and H5). And finally, we estimated a model omitting non-significant three-way interaction terms (Model 4) to create a sparser model in which we investigated whether the direct effects of teacher norms and teacher-classmate relations (if they do not depend on each other) depend on the ethnic background of the student who perceives these norms and interactions (H3).

Lastly, additional analyses were conducted to examine the role of *peer nomination frequency* and *class size* and to investigate the unique role teachers might play in affecting outgroup attitudes.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of student- and teacher level variables.

	Range	M	SD
Student level (N = 315)			
Female	0–1	0.50	0.50
Age	9–13	10.51	1.01
Close student-teacher relationship	0–4	2.77	0.82
Perceived parental norm	0–4	2.51	1.12
Perceived teacher norm	0–4	2.37	1.03
Perceived teacher-peer relationship – majority group	0–1	0.29	0.25
Perceived teacher-peer relationship – minority group	0–1	0.20	0.24
Number of nominations	0–10	5.12	3.14
Outgroup attitudes at Time 1	0–6	4.25	1.80
Outgroup attitudes at Time 2	0–6	3.95	1.77
Teacher level (N = 33)			
Classroom size	9–32	22.15	4.95
Classroom ethnic composition	0.03–0.87	0.32	0.23

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary analyses

The mean scores for all study variables are shown in Table 1. The results of one sample *t*-test showed that overall mean scores were clearly above the neutral midpoint of the scale ($p < .001$). Regarding the perceived relationships between teacher and classmates, students on average nominated five classmates and they nominated around 29% of their ethnic majority classmates and 20% of their ethnic minority classmates as having a positive relationship with their teacher. For the student-level variables the correlations (Table 2) with student ethnicity indicate that the ethnic minority students in our sample were older compared to the Dutch majority students. In addition, minority students perceived more positive multicultural norms from their parents and teacher. Also, minority students reported more positive outgroup attitudes compared to majority students, but only at T1. The bivariate correlations, moreover, indicated that student perceptions of teacher and parental multicultural norms were strongly correlated, but unrelated to their perceptions of teacher-classmate relationships. Furthermore, closeness and the perceived teacher and parent norms were positively associated with outgroup attitudes. Finally, perceived relationships between teachers and classmates were positively related to close student-teacher relationships, indicating the importance of taking this variable into account in our analyses.

3.2. Main analyses

3.2.1. Perceived teacher norms and teacher-classmate relationships

Prior to testing our hypotheses, we calculated the intraclass correlation by estimating an intercept-only model. This revealed that 6.2% of the variance in the outgroup attitudes was at the teacher level. We continued the analyses by estimating multilevel regression models for outgroup attitudes (see Table 3). Model 1 shows that student background variables had no significant effect on outgroup attitudes when we controlled for outgroup attitudes at Time 1. The autoregressive effect of outgroup attitudes was large and positive ($b = 0.622$, 99% CI [0.501, 0.743]). The ethnic composition of the classroom was not found to affect students' outgroup attitudes ($b = -0.197$). More importantly, there was no direct effect of students' perceptions of teacher norms on students' outgroup attitudes ($b = 0.020$), and children's perceptions of their teacher's relations with both majority and minority classmates were unrelated to their

Table 2
Bivariate correlations between student and teacher level variables.

Student level	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Ethnic minority background	–								
2. Female	–0.099	–							
3. Age	0.125*	0.086	–						
4. Close student-teacher relationship	–0.108	0.139*	–0.050	–					
5. Perceived parental norm	0.258***	–0.028	0.210**	0.089	–				
6. Perceived teacher norm	0.135*	0.045	0.249**	0.184**	0.601**	–			
7. Perc. tch-classmate rel. – majority group	0.035	0.020	–0.039	0.120*	0.053	0.085	–		
8. Perc. tch-classmate rel. – minority group	0.033	0.015	–0.094	0.167**	–0.061	–0.062	0.384**	–	
9. Outgroup attitudes at Time 1	0.205***	0.074	0.016	0.206***	0.220***	0.246**	0.082	0.108	–
10. Outgroup attitudes at Time 2	0.085	0.083	–0.052	0.156**	0.156**	0.173**	0.021	0.052	0.628**

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$ (two-sided).

