

Xenophobia among Youngsters: The Effect of Inter-Ethnic Contact

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Abstract: This study examines xenophobic attitudes of secondary school pupils in the Netherlands. This study builds upon a previous research in three ways. First, attitudes of pupils from both the ethnic majority and minority groups are examined. Second, the impact of positive as well as negative inter-ethnic contacts both within and outside the school environment is determined. Finally, hypotheses about inter-ethnic contacts are tested while simultaneously reckoning with alternative mechanisms that might explain xenophobic attitudes. Cross-classified multilevel regression analyses show that the level of xenophobia is lower when pupils evaluate their inter-ethnic contacts as positive, and higher when they perceive these contacts as negative. However, the impact of positive inter-ethnic contact in class disappears or even reverses when multiculturalism is more emphasized during lessons.

Introduction

There has been a growing interest in youngsters' attitudes towards other ethnic and religious groups (e.g. Verkuyten, 2005, 2007; Bakker *et al.*, 2007; Bevelander and Otterbeck, 2008; Dekker and Van der Noll, 2009). By examining youngsters' attitudes, notions that consider the sustainability of the multicultural society are obtained. After all, youngsters and their opinions determine the future of society through cohort replacement.

Most studies on youngsters' attitudes towards other ethnic and religious groups examine the influence of inter-ethnic contact in class and school (Verkuyten, 2005, 2007; Bakker *et al.*, 2007; Dekker and Van der Noll, 2009). These studies show mixed results. On the one hand, Bakker *et al.* (2007) show that the ethnic composition of the class—and hence the opportunities for inter-ethnic contact—does not affect the xenophobic attitudes of primary school pupils. On the other hand, Baerveldt *et al.* (2004) emphasize the importance of inter-ethnic contact in the class. Moreover, Dekker and Van der Noll (2009) show that the attitude of youngsters towards Muslims improves when they have positive contact with Muslims.

The diversity in findings concerning the influence of contact could have several reasons. First, the studies differ in the age of the youngsters that were examined and age affects the extent to which youngsters develop

attitudes independently of their parents (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). Moreover, age also relates to the number of (past and present) opportunities for inter-ethnic contact (Dekker and Van der Noll, 2009). In addition, different studies focus on different dependent variables regarding xenophobic attitudes. Differences in including other relevant factors, such as the perceived economic and cultural threat (e.g. Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders, 2002; Coenders *et al.*, 2008) and relevant background characteristics, such as educational level and personality traits (e.g. Dekker, Malova and Hoogendoorn, 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006) might also explain why studies show different results.

In this study, we will examine the effect of inter-ethnic contact on the xenophobic attitudes of secondary school pupils while simultaneously controlling for alternative mechanisms that might also explain xenophobic attitudes, such as educational level, self-esteem and perceived economic and cultural threat.

Extending Previous Research

Most research on inter-ethnic contact has focused on the school, class or neighbourhood setting (Brown and Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew, 2008). In addition, Van der Meulen (2007) showed that inter-ethnic contact at sports clubs affects the attitude towards ethnic out-groups as well. However, studies that

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simultaneously examine the influence of inter-ethnic contact in different settings are missing (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). We make progress by examining the influence of inter-ethnic contact in the class, at school, in the neighbourhood, and at sports and leisure clubs simultaneously.

Until now, almost all studies that focus on the relationship between inter-ethnic contact and xenophobic attitudes have only examined the influence of positive inter-ethnic contact (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Whether and how negative contact—contact that is perceived as unpleasant or unfriendly—also affects xenophobic attitudes is unknown. This study contributes to this body of research by its focus on both positive and negative contact.

Most studies on xenophobic attitudes focus on the attitude of the ethnic majority. Therefore, there is a lack of empirical evidence to show that the negative relationship between (positive) inter-ethnic contact and xenophobic attitudes also holds for ethnic minorities (Van Tubergen, 2006; Pettigrew, 2008). To test the generalizability of this hypothesis more strictly, we study the attitudes of youngsters from both the ethnic majority and various minority groups.

In summary, progress is made in three ways. We study (i) both majority and minority groups (ii) positive as well as negative inter-ethnic contact, and (iii) the impact of inter-ethnic contact while simultaneously controlling for other relevant factors that affect xenophobic attitudes. Our research answers the following questions:

To what extent do secondary school pupils at different educational levels from different ethnic backgrounds have xenophobic attitudes? And to what extent are these attitudes related to positive and negative contact in class, at school, at sports clubs and in the neighbourhood?

Theory and Hypotheses

Positive Contacts

Inter-ethnic contact is generally considered an important determinant of inter-ethnic prejudice and inter-group relations. The most common and generally accepted hypothesis about contact is that of Allport (1954). His contact hypothesis states that inter-ethnic contact reduces prejudice when four features of the contact situation are fulfilled, namely equal status between the groups in the situation, common goals, inter-group cooperation, and support of authorities or law.

In a meta-analysis of 515 studies regarding Allport's contact theory, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) showed that

inter-ethnic contact clearly reduces inter-ethnic prejudice. However, ethnic prejudice appeared to be reduced by positive or friendly inter-ethnic contact, regardless the conditions. Allport's conditions of contact only strengthen the effect of positive and friendly contact (McLaren, 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).

