Superdiversity subverted: Ethnic boundary constructions in Dutch class rooms

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Introduction

The concept of superdiversity has opened up a new perspective on social and cultural issues, especially involving migrants and migration. The concept itself could benefit, though, from further theoretical elaboration and empirical studies to enhance our understanding of these issues. In this paper, I try to contribute to such further development in several ways.

First, I propose to identify the opposite of superdiversity in cultural and social essentialism and argue in favour of a non-essentialist approach to the empirical interplay between superdiversity and essentialism. Second, I aim to apply this interplay to the field of ethnicity in terms of the (de)construction of ethnic boundaries. Ethnic boundary constructions represent an example of essentialism and a move away from superdiversity. Third, I will analyse the construction of such boundaries in ethnically diverse classes in a Dutch university of applied sciences.

Based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected in its faculty of social professions in 2011, this study highlights the contextual and situational nature of these constructions and identifies the factors that fuel such constructions in terms of ethnic group identifications, ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontations among the students. Within the conditions of a relatively young age, didactics of personal reflection and teachers’ hesitation to intervene, diversity-related aspects of social professions become ethnicized through the impact of cultural essentialist discourses that dominate Dutch politics and media and the contents of the special courses on cultural diversity. These discourses even manage to ethnicize social professions themselves as cultural particularistic phenomena.

This study contributes to the superdiversity literature by confirming the usefulness and fruitfulness of applying the opposition superdiversity versus essentialism to a field like ethnicity. It puts superdiversity on the side of individuality-focused and enabling – both in terms of meaningful constructions and of social ability – identity formations and behaviour patterns as relatively unregistered, unclassified, undetermined and enabling ways of being different. Their opposite, i.e. essentialistic ethnic boundaries erected in class, turn out to be oppressive to the students and disrupt the institutional logic of education.

To the literature on ethnic boundary constructions, this study contributes a detailed analysis of a process of ethnic boundary constructions in education and the factors that fuel such processes. It also forwards the finding that the baseline of such constructions is not only made up of non-ethnicity, but also of a superdiverse and non-essentialistic mode on ethnicity that is not focused on ethnic group formation but on enabling individuality, the development of a superdiverse form of ethnically underscored individuality.

Superdiversity and its counterpoints

In his ground-breaking paper (2007), Steven Vertovec highlights the superdiverse nature of cities like London and Frankfurt. His concept of superdiversity has inspired a complex and dynamic understanding of many contemporary issues of culture, language and society, also beyond metropolitan settings. It relates to the profound impact of transnational flows and transnationalism shaping people’s lives, work and identity constructions (e.g. Mazzucato, 2004; Vertovec, 2009). It aligns with John Urry’s (2000) sociology of mobility that argues
that bounded notions of society have become obsolete. It fits into Ulf Hannerz’s (1992) notion of cultural complexity as a corollary of globalization. It finds an ally in Mike Featherstone’s (1995) endeavour to ‘undo culture’, rephrasing culture as something that is about non-sharing and difference, that is discordant, non-systemic, contradictory and pluralistic and fails to provide clear recipes for action.

Against what does the concept of superdiversity make a case? I argue that it makes a case against cultural and social essentialism, i.e. the viability of simplification efforts to map the world into a set of relatively stable, static, bounded, homogeneous and systemic categories and communities, that exist side by side and that define the essence of an individual’s identity in terms of community belongingness (see Grillo, 2003, on cultural essentialism). It is not always very clear, though, whether this superdiversity claim is meant to be ontological or historical. Is it the case that the moment we take a detailed and micro look at individuals’ interactions and meaning-making that the relevance and validity of communities and categories as such melt into thin air? Is reality after all superdiverse, independently of time and place? Or, alternatively, is superdiversity something that marks specific historical configurations due to specific political, social, economic and cultural factors that render these configurations superdiverse, different from other configurations in time and place?

