Endorsement of Assimilationism among Ethnic Minority and Majority Youth in a Multination-Multiethnic Context: The Case of Brussels

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This is a pre-copy-editing, author-produced PDF of an article accepted for publication in European Sociological Review following peer review. The definitive publisher-authenticated version is available online at: http://esr.oxfordjournals.org/content/27/2/212

Please cite as:
Abstract

This study examined attitudes towards weak and strong assimilation in a sample of 3121 pupils from 70 secondary schools in Brussels with a multilevel linear analysis. Controlling for socio-demographic variables, members of some ethnic minority groups endorsed weak assimilation to a greater extent than the majority. Within members of the majority, the French-speaking Belgians held similar attitudes towards assimilation as the Dutch-speaking Belgians.

Among ethnic minorities, the identification of pupils from some origin countries with the mainstream society was positively associated with the endorsement of strong assimilation, while their ethnic identification remained non significant. Intergroup friendship among pupils of foreign origin was positively related to strong assimilation. Moreover, the perception of institutional discrimination against ethnic minorities in favour of the majority was negatively associated to the endorsement of strong assimilation.

Among the majority, the perception that people of foreign origin are victims of discrimination was positively related to the endorsement of weak assimilation. However, this association was mediated by the experience by the majority of institutional discrimination against the majority and in favour of minorities. Ingroup identification among the majority was not associated with the endorsement of assimilation. The results and their implications for future research and policy makers are discussed.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity Models; Assimilation; Attitudes; Majority and Minority Youth

Acknowledgements

This research was made possible through the grant program “Prospective Research in Brussels” of the Brussels Capital Region. The author is grateful to Dirk Jacobs and Andrea Rea from the Université Libre de Bruxelles for their helpful comments on previous drafts.
Introduction

Most of the West European societies today are ethnically diverse. Both the political and academic arenas in those societies have paid increasing attention to the debates on dealing with cultural diversity and ethnic relations. The academic ongoing debate on cultural diversity deals with the opportunity for the state to grant group-based rights in order to cope with the cultural identities of ethnic minorities (Parekh, 2006), to provide equal opportunity for ethnic minorities and to redress social inequality in the broader society (Fraser, 1997; Fraser & Honneth, 2003), while preserving at the same time the unity and social cohesion of the society (Phillips, 2007). In this far from settled debate, political philosophers focus on the role of the state in dealing with cultural diversity and overlook to a great extent the opinions of both the majority and ethnic minorities on these issues. Hence, compared to this vivid philosophical debate, there is little empirical research on the public opinion on these issues. However, the population’s attitudes towards cultural diversity should be an essential part in this debate, because “ultimately, culturally diverse societies consist of people that face the actual task of living with diversity” (Brug & Verkuyten, 2007, p. 113). As a matter of fact, a better understanding of the opinion of both the majority and ethnic minority groups within a society on cultural diversity and the ways for dealing with it is of direct relevance for the implementation of multicultural policies. Hence, “public opinion is likely to shape the future of multiculturalism's political project, if only by placing limits on the actions public officials can safely contemplate” (Citrin, Sears, Muste, & Wong, 2001, p. 248).

As Belgian and European capital, Brussels is of particular interest for the analysis of the attitudes of both the mainstream group and ethnic minorities towards cultural diversity: Brussels can indeed be considered as a non-experimental laboratory in which numerous migrants from various origins and a mainstream population composed of a minority and a majority group live together.
Brussels is not only composed of a large proportion of inhabitants of foreign origin, but this population with a migrant background is also highly culturally diverse. Brussels is indeed the region in Belgium with the highest proportion of foreign inhabitants: 28% of the population in Brussels does not have the Belgian citizenship, against 8.5% on the national level (INS, 2007). The majority of migrants arrived in Belgium in two distinct immigration waves. The first one took place after the Second World War, when the heavy industrial sector recruited an important immigrating labour force. The so-called guest workers of the Post War period mostly came from European and non European Mediterranean countries (mainly from Italy, Morocco and Turkey). The 1970s international oil crisis and the decline of the heavy industrial economy in Belgium ended the labour immigration wave and opened a new one. The new wave brought a more diversified immigration coming mainly by means of family reunification and political asylum. Both of these immigration waves contributed to Brussels’ cultural diversity. This cultural diversity is not only composed of first generation migrants but also meanwhile of a significant second generation migrant youth. Hence, more than half of the school going population is of foreign origin (Jacobs & Rea, 2007). Besides the non EU immigration waves, Brussels -as EU headquarters- also comprises a high number of non Belgian EU citizens.

Besides this large cultural diversity among ethnic minorities, Brussels is also composed of two mainstream groups. Brussels is indeed the capital of a “multination state” (Kymlicka, 1995), which is composed of a Dutch-speaking, a French-speaking and a German-speaking community. Brussels is an official bilingual region (French- and Dutch-speaking region). If the Dutch-speaking population constitutes the largest community on the national level, it remains a minority in Brussels region. The French-speaking Belgians, on the other hand, are in a minority position in Belgium but constitute the majority in Brussels. Following a survey on the languages spoken in Brussels (Janssens, 2008), 7.0% of Brussels inhabitants lives in a
family in which Dutch is the only spoken language, 56.8% of the population lives in a French-speaking family and 16.3% of the Brussels inhabitants lives in a family in which neither Dutch nor French is spoken. 19.9% of the population lives in a bilingual family, in which either French and Dutch (8.6%) or French and a non Dutch language (11.3%) is spoken. In this article, the term of majority group refers to the mainstream group (both French- and Dutch-speaking Belgians without distinction), while the terms of French-speaking Belgians and Dutch-speaking Belgians will be used when a distinction in the composition of the mainstream group is necessary. Thus, the case of Brussels is of particular interest for the analysis of the public opinion towards cultural diversity not only because of the culturally diverse composition of ethnic minorities, which form more than a half of the total youth population, but also because of the heterogeneous composition of the mainstream group. Hence, Brussels can be characterized as a multi-nation multi-ethnic region and the attitudes of its various groups towards cultural diversity can shed light into the process of intergroup relations and mutual expectations within a highly heterogeneous population. Moreover, the remarkable heterogeneous composition of the population of Brussels, which is reflected in our representative sample, can not only broaden but also refine the results of previous empirical studies on the attitudes towards cultural diversity for two main reasons: the empirical literature focuses generally on the population of more homogeneous societies and the results of almost all previous studies are based on the comparison of the attitudes of one majority group with those of very few different ethnic minority groups.

In this article we propose to analyze the attitudes of young adults from both the majority and ethnic minority groups in Brussels towards assimilationism. Assimilationism is a broad and multidimensional concept that can refer to policies (Brubaker, 2004), acculturation process (Berry, 1997), or to scholarly research (Alba & Nee, 1997). Moreover, assimilationism can
also relate to various social fields, such as residence, language, labour market, education or social relations (Alba & Nee, 2005). In this contribution, assimilationism is understood as a psychological concept corresponding to the opposite of multiculturalism defined by van de Vijver, Breugelman and Schalk-Soekar (2008, p. 93) as “an attitude related to the political ideology, which refers to the acceptance of, and support for, the culturally heterogeneous composition of the population of a society”. Furthermore, while the attitudes towards assimilationism can vary according to specific social domains, the general attitudes of youngsters towards assimilationism will be the focus of this contribution.