Positive and friendly inter-ethnic contact positively affects people's attitudes towards other ethnicities. The question arises, however, whether positive inter-ethnic contact causes a more tolerant attitude, or whether people with more tolerant attitudes have more inter-ethnic contacts and perceive these as more positive. This causality problem requires taking into account people's opportunities to have inter-ethnic contact. After all, contact opportunities are prerequisite for friendly and positive inter-ethnic contact, which, in turn, would positively affect people's attitude towards other ethnicities (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). The first hypotheses, therefore, are related to such opportunities for inter-ethnic contacts in settings in which youngsters often find themselves, their class and their neighbourhood¹. These hypotheses read as follows:

1. *Youngsters in more ethnically heterogeneous classes are less xenophobic than youngsters in less ethnically heterogeneous classes.*
2. *Youngsters in more ethnically heterogeneous neighbourhoods are less xenophobic than youngsters in less ethnically heterogeneous neighbourhoods.*

Although the opportunity for having inter-ethnic contact seems really important, it remains difficult to interpret the relationship between ethnic composition of the class and the neighbourhood—as indicators of contact opportunities—and inter-ethnic attitudes, because causality can work both ways. Furthermore, qualitative aspects of contact are neglected. By examining such aspects in situations of forced contact, the problem of reversed causality is largely overcome, because it is hard to avoid inter-ethnic contact in such situations, even for those who have antagonistic ethnic preferences. Forced contacts are, therefore, a delicate solution to the problem of causality (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; Dekker and Van der Noll, 2009).

Youngsters cannot avoid inter-ethnic contacts in their class easily. However, inter-ethnic contacts are not only established in forced settings, such as the class. Youngsters from different ethnic backgrounds can also meet in school but outside the class setting, in the neighbourhood, and during sport and leisure activities. Across these settings, the degree in which inter-ethnic contacts can be avoided differs. During leisure activities,

inter-ethnic contacts can be more easily avoided than in the neighbourhood. Subsequently, inter-ethnic contacts in the neighbourhood can be more easily avoided than at school. Consequently, effects of inter-ethnic attitudes on the amount (or avoidance) of inter-ethnic contacts and the subsequent evaluation of these contacts, are presumably strong when it comes to contacts during leisure activities and relatively weak for contacts in the forced setting of the class.

Notwithstanding the problem of causal interpretations of the relationships between inter-ethnic attitudes and contacts at school, in the neighbourhood and during leisure activities, both McLaren (2003) and Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) showed that the influence of unforced contacts on people's xenophobic attitudes are too important to ignore. Consequently, we formulate a hypothesis concerning the relations between inter-ethnic attitudes and positive inter-ethnic contacts in the various social domains:

3. *Youngsters who have more positive inter-ethnic contacts in their (a) class, (b) school, (c) neighbourhood or (d) sports or leisure club are less xenophobic.*

Negative Contacts

The influence of positive inter-ethnic contact has frequently been examined. However, negative or even hostile contact has received much less attention (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). If positive inter-ethnic contact reduces prejudice, it seems logical to assume that negative contact could have the reverse effect. Negative and hostile contacts might confirm preconceived opinions and increase negative attitudes (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Hence, we propose that:

4. *Youngsters who have more negative inter-ethnic contacts in their (a) class, (b) school, (c) neighbourhood and (d) sports or leisure club are more xenophobic.*

Positive versus Negative Contact

Several psychological studies suggest that negative experiences and contacts of youngsters are of more importance for their xenophobic attitude than positive experiences and contacts. For example, Vrij, Akehurst and Smith (2003) showed that a negative 'context' affects youngsters' attitude towards other ethnic groups more than a positive context. Moreover, Nesdale (1999) showed that negative characteristics are of more importance than positive characteristics in the development

of youngsters' prejudices about other ethnicities. The findings of these studies suggest that negative inter-ethnic contact is stronger related to xenophobic attitudes than positive contact. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

5. *The effect of negative inter-ethnic contact on youngsters' xenophobic attitude is stronger than the effect of positive inter-ethnic contact.*

Attention for Multiculturalism in Class

Although Allport's four conditions of inter-ethnic contact appeared not to be necessary for it to have an effect on attitudes towards other ethnicities, these conditions do strengthen the effect of positive and friendly inter-ethnic contacts (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). The Dutch Ministry of Education requires secondary schools to teach respect for people from different ethnic backgrounds, with different cultures and those who have different religious beliefs (Dutch Ministry of Education, 2010). However, the extent to which these multicultural values are translated into daily practice is teacher dependent. We agree with Verkuyten and Thijs (2002) that the extent to which teachers pay attention to these multicultural values could be considered as the degree in which school authorities support inter-ethnic contacts. As such, it relates to one of Allport's four contact conditions. We therefore propose the following hypothesis with regard to the influence of multicultural policies in classes:

6. *The effect of positive inter-ethnic contacts in (a) class and (b) school is stronger in classes that more strongly emphasize multiculturalism.*

7. *The effect of negative inter-ethnic contacts in (a) class and (b) school is weaker in classes that more strongly emphasize multiculturalism.*

Data and Measurements

In order to answer our research questions and test the hypotheses, we gathered data among youngsters by means of a paper and pencil self-completion survey questionnaire (Anonymous, 2009). The survey was conducted among youngsters in fourth grade at schools in the city of Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Nijmegen, with approximately 162,000 citizens, is the ninth largest city of the Netherlands and is located in the east of the Netherlands. The questionnaire was administered in

class under supervision of a teacher who noticed that the questionnaire was completed individually. The questionnaire was completed by all youngsters that were present. This led to a total number of 1,444 youngsters from 77 different classes at 10 different schools, who lived in 117 different 4-digit postal-code areas. Regarding educational levels, 268 (18.6 per cent) youngsters were at the lowest *pre-vocational educational level*, 316 youngsters (21.9 per cent) followed the *pre-vocational level 2 track*, 545 youngsters (37.7 per cent) were at the *senior general level*, and 315 youngsters (21.8 per cent) followed the highest, *pre-university*, track.