Table 3
Standardized effects of perceived teacher norms, teacher-peer relationships and controls on outgroup attitudes at Time 2.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Student level				
Background variables				
Minority (ref. majority)	-0.046	-0.064	-0.057	-0.053
Female (ref. male)	0.078	0.066	0.093	0.084
Age	-0.071	-0.065	-0.075	-0.078
Close student-teacher relationship	0.016	0.011	0.014	0.013
Perceived parental norms	0.032	0.031	0.037	0.034
Outgroup attitudes T1	0.622***	0.623***	0.628***	0.629***
Student perception				
Perceived teacher norm	0.020	0.030	0.068	0.074
Perc. teacher-classmate relations – majority group	-0.036	-0.071	-0.100	-0.101
Perc. teacher-classmate relations – minority group	0.002	0.029	-0.031	-0.030
Perc. tch. norm * Perc. tch - classm. rel. – majority group		0.112*	0.086	0.117*
Perc. tch. norm * Perc. tch - classm. rel. – minority group		-0.036	-0.126 ⁻	-0.142 ⁻
Perceived teacher norm * Minority			-0.092	-0.097
Perc. teacher-classm. rel. – majority group * Minority			0.051	0.062
Perc. teacher-classm. rel. – minority group * Minority			0.080	0.074
Perc. tch. norm * Perc. tch- classm. rel. – majority gr * Min.			0.050	
Perc. tch. norm * Perc. tch- classm. rel. – minority gr * Min.			0.164 ⁻	0.187*
Teacher-level variables				
Classroom ethnic composition	-0.025	-0.037	-0.035	-0.034
Variance				
Level 1 (student)	0.577***	0.568***	0.560***	0.559***
Level 2 (teacher)	0.015	0.014	0.011	0.012
Total variance	0.592	0.572 (1.6%)	0.571 (2%)	0.571 (0%)
<i>(explained variance % compared to prev. model)</i>				

⁻ *p*.
* *p* < .05.
*** *p* < .001 (two-sided).

outgroup attitudes as well (majority: *b* = -0.036; minority: *b* = 0.002).

3.2.2. Moderation effects

In the second step, we assessed if perceived teacher norms and teacher-classmate relationships interact in their effect on outgroup attitudes. In other words, we wanted to assess if perceived teacher norms are more meaningful for outgroup attitudes when they are accompanied by corresponding teacher relationships. We added two interaction terms between teacher norms and teacher relationships with ethnic majority and minority classmates to the model. Model 2 shows a positive effect for the interaction between teacher norms and positive teacher relationships with majority classmates (*b* = 0.112, 95% CI [0.000 0.223]). No interaction effect was found for minority teacher-classmate relationships. The interaction effect is illustrated in Fig. 1 and shows that when positive multicultural norms were less pronounced (i.e. below average student perception of teacher displaying positive norms about