From previous surveys of the attitudes related to the acceptance and support for the cultural diversity within a society (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003; Brug & Verkuyten, 2007; Taylor & Lambert, 1996), two main models seem to be favoured by members of either ethnic minorities or the majority group: the weak assimilationist and the strong assimilationist ones. In the first one, minorities are asked to adapt to the majority way of life in public domains but are allowed to preserve their cultural heritage in the private sphere. On the other hand, the strong assimilation model states that migrants should give up everything from their own culture and adopt the majority one in all life domains. Moreover, these two models seem to be interpreted by respondents as the two extremity of a bipolar continuum (Brug & Verkuyten, 2007).

The central question of this research is the extent to which the endorsement of the weak and strong assimilationist perspectives differs between the majority and the ethnic minorities and between the French-speaking and the Dutch-speaking Belgians. Moreover, the variation of these discordances in the endorsement of assimilationism along several key socio psychological measures will be investigated. This research is based on a survey among 3121
pupils who attended the last year of the compulsory education in 2007 in 70 schools in Brussels.

**Differences between Ethnic Minorities and the Majority Group**

The literature on ethnic differences in attitudes towards assimilationism points one main finding out: the majority group tends to prefer ethnic minorities to give up their own culture and adopt the majority one in all life domains (“strong assimilationism”), while ethnic minorities tend to distinguish the private (at home) from the public (outside home) domains. Indeed, ethnic minorities seem to agree with the majority to assimilate in public domains but want to keep their own culture in private domains (“weak assimilationism”) (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003; van de Vijver, Schalk-Soekar, Arends-Tóth, & Breugelmans, 2006). Thus, acculturation strategies adopted by ethnic minorities are conceptually understood as homogeneous by the majority –assimilation to all domains without distinction-, but are interpreted as more heterogeneous by ethnic minorities –differentiation between public and private spheres- (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003). An explanation for those results is to be found in the social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Hence, the weak version of assimilationism can be considered as a kind of hierarchy-attenuating ideology, i.e., an ideology that aims at decreasing the group-based degree of social inequality. Weak assimilationism supports indeed the interest of ethnic minorities or low status groups while challenging the group position of the majority or high status group. Thus, according to the social dominance theory weak assimilationism should be more appealing to ethnic minorities than to the majority. Pupils of foreign descent are therefore expected to prefer the weak version of assimilationism (keeping their own culture in the private sphere and adopting the majority culture in the public sphere), while the majority group is expected to favour the assimilation of immigrants in all life domains (H1).
Differences in the Majority between French-Speaking and Dutch-Speaking Belgians

Differences in the endorsement of multiculturalism among the population of subnational mainstream communities were observed in a Canadian survey. Hence, Montreuil and Bourhis (2004) investigated the attitudes of English-speaking and French-speaking students in the bilingual city of Montreal towards cultural pluralism. The demographic situation of the Francophones and Anglophones in Montreal is similar to the one of French-speaking and Dutch-speaking Belgians in Brussels. Indeed, the Francophones constitute the dominant majority in Montreal (province of Quebec), but remain a linguistic minority on the national level. The Anglophones, on the other hand, are a minority in Montreal while forming the majority group in Canada. The results from their survey showed that the Anglophone students endorsed cultural pluralism to a greater extent than the Francophones. Montreuil and Bourhis interpreted those results in the light of the differentiated policies of the Francophones and Anglophones on the integration of immigrant children in the school system. These policies resulted in Anglophones students in Montreal having a longer experience with cultural pluralism than the Francophones. In the same vein, Zick et al. (2001) found out that Germans expressed high expectations of assimilation and segregation of ethnic minorities in comparison to other EU citizens. They drew a parallel between the acculturation expectations of Germans and the official German policy as a non-immigrant country (Andreas Zick et al., 2001, p. 550).

From the conclusions of both Zick et al. (2001) and Montreuil and Bourhis (2004), it seems to be a link between the policies on integration of immigrants issues and the attitudes of the majority towards assimilationism. By applying these conclusions to the Brussels case, we would expect the Dutch-speaking Belgians to endorse the weak version of assimilationism to a greater extent than the French-speaking Belgians (H2). Hence, the French-speaking policy makers in Brussels support an assimilationist perspective towards the acculturation of
immigrants in the line with the French assimilationist-republic model. On the other hand, the Dutch-speaking policy makers endorse a more multiculturalist model inspired by the Anglo-Saxon and Dutch ideas on group-based multiculturalism (Jacobs, 2004).

**Social Identification**

*Identification of the Majority.*

The empirical literature (Brug & Verkuyten, 2007; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002) showed that ingroup identification for the majority group is positively related to the endorsement of strong assimilationism. Following Brug and Verkuyten (2007), members of the majority group who strongly identify with their ingroup will tend to focus to a greater extent on the threatening and negative aspect of cultural diversity and consequently favour the strong version of assimilationism. Hence, according to the Social Identity Theory, members of a group who highly identify with their own group will tend to protect the status position of their group against threat (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). They would thus tend to reject the weak version of assimilationism, i.e., the hierarchy-attenuating model. We would therefore expect a high ingroup identification among the majority to be positively related to the endorsement of strong assimilationism (H3).

*Identification of Ethnic Minorities.*

By contrast, a high ethnic identification for the minorities was reported to be negatively associated with the strong version of assimilationism (Brug & Verkuyten, 2007; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006). Hence, according to the Social Identity Theory, members of a group who highly identify with their group will show less willingness to become a member of a higher status group (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1999). Thus, members of ethnic minorities who identify with their ethnic community will support to a greater extent the model of
acculturation in which they are encouraged to keep some of their cultural heritage. We would therefore expect a high ethnic identification among minorities to be positively associated with the support of weak assimilationism (H4).

Several authors (Berry, 1997, 2001; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997) pointed out that identification with the ethnic community is conceptually distinct from identification with the mainstream society. Considering oneself as a member of an immigrant group does not exclude a coexistent identification with the mainstream society. According to these authors, these two identity dimensions vary independently from each other and can have therefore autonomous impacts on an outcome. Thus, not only the association between assimilationism and the magnitude of ethnic identification of minorities’ members but also the relation between assimilationism and the magnitude of their identification with the mainstream group will be investigated.