Measurements: Independent and Dependent Variables

To determine youngsters' *ethnicity*, youngsters were asked to what extent they consider themselves to be *Dutch*, *Surinamese*, *Antillean*, *Moroccan*, *Turkish*, or belonging to *another ethnic group*.² They could answer with *not at all*, *hardly*, *to some extent*, *strong*, or *very strong*. Youngsters' ethnicity was subsequently determined as the ethnic group with which they identified most.³ The small groups of Surinamese (0.8 per cent) and Dutch Antillean youngsters (1.1 per cent) were merged into one group (Caribbean).

Because ethnic background is an important characteristic in this study, we performed all subsequent factor and reliability analyses of the other variables separately for youngsters who perceive themselves as Dutch ($n=1,129$) and for youngsters who consider themselves as non-Dutch ($n=315$). These two-group analyses did not show significant differences in factor patterns and reliability of the measurements. The measurements described below are thus applicable to both Dutch and non-Dutch youngsters.

The dependent variable, xenophobic attitude, is measured by *ethnic distance*. Ethnic distance refers to the avoidance of social contact with people from other ethnic origin in various settings (Hagendoorn, 1995). The advantage of this measurement is that it can be assessed by concrete questions that do not presume prior knowledge or abstract reasoning. These features make ethnic distance ideal for measuring xenophobic attitudes among youngsters at different educational levels (Hello *et al.*, 2004; Bakker *et al.*, 2007). Youngsters were asked to indicate on a five-point scale how much they object to *have a relationship with*, *be neighbours of*, *have in-laws from*, *be friends with*, *get lessons from*, *have friends who are friends with* and *be a member of a club with* people from another ethnic origin than their own ethnicity. To ascertain that youngsters interpreted *from another ethnic origin* as people from another ethnicity than their own,

two examples were given in the introduction of this question. These questions provide a valid (the seven items are related to a single dimension) and reliable measurement (Cronbach's alpha 0.84) of ethnic distance. The ethnic distance score was computed by averaging over the seven ethnic distance items. This resulted in an ethnic distance scale ranging from one (1), no ethnic distance at all, to five (5), extreme ethnic distance.

To determine the *quality of inter-ethnic contact* youngsters were asked how they perceive their contacts with Dutch, Surinamese, Antillean, Turks, Moroccan, and 'others' in class, at school, in the neighbourhood, at sports clubs, and at other leisure clubs. They could refer to their contacts as *very negative*, *negative*, *neutral*, *positive*, and *very positive*. If youngsters had no contact with a certain group, they could choose the option *not applicable*. Due to high collinearity in the multivariate analyses, it was impossible to distinguish between contacts with different ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, for determining the quality of inter-ethnic contact in a certain setting, we used the mean evaluation of inter-ethnic contact with all different ethnicities in that specific setting.

In Table 1, some descriptive statistics of the variables are presented. It shows that the percentage of youngsters who reported to have no inter-ethnic contact in class, school, neighbourhood, and at sport or leisure clubs is respectively, 28, 40, 60, and 92 per cent. Within each setting, the number of youngsters who perceive inter-ethnic contact as positive is much larger than those who perceive inter-ethnic contact as negative.

The extent to which *teachers pay attention to issues of multiculturalism* is measured as the mean score on two questions: *Are racism and discrimination discussed during lessons?* And *Are the customs and habits of people from foreign countries discussed during lessons?* Youngsters could answer both questions with *never*, *seldom*, *sometimes* or *often*. We use the mean score on both questions as indicator for the extent to which youngsters perceive that attention is being paid to the multicultural society. Youngsters who score one (1) believe that teachers never pay attention to the multicultural society, whereas youngsters who score four (4) would say that their teachers often pay attention to the multicultural society. The mean standard error of the scale mean within classes equals 0.069 and varies between 0.027 and 0.141. This indicates a relatively small within-class variation of the perceived multicultural education, which makes the class-mean of both items a reliable measure of the extent to which multiculturalism is emphasized. We therefore aggregated individual mean scores to the class level. To determine the *ethnic diversity* of a class, the Blau index of ethnic diversity (Blau, 1977) is used. The Blau

Table 1 Descriptive statistics before centring to the mean

Variables	Mean (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Ethnic distance	1.890 (0.800)	1	5
Ethnicity: Dutch	0.782	0	1
Ethnicity: Turkish	0.037	0	1
Ethnicity: Moroccan	0.026	0	1
Ethnicity: Caribbean	0.030	0	1
Ethnicity: Other	0.108	0	1
No contact in class	0.284	0	1
Negative contact in class	0.057	0	1
Neutral contact in class	0.125	0	1
Positive contact in class	0.535	0	1
No contact at school	0.335	0	1
Negative contact at school	0.059	0	1
Neutral contact at school	0.075	0	1
Positive contact at school	0.530	0	1
No contact at sport clubs	0.607	0	1
Negative contact at sport clubs	0.024	0	1
Neutral contact at sport clubs	0.046	0	1
Positive contact at sport clubs	0.323	0	1
No contact at other clubs	0.919	0	1
Negative contact at other clubs	0.006	0	1
Neutral contact at other clubs	0.004	0	1
Positive contact at other clubs	0.071	0	1
No contact in the neighbourhood	0.399	0	1
Negative contact in the neighbourhood	0.084	0	1
Neutral contact in the neighbourhood	0.127	0	1
Positive contact in the neighbourhood	0.390	0	1
Perceived cultural threat	2.833 (0.779)	1	5
Perceived socio-economic threat	1.236 (0.941)	1	7
Self-esteem	3.095 (0.483)	1	4
Collective self-esteem	6.001 (1.134)	1	7
Strength of ethnic identification	4.374 (0.927)	1	5
Church attendance: weekly	0.029	0	1
Church attendance: monthly	0.030	0	1
Church attendance: yearly	0.143	0	1
Church attendance: never	0.070	0	1
Church attendance: not religious	0.720	0	1
Educational level: pre-vocational level 1	0.186	0	1
Educational level: pre-vocational level 2	0.219	0	1
Educational level: senior general	0.377	0	1
Educational level: pre-university	0.218	0	1
Sex, boy is 1	0.519	0	1
Age	16.349 (0.669)	15	19
Repeat a class	0.132	0	1
Ethnic heterogeneity class ^a	0.319 (0.162)	0	0.710
Ethnic heterogeneity neighbourhood ^b	0.304 (0.109)	0.066	0.528
Extent of multicultural education ^a	2.532 (0.224)	1.643	3.065

n = 1,444 pupils.