The first superdiversity claim seems odd to me because it boils down to an essentialist approach of non-essentialism. I argue in favour of the second superdiversity claim and underline the need to locate superdiversity historically, as a historical phenomenon located in time and place. Such a non-essentialist approach to superdiversity does not rule out its opposite, i.e. the relevance of cultural and social essentialism as a historical phenomenon in which community structures and categorizations are salient, but does not take this relevance and salience a priori for granted. It problematizes the emergence of community formation and categorizations and calls for the need to identify the factors that push for their emergence and their alternative, i.e. superdiversity.

Globalization in terms of the increasing importance of global flows of people, goods, information, symbols, capital and so on, that no longer halt at any categorical or community boundary, has been identified as a strong factor fuelling superdiverse configurations, for example in global cities (cf. Sassen, 2001; Vertovec, 2007). However, history discloses factors that push for superdiversity’s counterpoint as well. The techniques of surveillance and avowal deployed to ‘normalize’ individuals into categorical representatives and ‘fine exemplars’ of communal normativity, so brilliantly discussed by Michel Foucault, are a clear case in point. The same holds true for nationalist efforts to create nation-states as imagined communities (Anderson, 1987) with which individuals within fixed borders are supposed to identify themselves and that erect educational systems to mould them into national exemplars (Gellner, 1983). A sound understanding of superdiversity demands historical analyses of the interplay between the factors the push for it and those that fuel its opposite, i.e. cultural and social essentialism.

**Ethnicity**

One of the important fields in which the interplay between superdiversity and social and cultural essentialism is at play is the field of ethnicity. There are multiple definitions of ethnicity, but most authors would agree that ethnicity is about particular positionings and
constructions connecting time and place: it is about questions of origin, descent and destiny (time) and about belongingness to specific geographic or social spaces like a country, a village, a network or a school (place), and such constructions are underscored with claims to specific cultural orientations and practices such as religion, language and other cultural characteristics (cf. Verkuyten, 2005).

Ethnicity has been a breeding ground for essentialist approaches that define ethnicity in terms of ethnic group belongingness and take this ethnic group belongingness for granted, as if it were self-evident. Such essentialist approaches flourish in disciplines like business studies (e.g. Hofstede, 2001) and cross-cultural psychology (e.g. Berry, 2005). A-historical theories like social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and contact theories (Allport, 1954) guide most ethnicity studies in social psychology. Much of the sociological literature on inequality between migrants and non-migrants and between ethnic groups in, for example, labour markets (e.g. Heath and Cheung, 2007) simply takes the relevance and salience of categorical distinctions between migrants and non-migrants and ethnic groups for granted.

The ethnic boundary constructions approach tries to break away from such essentialist approaches of ethnicity. Fredrik Barth (1969) and Andreas Wimmer (2008a, 2008b, 2009 and 2013) argue that ethnic communities and categories are far from self-evident. We cannot take the existence of ethnic communities – and the relevance of ethnic categories – for granted, they require an explanation. This focus on the construction and deconstruction of ethnic communities provides a fruitful approach to the interplay between social or cultural essentialism (the construction of ethnic communities) and superdiversity (the deconstruction or absence of ethnic communities), applied to the field of ethnicity.

Moreover, Barth and Wimmer argue that the rise and fall of ethnic communities depends on the (de)construction of ethnic boundaries rather than on supposedly pre-existing cultural differences between communities. It is the boundary that matters, not ‘the cultural stuff’ that it encloses. Cultural stuff and differences are created or invented to render ethnic boundaries plausible. Ethnic boundaries refer to the salience of ethnic classifications (symbolic, subjective) and the occurrence of ethnic closure (social, interactional). Salient ethnic classifications are about constructions of subjective distinctions between ethnic in-group and out-groups to which people subscribe themselves and ascribe others. That is when people map their life-world into categories of ethnic group-belongingness and identify each other in ethnic groupist (cf. Brubaker, 2002) terms. Ethnic closure occurs when these people act upon such ethnic distinctions, prefer to interact with ethnic in-group members, favour in-group members when distributing resources like information and avoid cooperation and dealing with ethnic out-group members.