**Intergroup Friendships**

Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis suggests that under several conditions intergroup contact can have a positive impact on the attitudes towards outgroups. According to Pettigrew (1998), these conditions are fully met in intergroup friendships. Moreover, using the data of the Eurobarometer of four North West European countries, Pettigrew (1997) showed that the members of the majority who had intergroup friendships held not only lower level of ethnic prejudice, but had also more proimmigrant policy preferences. According to Pettigrew, members of the majority who have intergroup friendships are more concerned and sympathetic for the situation of ethnic minorities. A negative association among the members of the majority between intergroup friendships and the endorsement of strong assimilationism was also observed by Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006). We can therefore expect members of the majority who have intergroup friends to favour the weak version of assimilationism to a greater extent (H5).
For the ethnic minorities, such an association between intergroup friendship and weak assimilationism is less straightforward. It is indeed more likely that among members of ethnic minorities, those who have intergroup friendships will tend to favour the strong version of assimilationism to a greater extent than those who have friends solely from the same origin as their own. Hence, members of ethnic minorities who have intergroup friends might be less likely to consider preserving one’s cultural heritage as important. Thus, we would expect intergroup friendships for the members of ethnic minorities to be positively associated with strong assimilationism (H6).

**Group-Level Institutional Discrimination**

For the sake of clarity, we will use the term of perceived group-level institutional discrimination in this article to refer to the perception of members of one group (either ethnic minorities or the majority) that the other group (either the majority or ethnic minorities) is a victim of institutional discrimination. By contrast, experienced group-level institutional discrimination refers to the perception of members of one group (either ethnic minorities or the majority) that their own group is a victim of institutional discrimination.

**Perceived Group-Level Institutional Discrimination by the Majority.**

The current philosophic and politic debate on cultural diversity is closely linked to the notions of social inequality and equal opportunity. Hence, defenders of group-based rights state that supporting cultural diversity provides a means of fighting social inequality and structural discrimination within the society (Fraser, 1997; Young, 1990). On the sociopsychological level, it has been suggested that members of relative advantaged groups who perceive the disadvantaged position of other groups as illegitimate and beyond their control and
responsibility will tend to be more sympathetic towards these groups and to support to a
greater extent ameliorative social programs (Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002; Weiner, 1993).
Thus, because institutional discrimination is illegitimate and beyond the control of the
population of foreign origin, members of the majority who perceive ethnic minorities to be
institutionally discriminated against should support the hierarchy-attenuating model – the
weak version of assimilationism- to a greater extent. Indeed, Verkuyten and Martinovic
(2006) found out that for the respondents of the majority the perception of structural
discrimination against ethnic minorities was negatively related to the endorsement of strong
assimilationism. We would therefore expect among the members of the majority the
perception of group-level institutional discrimination (against ethnic minorities) to be
positively associated with the support of weak assimilationism (H7).

Perceived Group-Level Institutional Discrimination by Ethnic Minorities.

In order to have symmetry in the measurement of perceived group-level institutional
discrimination, we will also introduce a measure of the perceived group-level discrimination
(against the majority) by ethnic minorities. Furthermore, we cannot exclude the fact that some
youngsters of foreign origin may perceive the majority to be discriminated against. However,
we expect the perception of group-level institutional discrimination to be lower among ethnic
minorities than among members of the majority. We will explore the association between the
perception of group-level institutional discrimination by ethnic minorities (i.e., the perception
by pupils of foreign origin that the majority is a victim of institutional discrimination) and
their attitudes towards assimilationism.

The acculturation strategies adopted by migrants are intrinsically linked with their perception of the surrounding society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Hence, the endorsement of an acculturation model over another one is influenced by the mainstream society’s degree of hostility that migrants are confronted to (Bourhis et al., 1997). As Horenczyk (1996) pointed out, the extent to which members of minorities feel discriminated against as a group may affect their attitude towards culture maintenance and cultural adaptation. The negative association between experienced group-level discrimination and support for strong assimilationism among members of ethnic minorities was confirmed more recently by Verkuyten and Thijs (2002) and by Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006). While Verkuyten and Thijs (2002) analyzed the experience of general ingroup discrimination, we will focus in this contribution on the experience of institutional discrimination against the ingroup in the same way as Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006) did. Members of ethnic minorities who consider their group not equally treated by mainstream institutions are expected to support to a greater extent the weak version of the assimilation model in which they can maintain their cultural heritage in the private sphere (H8). Hence, the perception of an unequal treatment by mainstream institutions because of group membership can prevent pupils of foreign origin from endorsing the acculturation model in which the entirety of one’s cultural heritage is given up.

**Experienced Group-Level Institutional Discrimination by the Majority.**

Even if institutional discriminations are objectively often reported against members of ethnic minorities - in the Belgian education system, see Jacobs, Teney, Callier, Lothaire and Rea (2009), on the Belgian labour market, see Adam (2007); by the police, see Brion (2007)-, members of the majority can still subjectively experience an institutional discrimination against the majority (and in favour of ethnic minorities). Hence, the perception or experience
of unequal treatment of one’s own social position is seldom felt in an even proportion to the
degree of inequality to which one is subject (Runciman, 1966). Thus, the objective situation
of discrimination in the society cannot rule out the perception by the members of the majority
to be victims of group-level institutional discrimination. The association between the experience by the members of the majority of institutional discrimination against their own group and the endorsement of assimilationism will be therefore investigated.

It has been shown that relative group deprivation is positively associated with the rejection of outgroups, such as ethnic prejudice (Pettigrew, 2002) or with the opposition to government redress to the structurally disadvantaged (Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2007). In a similar vein, members of the majority who experience unequal treatment of the majority by institutions in favour of ethnic minorities can be expected to reject to a greater extent any hierarchical-attenuating ideology such as the weak version of assimilationism. In a Dutch survey (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002), the adolescents of the majority group experienced less general group-level discrimination than the ethnic minority (Turks). Moreover, the experience by the members of the majority of general discrimination against the majority group was not significantly associated with the endorsement of assimilationism. This could be due to the fact that the items used in their analysis on the experience group-level discrimination did not specify in favour of whom the majority felt discriminated against. However, in order to be accurate, a measurement on the experience of unequal treatment of one’s group –or measurement of group relative deprivation- should mention a reference group as comparison for the evaluation of the unequal treatment (Smith & Ortiz, 2002). Thus, items on the experience of institutional discrimination against one’s own group should refer to a comparison group. We will therefore use a measure of the experience of institutional discrimination against the majority group and in favour of ethnic minorities in our analysis of the endorsement of assimilationism. We expect the experience of group-level institutional
discrimination to be lower among members of the majority than among members of ethnic minorities. Moreover, we expect the experience of group-level institutional discrimination by members of the majority against their own group to be positively related to the endorsement of the strong version of assimilationism (H9).

Table 1 resumes the hypotheses on the association between perceived group-level institutional discrimination, experienced group-level institutional discrimination and assimilationism.

*** Table 1 about here****

**Socio Demographic Variables**

The aforementioned hypotheses will be tested while controlling the effect of socio-demographic variables that have been shown to influence attitudes towards assimilationism, including gender (Breugelmans, van de Vijver, & Schalk-Soekar, 2008; van de Vijver et al., 2006), the socioeconomic status and the education level (van de Vijver et al., 2006; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Moreover, members of minorities born in Belgium (the second generation migrants) will be differentiated from those born abroad—the so-called 1.5 generation migrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

**Methods**

**Sample**

Seven out of the nineteen municipalities of the Brussels Region were selected because of their representativeness of the geographic and demographic diversity of Brussels. All secondary schools of the seven municipalities were included in the sample. Seventy of the selected schools took part in the survey (response rate of 88%). Pupils attending the last year of the secondary education in one of the selected schools were asked to participate in the survey. In
total, 3121 pupils responded to the study in 2007 (response rate of about 70 % within the participating schools). Our sample is thus composed of pupils of the last year of the secondary education attending regularly schools in Brussels in 2007. The pupils who took part in our survey compose almost one third of the total school population of Brussels in the last grade of the secondary education. Respondents were on average 18 years old. The questionnaire was introduced to the pupils as a survey on their attitudes and opinions and the anonymity of their answers was guaranteed. The data were not weighted and cases with missing values on variables were included in the model.