^aNumber of classes = 77.

^bNumber of neighbourhoods = 117.

Source: Secondary School Pupils about Ethnicity and Themselves 2007.

index measures the probability of two individuals from different ethnic groups who are chosen at random from a multi-ethnic population. When there is a completely homogenous population, the Blau index would be zero (0), and when every individual has a different ethnic background—and thus the number of different ethnic groups is large—the Blau Index would score one (1). The Blau Index of ethnic diversity in a class is calculated based on the youngsters' self-ascribed ethnicity as Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan, Caribbean, or 'other' ethnic origin.

To calculate the *Blau index of ethnic diversity within the neighbourhood*, the percentages of *native Dutch*, *Western non-native*, and *non-Western non-native* inhabitants at the neighbourhood level (the four-digit postal code area) were derived from Statistics Netherlands.

Measurements: Control Variables

Xenophobic attitudes are not only affected by inter-ethnic contact. Perceived cultural and economic threat, self-esteem, and collective self-esteem (satisfaction with one's ethnic-background), religiosity, and the strength of ethnic identification may affect xenophobic attitudes as well (e.g. Hello, 2003; Gijsberts and Dagevos, 2007; Schneider, 2008; Dekker and Van der Noll, 2009). Therefore, these variables are included as control variables, next to the other control variables sex, age and whether a pupil repeated class or not.

To determine youngsters' perceived *cultural threat* the questionnaire included ten items about the multicultural society that have been proven valid and reliable (Verkuyten and Brug, 2002). The items are shown Table A1–A4 in Appendix A. Factor analysis showed double loadings for one item that also had a substantially lower inter-item correlation. This item is, therefore, not included in the measurement of cultural threat. The remaining nine items form a reliable scale, (Cronbach's alpha 0.87) with higher scores indicating more perceived threat.

To assess youngsters' perception of *socio-economic threat* five items concerning their future socio-economic situation were presented, see Table A1–A4 in Appendix A. Factor analysis showed that one item refers to another dimension and has a substantially lower inter-item correlation. This item was excluded from the measurement scale and the remaining items form a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha 0.84). Youngsters who score high on this scale expect a bad socio-economic future.

Ten items of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) are used to determine youngsters' *self-esteem*. The items shown Table A1–A4 in Appendix A form a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha is 0.87). A high score indicates a high level of self-esteem.

Youngsters' *satisfaction with their ethnic background* is measured with four items of the 'private collective self-esteem scale' of Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) (see Table A1–A4 in Appendix A). It measures one aspect of peoples' satisfaction with their ethnic background, namely the opinion about how people's ethnic group is threatened and judged by other groups. Two items appear not to contribute to a valid and reliable measurement. Therefore, the other two items are used to measure youngsters' collective self-esteem (Cronbach's alpha 0.75). A high score indicates high collective self-esteem.

Youngsters' *religiosity* was measured with two questions. First, for religious we asked *Do you consider yourself as a member of a church or denomination?* Next, youngsters answered positively were asked if they attend *never, yearly, monthly or weekly* to worship ceremonies of their religion.

For *strength of ethnic identification* we use the same items that measure youngsters' ethnicity. Youngsters were asked to indicate the extent to which they consider themselves to be *Dutch, Surinamese, Antillean, Moroccan, Turkish*, or belonging to *another ethnic group*. We measure the strength of ethnic identification with the ethnic group to which they identified most. This scale ranges from two (2) to five (5), which is the score for youngsters who identify themselves very strongly with their ethnicity. Youngsters who identified themselves equally strong with two ethnic groups—this applies to only six youngsters—get the score one (1) on the strength of ethnic identification scale, because they do not identify themselves strongly with a single ethnic group.

Finally, youngsters were asked if they had *repeated a class* at secondary school once or more, how *old* they were, and whether they are a *boy* or a *girl*. Table B1, in Appendix B shows the correlations between the constructed variables.

Method

The data we use are characterized by a non-hierarchical three-level structure. Youngsters (level 1) are nested in classes (level 2) and schools (level 3), as well as in neighbourhoods (level 2). However, youngsters from the same neighbourhood do not necessarily attend to the same school or class, hence cross-classified multilevel analyses are appropriate. Although the data have three levels, the school level was not included as a separate level, because the number of schools (10) was too small to justify an additional level of analysis (Hox, 2002).

Although the questionnaire was conducted under supervision of a teacher in class, not all youngsters

answered all questions. Two hundred and sixty one youngsters (18.1 per cent) did not answer one or more questions. These 261 youngsters appear to be randomly distributed over the 77 classes. Reckoning with the multilevel structure of the data (by including class and neighbourhood dummies into the imputation procedure), we replaced the missing values by simulated values using multiple imputations according to Rubin's (1987) procedure. By using the multiple imputation procedure, we were able to use all available information of all 1,444 youngsters for our analyses.