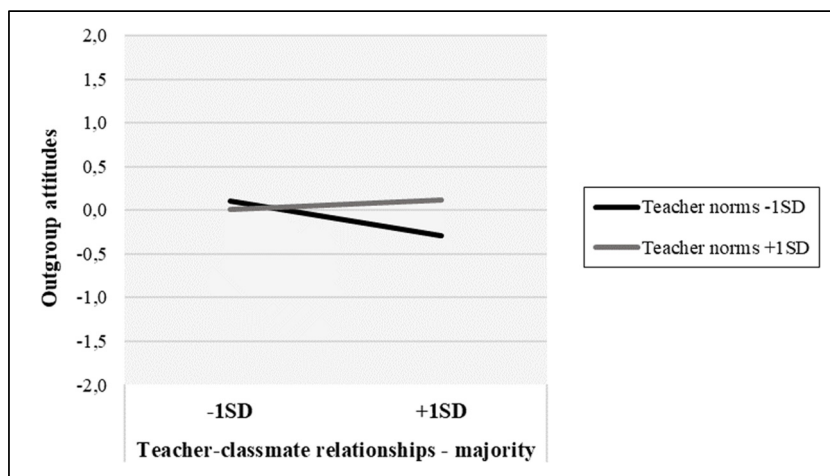


Fig. 1. Moderation effect of perceived relationships between teacher and majority classmates and teacher norms on outgroup attitudes.

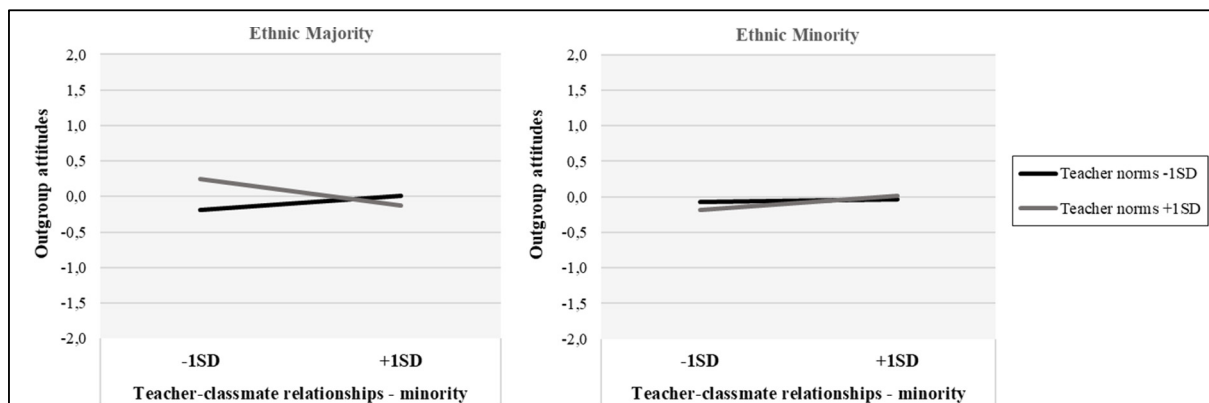


Fig. 2. Three-way interaction effect of perceived relationships between teacher and minority classmates, student ethnicity, and teacher norms on outgroup attitudes.

diversity), perceiving many positive interactions between the teacher and majority group classmates had a negative effect on outgroup attitudes. Conversely, when students perceived positive norms about multiculturalism, these relationships had a positive effect on their outgroup attitudes.

Subsequently, we assessed whether the aforementioned effects were similar for ethnic majority and minority students. The results in Model 3 revealed no significant three-way interaction with teacher-majority classmate relationships. However, there was a marginally significant three-way interaction between ethnicity, teacher norms and teacher relationships with minority classmates ($b = 0.164$, 95% CI $[-0.021, 0.349]$). This effect was only marginally significant, but, as it became significant in the following models, we further inspected it. A final sparser model was estimated, excluding the non-significant effects of the three-way interaction with teacher-majority classmate relationships. This model (Model 4) also shows a significantly positive effect of the three-way interaction between students' ethnicity, teacher norms and perceived relationships between teachers and minority classmates ($b = 0.187$, 95% CI $[0.024, 0.350]$). Fig. 2 illustrates this effect for minority and majority students separately. For majority students, perceiving teachers interacting with minority classmates in a positive way had a negative effect on their outgroup attitudes when the perceived teacher norm was less prominent (below average). When teacher norms about multiculturalism were more prominent, the perceived relationships between teacher and minority students seemed to have a negative effect on outgroup attitudes. For minority students, however, perceiving positive interactions with minority classmates had little effect on their outgroup attitudes regardless of the teacher norms. Additionally, we did not find a significant interaction effect between students' ethnicity and the teacher's perceived relations with majority classmates ($b = 0.062$, 95% CI $[-0.083, 0.206]$). Overall, the final model explained an additional 3.6% of the variance in outgroup attitudes compared to the first model (with main effects only).