Data

Explanatory Variables.

Female (56.7 per cent of the sample) is the reference category for gender. Pupils’ education level is measured by their education track. Belgian school system is composed of three main tracks: general (reference category; 55.9%), technical (31.4%) and vocational (12.8%). The education degree of the mother is considered as proxy for the SES of pupils. It is composed of three categories: low education degree (reference category, 16.5%); middle education degree (35.0%) and high education degree (41.1%).

Ethnic origin of pupils is measured with the country of birth of the mother. Besides several nationalities that are well represented in the data (Congolese, Turks, Moroccans and Belgians), the 92 other countries are regrouped by regions following the United Nations Statistics Division classification. Ten categories represent the origin of the mother: Subsaharan Africa (except Congo) (3.1 per cent), North Africa (except Morocco) (2.4 per cent), Asia (except Turkey) (2.0 per cent), Middle East (1.2 per cent), East Europe (1.8 per cent), South Europe (5.5 per cent), Morocco (17.7 per cent), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC; 5.3 per cent), Turkey (4.6 per cent) and Belgium (reference category, composed of
pupils whose mother was born in North West Europe; 53.7 per cent). Among pupils whose mother was born in a non North West EU country, 29.4 % was not born in Belgium (the so-called 1.5 generation migrants).

The mother tongue of the pupils will be used as a measure to differentiate between the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking Belgians. This variable is composed of pupils whose mother tongue is French (reference category; 45.4%), Dutch (10.4%), another tongue (19.8%) and of pupils having at least two mother tongues (24.4%). The French and Dutch categories will be the focus in the analysis.

Even if Belgium is a multinational state (Kymlicka, 1995), “host society” refers in the debates on immigration to the national society. Moreover, when asked about their strongest feeling of belonging, the majority of the respondents of both the Dutch-speaking and the French-speaking regions favours Belgium to any other subnational entity (De Winter, 2007). To our best knowledge, there is not such a survey about the feeling of belonging among the (bilingual) Brussels population. Thus, the ingroup identification of the majority and the identification of members of minorities with the mainstream society is measured with the item: “I have … things in common with Belgians”. This item could be answered with a five point likert scale ranging from nothing (0) to a lot (4) ($M$: 2.21; $SD$: 0.89 for the majority and $M$: 1.86; $SD$: 1.01 for ethnic minorities).

The identification of pupils of foreign descent with the ethnic community is measured with the following item: “I have … in common with the people from my country of origin”. This item could be answered with a five point Likert scale ranging from nothing (0) to a lot (4) ($M$: 2.59; $SD$: 1.11). All pupils whose mother was born in a North West EU country were given a missing value for this variable.
Intergroup friendship is measured with the item “How many of your friends and intimate relationships are from the same origin as you?” Pupils could answer this item with a five point likert scale ranging from all (0) to no one (4) ($M$: 1.70; $SD$: 1.08).

Five items measuring the perception of institutional discrimination were administered. These items were inspired by Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006) and measure the perceived discrimination by the police, by the school, the authorities, on the labour market and for social housing. A sample item is: “If something wrong happens somewhere, who, do you think, will be firstly controlled by the police?” The item was administered with a five point Likert scale: “Surely the youngsters of foreign origin”; “Probably the youngsters of foreign origin”; “There won’t be any difference”; “Probably the Belgian youngsters”; “Surely the Belgian youngsters”. The same design was applied for the other discrimination items so that not only the perception of discrimination against the ethnic minorities in favour of the majority but also the perception of discrimination against the majority in favour of ethnic minorities is measured. The items were crossed with a dummy on the country of birth of the mother (either North West Europe or another country). This crossing enables us to construct variables measuring not only the experienced institutional discrimination of both the ethnic minorities and the majority group, but also the perception by the majority that ethnic minorities are victims of institutional discrimination and the perception by pupils of foreign origin that the majority is a victim of institutional discrimination. The construction of the measure of the experienced group-level institutional discrimination was done as follow: pupils who answered for one item that “surely their own group will be discriminated against” received a value of 2. Those who responded “probably their own group” received a value of 1 and those who answered that their own group won’t be discriminated against received a value of 0 for that item. The internal consistency of those five measures is acceptable ($\alpha = 0.77$). The items were
then sum up to construct a common experienced group-level institutional discrimination index for pupils from ethnic minorities and from the majority group.

The construction of the measure of the perceived group-level institutional discrimination was done in a similar way: pupils who answered for one item that “surely the other group will be discriminated against” received a value of 2. Those who responded “probably the other group” received a value of 1 and those who answered that the other group won’t be discriminated against received a value of 0 for that item. The internal consistency of those five measures is $\alpha = 0.72$. The items were then sum up to construct a common perceived group-level institutional discrimination index for the pupils from ethnic minorities and from the majority group. It should be mentioned that the perceived group-level institutional discrimination index is not the reverse of the experienced group-level institutional discrimination index: pupils who answered on one item that “there won’t be any differences” received a value of 0 in the construction of both indexes. The correlation between these two indexes among pupils of foreign origin is -0.132 and is -0.164 among Belgian pupils.

For descriptive purposes, Table 2 presents the distribution of the experienced group-level institutional discrimination index (i.e., the experience that the own group is a victim of institutional discrimination) and the perceived group-level institutional discrimination index (i.e., the perception that the other group is a victim of institutional discrimination) across the categories of origin. As expected, the degree of experienced institutional discrimination and perceived institutional discrimination differs significantly between the majority and ethnic minorities.