The equation for the basic cross-classified two level model reads as follows:

$$y_{i(c,n)} = \beta_0 + \delta_c + \delta_n + e_{1(c,n)}$$

where β_0 estimates the mean ethnic distance of all pupils, index c and n respectively class and neighbourhood, δ_c is the random effect for class, δ_n is the random effect for neighbourhood, $y_{i(c,n)}$ is the ethnic distance of pupil i in class c and neighbourhood n , and finally $e_{1(c,n)}$ is the deviation of the ethnic distance of pupil i to the mean ethnic distance of the combination class c and neighbourhood n .

Table 2 shows the results of the cross-classified regression analyses for youngsters' ethnic distance. To simplify the interpretation of the parameter estimates, all interval variables were centred to the mean. In all models, we tested for multicollinearity. These tests showed that multicollinearity exists between quality of contact at sports club and quality of contact at other leisure clubs. Since more youngsters attend to a sports club, we decided to include only quality of contact at sports clubs. Moreover, we tested for linear dependency between the independent and dependent variables. The relationship between ethnic distance and church attendance appeared not to be linear. Church attendance was, therefore, included in the analyses as a categorical variable. Finally, the P -values were corrected with the 'false discovery rate' (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995) in order to decrease the chance of type-I errors

Analyses and Results

Model 1 is an empty model that only includes the intercept and its variance components. This model shows that the mean ethnic distance is 0.070 on the centred scale that runs from -0.892 to 3.111 . From the total variance of ethnic distance, $\{[0.145/(0.145 + 0.024 + 0.509)] \times 100\}$ 21.4 per cent can be ascribed to differences between classes, 3.6 per cent to differences between neighbourhoods, and 75.0 per cent to differences between youngsters.

In Model 2, we test our hypotheses concerning the ethnic diversity of class and neighbourhood. The ethnic heterogeneity of the neighbourhood is negatively related with youngsters' ethnic distance. As expected in Hypothesis 2, youngsters who live in neighbourhoods that are more heterogeneous have less ethnic distance than youngsters who live in neighbourhoods that are ethnically less heterogeneous. However, the effect of the ethnic diversity of the class is not significant. Consequently, the hypothesis that youngsters in more ethnically diverse classes have less ethnic distance (Hypothesis 1) is not confirmed.

In Model 3, we add all individual-level control variables. By doing so, we can show to what extent the effects of the differences between classes and neighbourhoods are caused by composition effects. When these individual characteristics are included, the effect of neighbourhood ethnic heterogeneity is no longer significant. Moreover, the variance at the neighbourhood level is no longer significantly different from zero. Thus, differences between neighbourhoods in the degree of ethnic distance are caused by the individual characteristics that are included in Model 3. The effects of these variables are in accordance with previous research (Hello, 2003; Gijsberts and Dagevos, 2007; Schneider, 2008; Dekker and Van der Noll, 2009). Ethnic distance decreases with educational level. Moreover, non-religious youngsters have less ethnic distance than religious youngsters who attend to church weekly. Furthermore, youngsters who consider themselves Moroccan or Turkish have more ethnic distance than youngsters who consider themselves Dutch. A stronger ethnic identification also corresponds with more ethnic distance. Finally, boys have more ethnic distance than girls.

To test our hypotheses concerning inter-ethnic contact, the quality of inter-ethnic contact in class, at school, at sport clubs, and in the neighbourhood are included in Model 4. After including these contact variables, the variance between classes is no longer significant different from zero. Hence, class differences can be explained by the individual-level characteristics of Model 4. While reckoning with inter-ethnic contact it appears that Turkish, Moroccan, and youngsters with 'another' ethnicity have more ethnic distance than Dutch youngsters. The quality of inter-ethnic contact in class clearly affects youngsters' ethnic distance as expected by hypotheses 3a and 4a. Youngsters who perceive their inter-ethnic contact as negative have higher ethnic distance, whereas youngsters with positive inter-ethnic contact have less ethnic distance than those with neutral contact. In contrast to hypothesis 5, the relation between negative inter-ethnic contact and ethnic distance is weaker than between positive contact and ethnic distance. Additional