3.3. Additional analyses

To assess the robustness of our findings, we performed two additional analyses. First, given that our measures of teacher-classmate relationships are based on dividing peer nominations per ethnic group by the size of this ethnic group in the classroom, their impact could depend on the number of nominations a student made or on the size of the classroom. Thus, we assessed to what extent the effects of perceived teacher relationships with minority and majority classmates were dependent on the number of nominations and on classroom size by adding two- three- and four-way interactions with the direct effects and interaction effects from our main analyses. This analysis (Table S1, Supplemental materials) showed that most of the interaction effects described were not dependent on class size or nomination frequency. However, we did find that the two-way interaction with teacher-classmate relationships and class size showed that the effect minority relationships is stronger in larger classrooms ($b = 0.095$, 95% CI $[0.018, 0.172]$). Similarly, there was a significant interaction between the nomination frequency and teacher-majority classmate relationships ($b = -0.195$, 95% CI $[-0.312, -0.077]$), indicating that for children who nominated more classmates the effect of teacher-majority classmate relationships is weaker.²

² The negative interaction between frequency of nomination and teacher-majority classmate relationships indicates that when students nominated many classmates as having a good relationship with their teacher, perceiving such positive teacher relationships with ingroup or outgroup classmates had less of an effect on outgroup attitudes. In contrast, when students nominated few classmates, perceiving these relations had a stronger positive effect on outgroup attitudes. This could mean that perceiving positive ingroup interactions plays a bigger role for students who are less sociable. To test this assumption, we examined whether a similar interaction effect exist with the measure for close student-teacher relationship as this measure also captures some of the tendency for positive social relations. Indeed, this analysis showed a similar negative, though not significant, interaction effect with the teacher-classmate relationships ($b = -0.024$, 95% CI $[-0.143, 0.094]$). This indicates that the negative interaction with nomination frequency was probably not related to sociability. Rather, with a larger number of nominations individual perceptions may become less discernable and may thus be less impactful on students' outgroup attitudes.

Second, we explored possible interactions with parental norms and teacher-classmate relationships by adding the interactions with multicultural parental norms to the final model of our main analysis and testing another model in which we replaced the interactions for teacher norms with parental norms. These analyses (Table S2) showed that when both teacher norms and parental norms were included in the model the interaction and main effects of both variables were non-significant. The model in which parental norms replaced teacher norms showed similar effect sizes and directions for both direct and interaction effects. However, bivariate correlations between these norms and outgroup attitudes were found to be slightly stronger with teacher norms (parental norms: $r = 0.16$; teacher norms: $r = 0.17$).

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to assess whether teachers affect their students' ethnic outgroup attitudes through the norms about multiculturalism that they express and the relationships they have with their students. Previous research has mainly focused on the norms teachers communicate through multicultural education and instructional practices (Byrd, 2014; Hachfeld et al., 2015; Rattan & Ambady, 2013; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004). Research on the multicultural messages that teachers convey through their interpersonal interactions with ethnic outgroup students has been lacking. We used peer nominations of relationships between teachers and ethnic majority and minority classmates and tested their unique predictive role for students' outgroup attitudes, alongside prescriptive teacher norms. Moreover, because our data contained two time-points we could assess the effects of perceived teacher norms and teacher-classmate relationships on students' outgroup attitudes while controlling for students' initial outgroup attitudes (at Time 1). Taking into account this autoregressive effect allowed us to examine change in outgroup attitudes over time and to investigate how this change was related to perceptions of teacher norms and behavior.