***Table 2 about here***
Outcome Variables.

The attitudes towards assimilationism were measured with three items: “In order to be totally accepted by the host society, people with foreign origin must give up their culture and adopt entirely the Belgian culture” (item1); “In order to be totally accepted by the host society, people with foreign origin must, when necessary, give up some of their cultural practices” (item2) and “People from foreign origin can preserve their culture but only in their family lives. In public spaces (school, street, work,…), they must adapt to the Belgian lifestyle” (item3). The items were administered with a five points Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (0) to “strongly agree” (4). An exploratory factor analysis on the three items resulted in a unidimensional construct similar among the different categories of origin. However, the unidimensionality of the scale does not imply that all items of the scale were equally endorsed. Because the weak and the strong assimilationism items are expected to be inversely popular among ethnic minorities and the majority, a Mokken scale analysis was performed on the three indicators. The Mokken scale method is a nonparametric probabilistic version of the Guttman scale analysis and belongs to the Item Response Theory techniques. It determines whether the items can be cumulatively ordered by popularity and can form a single scale. Moreover, the ordering of the items by popularity can also be compared across groups. In addition, the Mokken scale technique can successfully be used on a small number of items (van Schuur, 2003). This analysis was performed with the MSPWIN 5.0 program (Molenaar, van Schuur, Sijtsma, & Mokken, 2002). The ordering of the items according to their popularity in the whole sample resulted in item3 (“weak assimilation” item) being the most popular, followed by item2 and then item1 (“strong assimilation” item). As an indicator for the degree to which pupils can be accurately ordered by means of the 3 items (Molenaar &
Sijtsma, 2000), the Loevinger’s coefficients $H$ are provided. A set of items should have a coefficient $H > 0.3$ to be considered scalable (Mokken, 1971 cited in van Schuur, 2003, p. 149). The $H$ coefficient for the entire sample is 0.51. Moreover, the invariance of items ordering was tested across the categories of origin in order to verify the scalability of the items across the subgroups of interest and to detect item bias (Sijtsma & Molenaar, 2002). The item step order does not vary across the categories of origin and the lowest $H$ coefficient is 0.38 (for the group of pupils whose mother was born in RDC). The cumulative scale formed by the three items is thus valid in the entire sample and across each origin group. The construction of the assimilationsim scale was done by summing all scores of pupils up, as suggested by Molenaar and Sijtsma (2000). This scale ranges from 0 to 12 ($M$: 5.79, $SD$: 2.84, Missing: 170), with a middle score corresponding to the endorsement of the weak version of assimilationism and the higher the score, the higher the support of the strong version of the assimilation model.

**Statistical Analysis**

A multilevel linear analysis was performed in order to assess the impact of the individual characteristics on pupils’ attitudes towards assimilationism by controlling for the effect of the clustered sample –pupils aggregated within schools (Rasbash, Steele, Browne, & Prosser, 2005). However, we restricted the analysis in this contribution to the individual level, without exploring the school level.

Because pupils of the majority and the ethnic minorities compose a single sample, the hypotheses concerning both the majority and ethnic minorities will be tested in the same models. Nevertheless, the explanatory variables can have a different impact on the attitudes towards assimilationism of ethnic minorities and the majority. Interactions between the explanatory variables and the categories of origin will therefore be introduced in the
construction of the models. The complexity of this procedure –interactions with 10 categories of origin for each explanatory variable- had however to be reduced in order to reach convergence. The hierarchical regression model was built in two steps: in the first step, the explanatory variable and its interaction were allowed to vary across each category of origin. Then, a Wald test (Goldstein, 2003) was performed on the coefficients of the explanatory variable and its interaction with every category of origin. Finally, we removed each non significant variable and each non significant interaction from the model.

Results

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis –by controlling for the impact of schools- are presented in Table 3. The variances at both the school and pupil levels are presented for informative purposes at the bottom of the table. The following variables were introduced in the first model: the origin categories, the mother tongue categories, the controlling variables (gender, SES, education, country of birth), as well as the interactions between the controlling variables and the categories of origin. Among the controlling variables, only gender has a significant effect on the attitudes towards assimilationism. Hence, the category “male” has a positive and significant coefficient, which means that boys tend to support to a greater extent the strong version of assimilation. SES, education tracks and the country of birth of pupils do not have a significant impact on the outcome and are thus not presented in the Table 3.

Out of the nine categories of foreign origin, four categories do not significantly differ from the category North West EU: pupils whose mothers were born either in Subsharan Africa, in Middle East, in East EU or in South EU share the same attitudes as the majority towards assimilationism. By contrast, pupils whose mothers were born either in North Africa, in Asia, in Morocco, in DRC or in Turkey endorse weak assimilationism to significantly greater extent than the majority. Thus, our first hypothesis is in part confirmed: members of some –but not
all ethnic minority groups tend to support weak assimilationism to a greater extent than the majority. Contrary to our second hypothesis, the distinction among the majority between Dutch-speaking and French-speaking Belgians is not significant –and is thus not presented in Table 3. Thus, Dutch-speaking pupils do not significantly differ from the French-speaking pupils in their attitudes towards assimilationism. This first model explains 10% of the unexplained variance at the individual level.

*** Table 3 about here***

In the second model, the variables referring to social identity and social relations are introduced: identification with Belgians, identification with the ethnic community and intergroup friendship along with their interactions with the origin categories. This second model reject our third hypothesis: members from the majority who highly identify with Belgians do not favour strong assimilationism to a greater extent. Hence, the main effect of the variable identification with Belgians –referring to the identification with Belgians of pupils from the majority (the reference category)– is not significant. Thus, a high ingroup identification among the majority does not lead to a significantly stronger support for strong assimilationism. However, a high identification with Belgians is significantly associated with the outcome for three out of the five remaining categories of origin. Hence, pupils with an Asian, North African or Turkish origin who identify with the mainstream society tend to endorse strong assimilationism to a greater extent than pupils from the same origin who do not identify with Belgians. Neither the variable identification with the ethnic community nor its interaction with the categories of origin is significant. This means that a high ethnic identification among ethnic minorities is not related to the endorsement of weak assimilationism. Our fourth hypothesis is thus rejected.
With regards to the main effect of the intergroup friendship variable, the more pupils from the majority have friends from a different origin, the more they endorse weak assimilationism. This confirms our fifth hypothesis: intergroup friendship among the majority is positively associated with weak assimilationism. By contrast, pupils from North Africa, Asia, Morocco or Turkey who have many friends from a different origin tend to favour the strong version of assimilationism to a greater extent than pupils from the same origin who do not have any intergroup friendship. This association is however not significant for the pupils from Congo. This confirms in part our sixth hypothesis: the more pupils of foreign origin have intergroup friendships, the less they support the weak version of assimilationism. Even if most of the interaction terms of ethnic identification and identification with the mainstream society are not significant, the introduction of these variables and the measure of intergroup friendship along with their interaction terms into the model affects the magnitude of the ethnic differences on the endorsement of assimilationism. Hence, ethnic differences increase in the second model: while the constant (referring to the North West EU pupils) remains stable, the magnitude of the coefficients of the origin categories becomes larger in the second model. This means that the variables “identification with Belgians” and “intergroup friendships” with their interaction terms affect not only the outcome but also the ethnic differences. This second model explains 13% of the total unexplained variance at the individual level.

In the third model, the variable perception of group-level institutional discrimination (i.e., perception that the other group is institutionally discriminated against) and its interaction with the categories of origin are introduced. The perception of institutional discrimination by pupils of the majority (main effect) is significant: a Belgian pupil who perceives ethnic minorities to be victims of institutional discrimination tend to favour weak assimilationism to a greater extent. Our seventh hypothesis is thus confirmed: among the majority perceived group-level institutional discrimination is positively associated with the support of weak
assimilationism. Moreover, pupils from Congo who perceive that Belgians are victims of institutional discrimination tend to favour strong assimilationism to a greater extent than pupils from the same origin who do not perceive any institutional discrimination (against the majority). The interaction between the perceived group-level institutional discrimination and DRC is indeed the only significant interaction term. With the introduction of the perceived group-level institutional discrimination index into the model, the coefficients of the ethnic categories remain fairly stable. This model explains 14% of the total unexplained variance.