Table 2 Cross-classified regression of ethnic distance

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Intercept	0.07**0	0.052	0.076	0.051	**0.262	0.097	0.408**	0.125	0.403**	0.125	0.407**	0.125
Ethnicity, Dutch is ref.												
Caribbean					0.018	0.094	0.077	0.092	0.075	0.092	0.074	0.092
Moroccan					0.287**	0.104	0.355**	0.101	0.359**	0.101	0.368***	0.101
Turkish					0.263**	0.089	0.370**	0.087	0.370**	0.087	0.373**	0.087
Other ethnicity					0.043	0.055	0.124**	0.055	0.124**	0.055	0.127**	0.055
Strength ethnic identifi.					0.064***	0.018	0.052**	0.017	0.052**	0.017	0.050**	0.017
Religiosity, weekly is ref.												
Monthly					−0.039	0.120	−0.060	0.117	−0.060	0.117	−0.056	0.116
Yearly					−0.075	0.093	−0.094	0.090	−0.095	0.090	−0.086	0.090
Never					−0.115	0.102	−0.154	0.098	−0.158	0.099	−0.162	0.098
Not religious					−0.156*	0.088	−0.180*	0.085	−0.182*	0.085	−0.176*	0.085
Education, pre-voc. level 1 is ref.												
Pre-vocational level 2					−0.210***	0.059	−0.146**	0.052	−0.130**	0.055	−0.134**	0.054
Senior general					−0.294***	0.055	−0.199**	0.049	−0.188**	0.050	−0.188***	0.050
Pre-university					−0.349***	0.065	−0.247**	0.058	−0.233**	0.059	−0.238**	0.059
Socio-economic threat					0.002	0.018	0.003	0.017	0.004	0.017	0.005	0.017
Cultural threat					0.608***	0.023	0.544**	0.023	0.544**	0.023	0.547**	0.023
Self-esteem					−0.013	0.037	−0.008	0.036	−0.008	0.036	−0.005	0.036
Collective self-esteem					0.034**	0.015	0.039**	0.014	0.039**	0.014	0.039**	0.014
Contact class, neutral is ref.												
No contact							−0.131**	0.057	−0.135**	0.057	−0.177**	0.059
Negative contact							0.190**	0.083	0.191**	0.083	0.154~	0.085
Positive contact							−0.164**	0.051	−0.166**	0.051	−0.201**	0.053
Contact school, neutral is ref.												
No contact							−0.026	0.068	−0.026	0.068	−0.006	0.069
Negative contact							0.073	0.093	0.071	0.093	0.085	0.094
Positive contact							−0.134*	0.065	−0.133*	0.065	−0.127~	0.065
Contact sport, neutral is ref.												
No contact							0.044	0.075	0.043	0.075	0.059	0.076
Negative contact							0.045	0.128	0.044	0.128	0.067	0.128
Positive contact							−0.034	0.079	−0.035	0.079	−0.018	0.079
Contact neighb., neutral is ref.												
No contact							−0.023	0.050	−0.021	0.050	−0.018	0.050
Negative contact							0.158**	0.072	0.160**	0.072	0.162**	0.072
Positive contact							−0.077	0.050	−0.077	0.050	−0.075	0.050
Sex, girl is ref.					0.153***	0.034	0.137**	0.034	0.135**	0.034	0.133**	0.034
Age					0.027	0.027	0.010	0.026	0.010	0.026	0.013	0.026
Repeat a class					−0.016	0.053	−0.021	0.051	−0.019	0.051	−0.025	0.051
Contextual characteristics												
Heterogeneity class			−0.156	0.285	−0.189	0.131	−0.038	0.116	−0.005	0.121	−0.011	0.120
Heterogeneity neighb.			−0.821*	0.326	−0.130	0.183	−0.105	0.187	−0.098	0.187	−0.098	0.189
Extent multicultural edu.									−0.074	0.080	−0.504	0.308
Interaction variables												
No contact class *											0.864**	0.288
Multi.Edu.												
Neg. contact class *											0.527	0.341
Multi.Edu.												
Pos. contact class *											0.613**	0.241
Multi.Edu.												
No contact school *											−0.395	0.317
Multi.Edu.												
Neg. contact school *											−0.228	0.386
Multi.Edu.												
Pos. contact school *											−0.061	0.286
Multi.Edu.												

(continued)

Table 2 Continued

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Ethnic identifi. *												
Cultural threat												
Variance												
Class	0.145***	0.032	0.144***	0.032	0.010*	0.005	0.004	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003
Per cent explained compared to Model 1			7.0		93.1		97.4		97.6		97.9	
Neighbourhood	0.024**	0.014	0.015~	0.011	0.001	0.003	0.002	0.003	0.002	0.003	0.001	0.003
Per cent explained compared to Model 1			39.6		94.0		90.4		93.4		94.7	
Pupil	0.509***	0.021	0.510***	0.020	0.320***	0.013	0.301***	0.012	0.302***	0.012	0.300***	0.012
Per cent explained compared to model 1	—		0.0		37.2		54.7		40.7		55.1	

~ $P < 0.1$; * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$.

analysis shows that the difference in the effect size is not significant though: $t(0) = 0.22$, $P > 0.1$. Moreover, the finding that youngsters who do not have inter-ethnic contact in class have less ethnic distance than youngsters with neutral contact is remarkable.

Focusing on inter-ethnic contact at school it appears that—in contrast to inter-ethnic contact in the class—only contact that is perceived as positive affects youngsters' ethnic distance significantly. Youngsters with positive inter-ethnic contact at school have, in accordance with hypothesis 3b, less ethnic distance than those with neutral contact at school. Contrary to contact at school, positive contact in the neighbourhood does not affect youngsters' ethnic distance. However, negative contact in the neighbourhood is significantly related with ethnic distance. Youngsters who perceive their inter-ethnic contact in the neighbourhood as negative have, in line with hypothesis 4c, more ethnic distance than youngsters who perceive this contact as neutral. In contrast to our expectations, youngsters' ethnic distance is not affected by inter-ethnic contact at sport clubs.

To determine the influence of the attention that is paid to multiculturalism during lessons, we add this variable in Model 5. Paying attention to multiculturalism during lessons does not affect youngsters' ethnic distance significantly.

Finally, in Model 6 the interaction-terms are included in order to test our expectation concerning multicultural education and the influence of positive and negative contact in class and at school. Only the interaction effects between multiculturalism in class and positive contact and no contact in class are significant. Consequently the hypotheses 6b, 7a and 7b are not supported. However, there is support for hypothesis 6a. When more

attention is being paid to multiculturalism, the negative effect of positive and no inter-ethnic contact decreases. Therefore, youngsters with positive inter-contact in class have, in general, *less* ethnic distance. However, this effect is weaker when, according to the youngsters, more attention is paid to issues of multiculturalism. Moreover, when relatively more attention is paid towards the multicultural society, the absence of inter-ethnic contact in class is related with higher ethnic distance. In Figure 1, the interaction effects are shown graphically. Figure 1 shows the predicted ethnic distance of an average pupil who has *no* or *positive* inter-ethnic contact in class, in contrast to an average pupil with neutral contact. The effect of contact on ethnic distance varies with the attention that is paid to the multicultural society. In Figure 1, attention to multiculturalism is categorized in five categories (ranging from the minimum reported attention to the maximum reported attention). It becomes clear that when the attention towards multiculturalism increases, the ethnic distance of youngsters with no inter-ethnic contact and positive inter-ethnic contact also increases. This finding is in contrast with our expectation as formulated in hypothesis 6a.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study enhanced the body of already existing research on three points. First, the xenophobia of youngsters from the ethnic majority as well as ethnic minority groups is examined. Second, we studied the influence of both positive and negative inter-ethnic contacts in different social settings. Finally, we controlled for other relevant factors that are known to affect xenophobic attitudes and which might also be related to