Based on the notion that preadolescent children's ethnic attitudes are dependent on the social norms in their environment (see Nesdale, 2004), our first expectation (H1) was that students' perceptions of the multicultural norms of their teacher would increase their outgroup positivity over time. This hypothesis was not supported in our analyses. We did find positive correlations between perceived teacher norms at Time 1 and outgroup attitudes at Time 1 and Time 2, but there was no significant over-time effect in our main analyses. This lack of effect may be attributed to the strong autoregressive effect of outgroup attitudes (indicating relative stability of outgroup attitudes during the second half of the school year) and suggests the possibility of reverse relations between perceived teacher norms and ethnic attitudes in earlier cross-sectional research (see Thijs & Verkuyten, 2016). Still, we did find that the perceived multicultural norms moderated the impact of the perceived teacher-classmate relations over time.

We expected that for both ethnic majority and minority students, perceiving positive interactions between their teacher and minority classmates would positively affect their outgroup attitudes (H2). This main effect was not obtained but it was found to depend on a combination of student ethnicity and perceptions of teacher norms. For ethnic minority students, there was no significant effect of perceived teacher-minority classmate relationships. This might contradict the premise that interactions between ingroup (minority) classmates and their native Dutch teacher constitute a form of extended contact for ethnic minority students (see Cameron, Rutland, Hossain, & Petley, 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Turner et al., 2007; Vezzali et al., 2012). However, it is in line with previous work that has found no extended contact effects on outgroup attitudes among minority students (Feddes et al., 2009) and with studies that have shown that the effect of intergroup contact (either direct or extended/indirect) on outgroup attitudes tends to be weaker among ethnic minority groups (Aboud, Mendelson, & Purdy, 2003; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

For Dutch majority students, perceiving positive relationships between their teacher and minority classmates had a positive effect on their outgroup attitudes, but only when multicultural teacher norms were less pronounced. These results suggest that when teacher norms are less prominently displayed, ethnic majority students rely more on the social cues derived from teacher-classmate relationships to form an ethnic outgroup attitude. The ensuing positive effect from those social cues might be the result of processes of social referencing where children tend to like classmates with whom their teacher has a good relationship (Hendrickx et al., 2017). Furthermore, because the relationship involves an ethnic ingroup teacher and an outgroup classmate the effect may also be the result of extended contact processes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The interaction further implies that when teacher multicultural norms were perceived to be more favorable, the perceived relationships between teacher and minority classmates had a negative effect on majority student's outgroup attitudes. This finding is not in line with our expectation that it would be particularly effective to perceive positive interactions between teachers and minority classmates that correspond with positive teacher norms (H4). If anything, it appears that positive relationships between teachers and minority students compensate for the relative absence of teachers' multicultural norms. Alternatively, when multicultural teacher norms are strongly positive and accompanied by positive relationships with minority students, this may invoke a feeling of exclusion among majority students. Indeed, research has found that multiculturalism can be perceived as focusing on ethnic minority groups and thereby as excluding ethnic majority members (Correll, Park, & Allegra Smith, 2008; Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011; Rattan & Ambady, 2013). Perhaps, reinforcing these multicultural norms by focusing on relationships with ethnic minority students accentuates these feelings of exclusion and thus undermines the positive effects of perceiving such relationships.

With regard to relationships between teachers and *majority* classmates, we hypothesized, based on social referencing theory (Walden & Ogan, 1988), that for ethnic minority students, these relationships would have a positive effect on their evaluations of the majority group (H3). However, we also argued that these relationships may have negative effects among ethnic minority students as these relations could be construed to negate positive teacher norms about multiculturalism, and students may, therefore, conclude that their teachers are biased or favor the majority (ingroup) over minority groups (H5). Our findings show that perceiving teacher-majority classmate relationships can negatively affect outgroup attitudes and these relationships have a different effect on outgroup attitudes depending on teacher norms. More specifically, when teacher multicultural norms were perceived to be less pronounced,