In the last model the experienced group-level institutional discrimination index (i.e., experience that the own group is institutionally discriminated against) and its interactions with the categories of origin are added. Each interaction term between the experienced institutional discrimination index and the categories of origin are significant and negative. This means that pupils from a foreign origin who experience some institutional discrimination against their own group tend to be more in favour of weak assimilationism than pupils from a foreign origin who do not experience any group-level institutional discrimination. This confirms our eighth hypothesis.

The coefficient of the experienced group-level institutional discrimination by pupils of the majority (main effect) is significant and positive: among members of the majority, the higher the experienced institutional discrimination against the majority, the higher their support of strong assimilationism. This result confirms our ninth hypothesis: the experienced group-level institutional discrimination among the majority is positively associated with the endorsement of strong assimilationism. Moreover, with the introduction of the experienced group-level discrimination index into the model, the coefficient of perceived institutional discrimination by the majority becomes non significant. The positive association among members of the majority between the perceived institutional discrimination index (i.e., perception by the majority that ethnic minorities are victims of institutional discrimination) with the
endorsement of weak assimilationism seems thus completely mediated (Baron & Kenny, 1986) by the experienced institutional discrimination index among the majority (i.e., experience by the majority that the majority is a victim of institutional discrimination). As aforementioned, among members of the majority, the correlation between the perceived institutional discrimination index and the experienced institutional discrimination index is \(-0.16\). In addition, the introduction of the experienced institutional discrimination (i.e., experience that the own group is institutionally discriminated against) and its interaction into the model reduces the ethnic differences on the attitudes towards assimilationism. Hence, the coefficient of one out of the five origin categories becomes non significant (pupils from DRC) while the coefficients of the four other categories decreases. Thus, the variable “experienced group-level institutional discrimination” by the majority and ethnic minorities can help reducing the discrepancies between the five origin categories and the majority in their endorsement of assimilationism: this variable has a mediating effect on the association of ethnic origin with the endorsement of assimilationism. The amount of explained variance in this last model increases to 17\%, which is –in comparison to the first model- relatively low with regards to the numerous main effects and interaction terms included in this model. This can be due to the fact that most of the main effects and interaction terms introduced in the model step by step (such as the variables “identification with Belgians”, “intergroup friendship” or “experienced institutional discrimination”) mediate the association between ethnic origin and endorsement of assimilationism. In other words, these variables together with their interaction terms affect the association of ethnic origin with assimilationism but do not explain a large amount of the remaining unexplained variance.

**Conclusion and Discussion**
Research suggests that an acculturation model, in which members of minorities can preserve their cultural heritage while being integrated in the mainstream society leads overall to the most positive psychological outcomes among members of minorities (e.g., Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). However, to what extent members of ethnic minorities can endorse such an acculturation model depends on the ideological climate of the mainstream society (Bourhis et al., 1997). This ideological climate is not only composed of the state policies on integration issues but also of the expectations and preferences of majority members. The purpose of this article was to explore the possible discordances in the endorsement of weak and strong assimilationism between pupils from ethnic minorities and the mainstream group in a culturally diverse society and their variation along several key sociopsychological factors. Hence, the multination and multiethnic characteristics of Brussels enabled us to analyse the intergroup relations and mutual expectations of various ethnic minorities and of the two subnational majority groups that compose the population of an European urban context. Let review the main findings and limitations of our analysis.

First of all, the results of probabilistic version of the Guttman scale pointed out that the attitudes towards weak assimilationism (distinction between the private and public spheres) and towards strong assimilationism (adaptation to the majority in all life domains) were not only unidimensional, but formed also a cumulative scale invariant across each origin category. This means that the popularity degree of the items follows the same patterns among members of ethnic minorities and the majority. Youngsters of foreign origin and youngsters from the majority give thus the same meaning and structure to assimilationism. They diverge only on their degree of agreement on the assimilationism scale. In future surveys, the scalability and structure of the assimilationism concept between the majority and ethnic minorities should be enlarged and encompass items on specific social domains such as the labour market, education, public spaces, politics or social relations.
Moreover, our results showed that not all ethnic minority groups did differ from the majority in their degree of endorsement of assimilationism. Hence, four out of the nine categories of origin in our sample (Subsaharian Africa, Middle East, East EU and South EU) expressed the same attitudes on assimilationism as the majority. Thus the clash between ethnic minorities and the majority in their endorsement of assimilationism often reported in the empirical literature should be put into perspective. Most—if not all—of the surveys on assimilationism focused their analysis on the comparison of the majority with one or two main ethnic groups. As we have seen in our analysis, a discrepancy in the attitudes towards assimilationism between an ethnic minority group and the majority can not be generalized to all ethnic minority groups. Future empirical research on the endorsement of assimilationism should therefore pay more attention to the diversity of ethnic minorities within a society and to possible contrasted results with regards to the origin of ethnic minorities. From a theoretical perspective, the fact that four out of nine ethnic minority groups endorsed assimilationism to the same extent as the majority raise the question of whether the dominant group does really support hierarchy-attenuating ideology to a lesser extent than the subordinate groups, as suggested by Sidanius and Pratto in their Social Dominance Theory (1999). Because of the very different social contexts, types of ethnic minorities and ethnic intergroup relations that are to be found in Europe and in the US (Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008), the transposition of US theories developed mainly from the Black-White relations such as the social dominance theory to the European context might not be straightforward. Hence, our results based on a European multiethnic and multination urban context suggest that this transposition is not self-evident and that the differentiation of subordinate and dominant groups based on their support for hierarchy-attenuating ideologies is not clear-cut. The question of why specifically those ethnic minority groups hold similar attitudes towards assimilationism as the majority is left open. Hence, the differentiated endorsement of assimilationism by the ethnic minority groups
living in Brussels can not be explained by the ethnic hierarchy (Verkuyten & Kinket, 2000) that is to be found among Brussels youngsters (Jacobs & Rea, 2007). Some of the ethnic minority groups that did not differ from the majority in their attitudes towards assimilationism (e.g., pupils from Subsaharan Africa or East Europe) seem indeed to rise more mistrust among Brussels youngsters than some ethnic minority groups who do support weak assimilationism significantly more than the majority (e.g. pupils from Asia). Moreover, with regards to the immigration history of Belgium, the ethnic minority groups that hold similar attitudes towards assimilationism as the majority arrived mainly in the second immigration wave. However, besides the Moroccan and Turk groups, the ethnic minorities that differs from the majority in their endorsement of assimilationism (i.e., North Africa, Asia, and Congo) are also recent immigrant groups. Thus, the length of stay of these ethnic groups in Belgium can not afford a convincing explanation for this discrepancy. A last possible explanation to be mentioned could be the religion of those minorities. Hence, Dutch studies (e.g., Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002) that found significant differences in the endorsement of assimilationism used samples of respondents of Turk origin. However, Christians and Muslims are to be found among ethnic minorities that do not differ from the majority in their attitudes (East EU, South EU, Subsaharian Africa or Middle East) as well as among ethnic minorities that hold different attitudes than those of the majority (Morocco, Turkey or DRC).