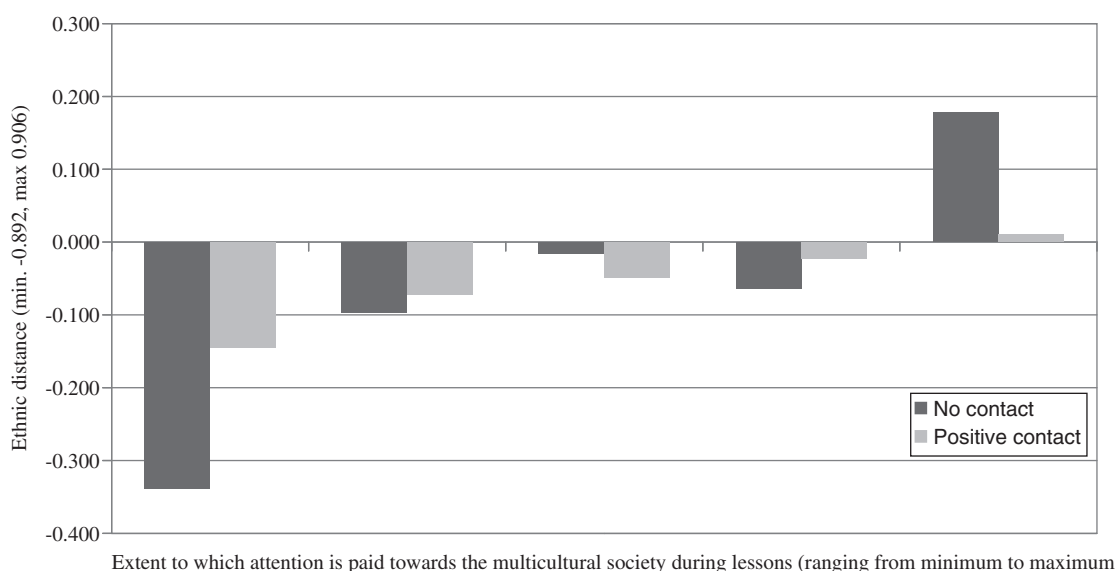


Figure 1 Observed differences in ethnic distance of the youngsters with positive and no inter-ethnic contact in class in contrast to youngsters with neutral contact, by the extent to which attention is paid towards the multicultural society during lessons

(positive and negative) inter-ethnic contacts. Hence, the question that is answered in this study reads:

To what extent do secondary school pupils at different educational levels from different ethnic backgrounds have xenophobic attitudes? And to what extent are these attitudes related to positive and negative contact in class, at school, at sport clubs and in the neighbourhood?

It appears that most of the youngsters in this study are not very xenophobic. The analyses showed that xenophobic attitude of youngsters is affected by inter-ethnic contact as hypothesized. Although the opportunity for contact is a precondition, the quality of contact affects youngsters' attitude more than the quantity. The following two findings imply the importance of quality above quantity. First, the ethnic heterogeneity of class and neighbourhood do not directly affect ethnic distance. Second, lack of inter-ethnic contact—in comparison with neutral inter-ethnic contact—does not result in higher ethnic distance.

Since we could not apply longitudinal data, the causal relation between inter-ethnic contact and xenophobic attitudes is not fully examined. We cannot rule out the reversed causal link between xenophobic attitudes and the (avoidance of) inter-ethnic contact. There are, however, two reasons why we believe that our results are only marginally affected by the problem of reverse

causality. First, we examined the influence of forced inter-ethnic contact, that is, contact in class. Ethnic preferences are of little importance when contact is forced, because these contacts simply cannot easily be avoided. The question remains, however, to what extent the ethnic composition of the class, and thus the possibility to have inter-ethnic contact, is indirectly affected by parental ethnic preferences. Parents can of course make school choices for their children based on their ethnic preferences.

Second, contacts at sports clubs do not affect youngsters' xenophobic attitude at all. Inter-ethnic contact at sports clubs was expected to be the most vulnerable for ethnic preferences. No connection between the xenophobic attitude and contact in this setting is found, which actually means that a xenophobic attitude does not affect the evaluation of the contact at sports clubs. However, this argument requires further reflection. Dutch sports clubs are rather ethnically homogeneous (Van der Meulen and Ultee, 2006). Future studies should address the question on whether inter-ethnic contact at sports clubs that are ethnically more mixed is related to xenophobic attitudes.

This study showed that both positive and negative contact in class affect xenophobic attitudes as hypothesized. Youngsters with positive inter-ethnic contacts in class are less xenophobic and youngsters with negative contacts are more xenophobic. However, surprisingly,

the effects of both forms of contact are equally strong. At the school level, only positively evaluated contacts affect youngsters' xenophobic attitude as expected. Inter-ethnic contacts in the neighbourhood only affect youngsters' xenophobic attitude if they are perceived as negative. The findings of Nesdale (1999) and Vrij, Akehurst and Smith (2003) suggest that negative interethnic contact is stronger related to xenophobic attitudes than positive contact. Apparently this is not the case. But the different influence of positive and negative contact at school and in the neighbourhood makes that we cannot argue that the effect of positive and negative interethnic contact is equal. Further research is needed to understand the impact of positive and negative interethnic contact in different settings.