observing positive interactions between native Dutch teachers and native Dutch classmates had a negative effect on students' attitudes towards outgroups. Unlike our expectations however, these effects were found among ethnic majority and ethnic minority students alike. It is possible that the hypothesized processes affect students' outgroup attitudes, regardless of their ethnic background, as the lack of multicultural teacher norms creates a classroom environment in which positive interactions between a majority teacher and majority classmates can be interpreted as a form of majority ingroup preference (Dovidio et al., 1997; Nesdale et al., 2010). Students might understand these positive interactions between native Dutch students and teachers as a tendency of the teacher to favor Dutch students over ethnic minority students. Previous research has found that perceiving such intergroup biases tends to lead to a lower intention to engage in interethnic friendships (Tropp, O'Brien, & Migacheva, 2014). Indeed, our study shows that, under these conditions, ethnic majority students evaluate minority groups more negatively, and ethnic minorities, similarly, report more negative evaluations of majority groups.

Our findings also indicate, conversely, that when minority and also majority students observe their teacher expressing positive norms about multiculturalism, favorable interactions between majority classmates and teachers have a significant positive effect on outgroup evaluations. Likely, these multicultural teacher norms function as a buffer against the possibility of group biases. Teachers who frequently emphasize multicultural norms in their classrooms may reduce the likelihood of a majority group bias and, thus, allow students to make positive social inferences from relationship between the teacher and majority group classmates. This process would be in line with research on social referencing that indicates that students make inferences about likeability based on their teacher's interpersonal relationships with classmates (Hendrickx et al., 2017; Hughes et al., 2001). However, given that the 'outgroup' constitutes a different group for ethnic majority and minority students, the mechanism of social referencing may work slightly differently for both groups. For ethnic minority students, teachers' positive interactions with majority classmates, combined with multicultural norms, may simply signal to students that these majority students are likable. For ethnic majority students, on the other hand, these interactions with ingroup classmates might signal teacher's ingroup acceptance (i.e. 'the teacher likes people who are like me'). This would be in line with previous research that has found that majority students who share positive relationships with their majority teacher tend to evaluate outgroups more positively (Geerlings et al., 2017).

The results present a rather complex set of configurations between perceived teacher norms and perceived teacher-student relationships, which does not correspond to our initial assumption that teacher norms and practices would be most effective when they correspond. Nevertheless, it is important for teachers to consider both 'what they preach' and 'what they practice' as both norms and practices (in combination), can positively or negatively affect outgroup attitudes.

4.1. Limitations and directions for future research

Our study has several limitations that should be taken into account in the interpretation of the findings. First, the sample size was somewhat limited. At the teacher level, the sample size may have restrained the variability in outgroup attitudes. In our sample students' outgroup attitudes varied between students rather than between teachers. Yet, other studies have also found that outgroup attitudes differ little between classrooms but rather between students (e.g., Thijs & Verkuyten, 2012). Furthermore, the number of students reporting on a single teacher is somewhat limited in certain classrooms due to the small class sizes. However, the smallest classroom in our sample contained eight students which is considered sufficient for generating reliable and representative results (Snijders & Bosker, 1999) and we used a Maximum likelihood estimator with robust standard errors (MLR: Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Nonetheless, a larger sample would have been preferable, also because that would enable us to investigate possible differences between the two minority groups (Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch students).

A second limitation concerns the number of time points in the data. We used data from two waves, which allowed use to draw conclusions about the direction of effects (Meeus, 2016). Still, we cannot draw any causal inferences from these analyses, due to the possibility of time-varying third-variables (Hamaker, Kuiper, & Grasman, 2015). Concerning our sample, it is also important to note that this study was conducted in elementary schools in the Netherlands where teachers usually teach a class of students for one full year. As such, teachers have the opportunity to become an important source of influence in students' lives, including via the norms they express and the relationships they form. However, this influence is likely to be less strong in high school settings where students usually are taught by many different teachers (but see Miklikowska et al., 2019). The effects of teacher norms and teacher-classmate relationships found in this study might thus be specific for elementary school.