Among the majority, the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking Belgians held the same degree of endorsement of multiculturalism. These results contrast with the differentiated policies of the Dutch- and the French-speaking policy makers in Belgium. We can conclude from our results that the link between the policies on immigration issues and the attitudes of the mainstream population towards assimilationism is not straightforward. However, developing the interpretation of these results further is tentative, given the limited number of subnational
groups analyzed in this article. A cross-national comparative study of policies on multiculturalism and attitudes of the majority members towards multiculturalism could shed more light on this issue.

With regards to the sociopsychological predictors tested in our analysis, it should be underlined and emphasized that the causal direction of any of the effects in our results can not be determined with our cross-sectional data. The associations mentioned here are indeed not causal but correlational.

The first sociopsychological predictor tested in our analysis was the identification with the majority for both the ethnic minorities and the majority and the ethnic identification for the ethnic minorities. First and to the contrary of our hypothesis, the ingroup identification among the majority was not significantly associated with the attitudes towards assimilationism.

Because the empirical literature is convergent on the negative association between ingroup identification among the majority and the endorsement of assimilationism, our results seem surprising. It should be reminded that Belgium is a “multination state” (Kymlicka, 1995) with Brussels as a bilingual region-capital. The national and subnational identifications among the population living in the French-speaking and the Dutch-speaking region have been analysed (Billiet, Maddens, & Beerten, 2003; De Winter, 2007). However, the samples of these surveys do not encompass the population in Brussels. The ingroup identification of the majority in Brussels might be a more complex process than the identification of the majority in a unilingual region. In other words, the association of ingroup identification among the majority with the endorsement of assimilationism is not as self-evident as the empirical literature has suggested, at least among the youth of a European multination and multiethnic urban context.

The same argument can be put forward in the interpretation of the results on the identification with the ethnic community. Hence, the association between the ethnic identification and the endorsement of assimilationism was not significant, to the contrary of our hypothesis and of
most of other surveys on this issue. Identifying with the ethnic community for a youngster of foreign origin living in a “multination” society might have a different meaning than for a youngster of foreign descent living in a society with a homogeneous majority group. Hence, a simple dichotomy such as majority/migrants does not hold in a multination region like Brussels. This could have an impact on the identification of both the ethnic minorities and the majority groups. We can only plead for further surveys on the identification processes of the majorities and minorities and their impact on outcomes in heterogeneous societies. Hence, Brussels is far from being the only region in Europe in which the majority is composed of several groups or in which the ethnic minorities compose a large proportion of the population. Nevertheless, these results shed light on the identification of ethnic minorities with the mainstream group. Hence, besides the relation of the ethnic identification of minorities and assimilationism, the association between identification of ethnic minorities with the mainstream group and assimilationism was investigated. Pupils from three ethnic minority groups (North Africa, Asia and Turkey) who identify with the mainstream group did support strong assimilationism to a greater extent than pupils from the same origin who do not identify with the mainstream group. Even if we can not generalize this pattern to all ethnic minorities, it is worth investigating this association in future surveys. Hence, the identification process of ethnic minorities cannot be reduced to the solely ethnic identification (Berry, 1997; Bourhis et al., 1997). A last remark should be done about our items measuring identification with the mainstream group and ethnic identification: the items used in our analysis refer to the cognitive component of identification, while its affective component was not included in our analysis. Future research on the identification process of both the majority and ethnic minorities and its impact on intergroup relations in heterogeneous societies should encompass more aspects of identification in order to broaden the scope of our results.
The association between intergroup friendship and attitudes towards assimilationism was tested among the majority and ethnic minorities. Among the majority, pupils who have friends from other origins than theirs endorse weak assimilationism to a greater extent than pupils from the majority without any intergroup friendships. Our results confirm our hypothesis but more importantly the contact hypothesis of Allport (1954). Hence, in accordance with the results of Pettigrew (1997), members of the majority who have intergroup friendships tend to support to a greater extent policies in favour of the population with a migrant background.

Among ethnic minorities, pupils from all expect one (DRC) ethnic minority groups who have friends from other origins as theirs tend to favour strong assimilationism to a greater extent than pupils from the same origin who do not have any intergroup friendships. These results confirmed our hypothesis: pupils of foreign origin whose friends are mainly from different origins might consider the preservation of their cultural heritage as less important than pupils of foreign origin who have solely friends from the same origin as theirs.

The analysis of the association between the perceived group-level institutional discrimination (i.e., perception that the other group suffers from institutional discrimination), the experienced group-level institutional discrimination (i.e., experience that the own group is a victim of institutional discrimination) and the endorsement of assimilationism enabled us to shed light on several mechanisms. In a first step, we could confirm the results obtained by Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006) and our hypothesis: the positive association between perceived group-level institutional discrimination among members of the majority and their endorsement of weak assimilationism. On a more theoretical perspective, our results confirm the conditions drawn by Leach, Snider and Iyer (2002) in which the relative advantaged will tend to support social equality. Hence, following those authors, members of an advantaged group -whose advantage remains stable- who consider the disadvantaged position of other groups as illegitimate and beyond their control will tend to support policies aiming at redressing
inequality. The perceived group-level institutional discrimination among the majority fulfills those conditions: institutional discrimination against ethnic minorities is stable, is illegitimate and beyond the control of ethnic minorities. Moreover, the association between the perception of this kind of disadvantage (i.e., perceived group-level discrimination) and the support for hierarchy-attenuating policy among members of an advantaged group is confirmed by our data. In addition, the positive association between the perceived group-level institutional discrimination and the support of weak assimilationism among the majority raises an interesting implication or policy makers: this would suggest that the support among the majority of the preservation of ethnic minorities’ cultural heritage in the private sphere is in part conditioned by the perception that ethnic minorities suffer from discrimination by institutions. This finding could indeed help policy makers in seeking for the support of the majority to implement multicultural policies.