Discussing discrimination and the customs and habits of other cultures during lessons affects the youngsters' xenophobic attitude indirectly. When more attention in class is being paid to the multicultural society, the liberalizing effect of both positive and no inter-ethnic contact in class on youngsters' xenophobic attitude decreases. This outcome contradicts Pettigrew and Tropp's finding that support of authorities increases the effect of positive inter-ethnic contact. However, this finding is in agreement with the findings of Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007) who examined the influence of promoting multiculturalism by authorities according to the 'top-down' principle. They showed that public attention towards multiculturalism and ethnic minorities by authorities and other public institutions cause hidden and unspoken feelings of suspicion by both the least and the most tolerant people.

Another explanation for this unexpected finding could be that in classes and at schools where there are more tensions and problems between ethnic groups extra attention is paid towards multiculturalism. However, this explanation is not likely. The correlation between the attention that is being paid in class towards the multicultural society and negative contact in class is not significant [$R = -0.021$, $P > 0.1$]. The correlation between the attention towards multiculturalism and negative contact at school is significant [$R = -0.107$, $P < 0.1$]. However, this means that schools with fewer negative contacts pay more attention towards the multicultural society.

Next to this theoretical line of reasoning, a methodological explanation for the unexpected influence of multicultural education is also possible. Discussing discrimination and habits of other cultures during lessons is considered beneficial for inter-ethnic contacts. However, when negative customs and habits of people from foreign countries are discussed (e.g. honour killings and female circumcision), this is not very likely to

support inter-ethnic contacts. Unconstructive approaches to discrimination and racism (e.g. a one-sided offender-victim approach) could also be considered as non-support. Thus, a negative approach of discrimination and the customs and habits of other cultures could explain the decrease in the effects of positive and no inter-ethnic contact in class. Further research regarding the contents of the multicultural curriculum must be done before reliable recommendations concerning multiculturalism (in) lessons can be made. However, it is evident that the idea that every form of attention towards the multicultural society contributes to a more tolerant society is incorrect. Considering the findings of this study and the findings of Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007), decreasing pupil's xenophobic attitude through the school curriculum should be done with reservation. Instead of explicitly paying attention to the multicultural society, it would be better to create the opportunities for positive inter-ethnic contact.

Notes

1. Another relevant setting for youngsters is their school. However, the data that are used in this study only contain the information of 10 different schools. This number is far too small for reliable analyses at the school level, which is explained in the data section. Consequently, the effect of ethnic heterogeneity at the school level is not examined.
2. In the Netherlands, ethnicity is commonly operationalized according to the definition of Statistics Netherlands, in which ethnicity is based on the country of origin of the parents (CBS, 2002). Measuring ethnicity by youngsters' own perception has however two advantages. Someone who feels Dutch and who is often by others perceived as Dutch can be considered as non-Dutch by the definition of Statistics Netherlands. When this person is asked for his or her opinion about people from other ethnic groups, he or she might be inclined to answer about non-Dutch people. By using the definition of Statistics Netherlands, such mismatches could lead to distorted results. The second advantage of perceived ethnicity applies to individuals whose parents are born in two different foreign countries. Measuring ethnicity based on one's parents country of origin requires a rather arbitrary choice for either father's or mother's country of origin. Statistics Netherlands chooses

for mother's country of origin. This arbitrary choice is not necessary if ethnicity is determined by one's own perception.

3. Note that a small number (6) of youngsters indicated that they belonged to the Dutch, as well as to another ethnic group to the same extent. It is likely that these youngsters do not completely feel equally Dutch, and will not be treated by others as if they were fully Dutch. Therefore, the non-Dutch ethnic group is used as pupil's ethnicity in these cases.

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Appendix

Table A1 Cultural threat items

Native Dutch must accept that people with different cultures and religions live in The Netherlands ^a
People who choose to come to the Netherlands must adjust to the Dutch culture
It is the best for the Netherlands when non-natives give up their own culture as soon as possible
Different cultures are good for Dutch society ^a
Non-natives may keep their own beliefs and practices both in private and public ^a
Immigrants must assimilate to the Dutch culture as much as possible
The Netherlands are a Christian country and this must remain so
All cultural groups must have an equal chance in The Netherlands ^a
Immigrants must have an equal say about the future ^a
All social groups must have an equal say in society ^{a,b}

^aItem was reversed for scoring.

^bItem was not included in the scale.

Table A2 Socio-economic threat items

In the future do you:
Will have work?
Will have a well-paid job?
Will able to buy a house?
Will have a better job than your parents have? ^a
Will have a pleasant job?

^aItem was not included in the scale.

Table A3 Self-esteem items

On the whole, I am satisfied with myself
 At times, I think I am not good at all^a
 I feel that I have a number of good qualities
 I am able to do things as well as most other people
 I feel I do not have much to be proud of^a
 I certainly feel useless at times^a
 I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal
 plan with others
 I wish I could have more respect for myself^a
 All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure^a
 I take a positive attitude toward myself

^aItem was reversed for scoring.**Table A4** Satisfaction with the ethnic background items

I often regret that I belong to my ethnic group^{a,b}
 Overall, I often feel that the social groups of which I am
 a member are not worthwhile^{a,b}
 In general, I am glad to be a member of the social group
 I belong to
 I feel good about the social group I belong to

^aItem reversed for scoring.^bItem not included in the scale.**Table B1** Correlations between constructed variables

	Ethnic distance	Socio-economic threat	Cultural threat	Self-esteem	Collective self-esteem
Ethnic distance	1				
Socio-economic threat	0.106***	1			
Cultural threat	0.650***	0.121***	1		
Self-esteem	0.107***	0.364***	0.098***	1	
Collective self-esteem	0.217***	0.258***	0.213***	0.2779***	1

~ $P < 0.1$; * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$.