Regarding the measure of perceived teacher-classmate relationships, our additional analyses indicated that its impact partly depended on the size of the classroom and nomination frequency. Specifically, the results showed that the effect of perceived majority relationships was less strong with a higher number of nominations, and that the effect of perceived teacher-minority classmate relationships was stronger in larger classrooms.³ Nevertheless, we would argue that using this indirect measure of perceptions of teacher relationships with different ethnic groups is to be preferred over a more direct measure of such perceptions (e.g. asking students if their teacher has positive relationships with ethnic majority/minority classmates). A more direct measure might be prone to social desirability effects or experienced as delicate or divisive.

A final limitation of our study is that the students in our sample appear to have conflated teacher and parental norms. Both were assessed using the same set of three items and these questions were asked consecutively in our survey. Future studies would need to include measures that more clearly distinguish between perceived teacher and parental norms, to disentangle their unique effects on

³ The latter may be due to a strong negative correlation between classroom size and the percentage of ethnic minority students ($r = -0.50$). This implies a lower likelihood of nominating minority students in larger classes, which would make these nominations more noteworthy.

outgroup attitudes. They could also examine the change of in (perceived) teacher norms over time, as teachers could adjust their multicultural teachings to their perceptions of the attitudes of their students,

4.2. Practical implications

The results of our study provide some suggestions for teaching practices in culturally diverse classrooms. They show that the interpersonal relationships between teachers and students with diverse backgrounds can signal messages about the acceptance of cultural diversity to students in that classroom. Apparently, these relationships are not only important for the promotion of a healthy school climate and children's sense of school belonging as has been found in the school psychology literature (e.g., Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, and Waters, 2018; Thijs, Keim, & Geerlings, 2018), but also for how children think about ethnic outgroups. Thus, it seems important for teachers to be aware of their interpersonal relationships with both majority and minority students. For ethnic majority students, positive interactions with majority classmates reaffirm that their ethnic majority teacher 'likes people who are like me' which generates more positive attitudes towards the minority group. For ethnic minority students, these relationships may convey positive social cues about dealing with majority outgroups, and, similarly, perceiving positive relationships between teachers and ethnic minority students may have positive effect on outgroup attitudes for ethnic majority students.

However, our study also shows that for these perceptions of teacher-classmate relationships to have a positive effect on outgroup attitudes, teacher norms may play an important role in forming a balanced environment for both minority and majority students. With regard to instructional practices in diversity education, our findings suggest that setting positive norms about cultural diversity can be important for students' outgroup attitudes. For ethnic minority students, expressing positive norms helps to create an environment that is accepting and supportive of cultural diversity. Such environments are likely to make ethnic minority students feel recognized and valued. This may have positive outcomes in itself but may also help to buffer against possible perceptions of group bias in the classroom. However, our results also suggest that multicultural norms might bolster feelings of exclusion among ethnic majority students. It is therefore important for teachers and schools to invest in curricula that promote positive intergroup relations and cultural diversity in a manner that is inclusive of both minority and majority group children.

5. Conclusion

Our study reveals that teachers in culturally diverse classrooms influence how their students evaluate ethnic outgroups, not only through the norms about multiculturalism they express, but also through the interpersonal relationships with their students. Both ethnic minority and majority students use the social cues that are conveyed in relationships between their teacher and classmates for evaluating ethnic outgroups. However, these social cues can be interpreted differently depending on the multicultural classroom environment that teachers create. Among both majority and minority students, positive teacher-majority classmate interactions can generate more favorable outgroup attitudes, but only when accompanied with multicultural norms expressed in their classroom. For ethnic majority students, perceiving positive interactions between their teacher with minority classmates has positive effects on their outgroup attitudes. But these perceptions may lose their positive influence when combined with strong multicultural norms, as these norms might, perhaps, strengthen feelings of exclusion among majority students.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.07.003>.

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