However, this association was entirely mediated by the experienced group-level institutional discrimination by the majority. Thus, the relationship between perceived group-level institutional discrimination and support for weak assimilationism is not direct, but implies to take the experienced group-level institutional discrimination of the majority into account. Hence, even if ethnic minorities are objectively more often victims of institutional discriminations, some members of the majority can still experience their own group as discriminated against in favour of ethnic minorities. More importantly for our purpose, this experienced group-level institutional discrimination by the majority is negatively associated with their support of weak assimilationism. In addition, this experienced group-level institutional discrimination interferes in the relationship between the perceived institutional discrimination and the endorsement of weak assimilationism: the introduction of the experienced institutional discrimination measurement into the model resulted in the non
significance of the perceived institutional discrimination coefficient among the majority. Furthermore, experienced group-level institutional discrimination was the only variable in our model – except gender- with a uniform coefficient among all ethnic minority groups: pupils from all countries of origin who experience their group as institutionally discriminated against tend to favour weak assimilationism to a greater extent than pupils of foreign descent who do not experience any institutional discrimination. In addition, the experienced institutional discrimination mediated the association of ethnic origin with the endorsement of assimilationism: the ethnic differences on the attitudes towards assimilationism decreased with the introduction of the perceived institutional discrimination into our model. This means that the clash between ethnic minorities and the majority in the endorsement of assimilationism is in part due to the experience of both the majority and ethnic minorities that the own group is a victim of institutionally discrimination. It seems therefore that the subjective feeling of the institutional discrimination of one’s own group among both ethnic minorities and the majority play a key role in the endorsement of assimilationism. The Group Relative Deprivation theory (Pettigrew, 2002) -applied not only to the disadvantaged but also to the advantaged groups- is thus a powerful theoretical tool in understanding the clash between ethnic minorities and the majority in the endorsement of assimilationism. Nevertheless, these results leave a tremendous challenge for the policy makers. Hence, in order to reduce the discrepancy in the endorsement of assimilationism between ethnic minorities and the majority, policies supporting equal opportunities in the mainstream institutions should be implemented. Besides the reduction of objective discrimination, policy makers should also strive to diminish the subjective feeling of being a victim of institutional discriminations among the entire population –both the majority and ethnic minorities. Hence, the relation between objective discrimination of a group and the subjective perception of it by its members is everything but straightforward. Stakeholders who strive to implement
multicultural policies in heterogeneous societies should thus brace themselves to a busy agenda. Young adults of today are indeed the citizens of tomorrow.

References


Table 1: Hypotheses on Perceived Group-Level Institutional Discrimination and Experienced Group-Level Institutional Discrimination by Ethnic Minorities and the Majority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewed By</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Experienced Group-Level Institutional Discrimination</td>
<td>Strong Assimilationism (H9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minorities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived Group-Level Institutional Discrimination</td>
<td>Weak Assimilationism (H7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minorities</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Perceived Group-Level Institutional Discrimination</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minorities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced Group-Level Institutional Discrimination</td>
<td>Weak Assimilationism (H8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Distribution of the Experienced Group-Level Institutional Discrimination Index and the Perceived Group-Level Institutional Discrimination Index across the Categories of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of Origin</th>
<th>Experienced Group-Level Institutional Discrimination</th>
<th>Perceived Group-Level Institutional Discrimination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West EU (n: 1705)</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsaharian Africa (n: 97)</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa (n: 75)</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia (n: 63)</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East (n: 36)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe (n: 56)</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Europe (n: 171)</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco (n: 551)</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC (n: 166)</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey (n: 143)</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N: 3121)</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $F= 236.95; 9$ df; $p < 0.001$ for the experienced group-level institutional discrimination index.

$F= 207.68; 9$ df; $p < 0.001$ for the perceived group-level institutional discrimination index.
Table 3: Results of the Individual Characteristics on the Attitudes towards Assimilationism – by Controlling the Impact of Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Model 1 $^a$</th>
<th>Model 2 $^b$</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>6.96 (0.19)</td>
<td>7.08 (0.24)</td>
<td>7.29 (0.26)</td>
<td>6.71 (0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.29 (0.10)**</td>
<td>0.28 (0.10)**</td>
<td>0.26 (0.10)**</td>
<td>0.21 (0.10)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origin of the mother</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>-2.04 (0.33)**</td>
<td>-4.92 (0.95)**</td>
<td>-4.97 (0.97)**</td>
<td>-2.65 (1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>-1.14 (0.36)**</td>
<td>-4.96 (1.31)**</td>
<td>-5.66 (1.38)**</td>
<td>-4.65 (1.39)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>-2.26 (0.15)**</td>
<td>-3.48 (0.38)**</td>
<td>-3.73 (0.40)**</td>
<td>-3.05 (0.47)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>-0.94 (0.23)**</td>
<td>-1.46 (0.63)*</td>
<td>-1.75 (0.64)**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>-1.23 (0.24)**</td>
<td>-3.45 (0.57)**</td>
<td>-3.72 (0.59)**</td>
<td>-2.62 (0.72)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification with Belgians</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main effect</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* North Africa</td>
<td>0.69 (0.32)*</td>
<td>0.69 (0.32)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Asia</td>
<td>1.12 (0.40)**</td>
<td>1.12 (0.40)**</td>
<td>1.26 (0.40)**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Morocco</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* DRC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Turkey</td>
<td>0.72 (0.23)**</td>
<td>0.72 (0.23)**</td>
<td>0.65 (0.22)**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends of other origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main effect</td>
<td>-0.47 (0.07)**</td>
<td>-0.47 (0.07)**</td>
<td>-0.47 (0.06)**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* North Africa</td>
<td>0.77 (0.28)**</td>
<td>0.77 (0.28)**</td>
<td>0.71 (0.27)**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Asia</td>
<td>0.75 (0.38)**</td>
<td>0.79 (0.38)**</td>
<td>0.78 (0.38)**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Morocco</td>
<td>0.55 (0.15)**</td>
<td>0.55 (0.15)**</td>
<td>0.50 (0.15)**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* DRC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Turkey</td>
<td>0.52 (0.22)**</td>
<td>0.52 (0.22)**</td>
<td>0.49 (0.22)**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived inst. disc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main effect</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.03)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Experienced inst. disc.</td>
<td>Main effect</td>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>-0.85 (0.13)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R² c</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance at pupil level</td>
<td>6.96 (0.19)</td>
<td>6.72 (0.18)</td>
<td>6.70 (0.18)</td>
<td>6.46 (0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance at school level</td>
<td>0.35 (0.09)</td>
<td>0.33 (0.09)</td>
<td>0.32 (0.09)</td>
<td>0.28 (0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intraclass correlation</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Reference category of gender = Female; reference category of origin of mother = Belgium and North West EU; reference category of mother language = French; reference category of country of birth = Belgium; reference category of education = general.

*The non significant (p.> 0.05) interactions between the explanatory variables of model 1 and the origin of the mother are removed from the model and are omitted in the table. These are: Gender * origin of the mother; Country of birth * origin of the mother; Education * origin of the mother, SES*origin of the mother. The non significant (p.> 0.05) categories of model 1 are omitted in the table. These are: Origin of the mother: Subsaharan Africa, Middle East, East EU, South EU. These non-significant origin categories are regrouped in a category ‘other’, which is not significant and is not shown. Mother tongue: Dutch. The variable ‘mother tongue’ is removed from the model. Country of birth: not Belgium. The variable ‘country of birth’ is removed from the model. SES: middle, high. The variable ‘SES’ is removed from the model. Education: technical, vocational. The variable ‘education’ is removed from the model.

b In model 2, the variable ‘ethnic identification’ and its interaction terms with the origin categories are not significant (p.> 0.05) and are removed from the model.
R² values were calculated following the formula proposed by Snijders and Bosker (1999, p. 102).

Dashes indicate non significant coefficients with p.> 0.05.

* p.< 0.05. ** p.<0.01.