So, I argue that the rise and fall of ethnic boundaries represents an adequate operationalization of the interplay between cultural or social essentialism and superdiversity, applied to ethnicity. Wimmer (2013) calls for case studies on the process of construction of ethnic boundaries between migrants and non-migrants to detect the factors that fuel such constructions. Which factors favour the salience of ethnic classifications and ethnic closure and reduce the superdiverse complexity and dynamics of migrants and non-migrants while framing their subjective and social experiences in terms of ethnic communities and categories?
Case and methods
This study aims to contribute to answering these questions in the case of students at a Dutch university of applied sciences. This university qualifies for Wimmer’s (2013: 41) argument that ethnic boundary constructions are best studied in institutional settings in which both ethnic and non-ethnic principles of identification and socialization are available and optional (cf. Baerveldt et al., 2007) in order to see if, how and why ethnic boundaries emerge or disintegrate.

Situated in the Western and most urbanized part on The Netherlands, this institution has seen a strong increase in the number of students with a first or second generation ‘non-Western’ migration background over the last decades, reaching 30 percent in 2011. This 30 per cent is much higher than their total share of the Dutch population (10.8 per cent, statline.cbs.nl), but approaches their percentage of the population in this part of the country. Apart from these ‘non-Western’ students, the international and English speaking careers of the university attract considerable numbers of students from ‘Western’ countries as well.

One of the faculties that face the consequences of the ethnic diversification of both its staff and students is the faculty for social professions. The faculty offers three Dutch language careers: socio-cultural education and training CMV, socio-pedagogical work SPH and social work and service delivery MWD. CMV has a full-time programme to train students to develop cultural activities with a social development perspective. It serves about 180 students, only a small part having a ‘non-Western’ migration background. SPH and MWD train social workers with respectively a group and individual perspective. SPH has 800 students in its part-time and full-time programmes, 20 per cent of which have a ‘non-Western’ migration background. MWD’s full-time and part-time programmes host 730 students with an increasing share of ‘non-Western’ migration students, reaching 70 per cent in 2011 (data provided by the three programme directors in 2011). In short, the three careers vary considerably in both size and ethnic composition.

The increasing influx of migrants in the student population, and to a lesser degree also in the teaching staff, has not gone smoothly. Accusations of discrimination had emerged and in 2008 the Equal Treatment Commission CGB, the official Dutch tribunal to file a discrimination complaint, condemned the faculty for discrimination in two cases involving ‘non-Western’ migrant staff members. That created considerable unrest in the whole university that initiated a detailed plan to deal with future cases. The current research was part of a plan to prevent discrimination and ethnic tensions in the future. Nevertheless, diversity remains a delicate and uneasy topic to discuss for both students and teachers.

The data for this study were collected in an action-research project in the faculty in 2011. It was meant to identify the topics and subjects that produce ethnic conflicts in class and to develop, interactively with students and teachers, a methodology to discuss these topics and subjects in a more fruitful way. In the data collection part of the action research, we studied relevant documents, conducted 24 interviews with individual students (ten, spread over careers and ethnic backgrounds), teachers (nine, spread over careers and ethnic backgrounds) and coordinators and management (five, director, career coordinators and managers), held seven focus group meetings with students and teachers, had meetings in five different classes and discussed preliminary findings in five team meetings with teachers. These meetings were spread over the various careers.
Moreover, we distributed a questionnaire among the teachers (N = 58, which represents 66 per cent of the teachers, spread over the three careers, teachers with a permanent appointment being overrepresented) to check the internal validity of the previously collected qualitative findings. Finally, we were able to include 42 relevant questions, based on these qualitative data, in a university-wide questionnaire on study success. Of the social professions faculty, 110 students filled in the questionnaire – distributed over the three careers CMV 15, MWD 38 and SPH 57 – representing a response rate of 6 per cent.

It may be argued that data triangulation – in terms of various stakeholders like students and teachers, of various research instruments and of various kinds and sources of data on the same subjects – underscores the validity of the research. As input to the development of a methodology to deal with conflictive subjects, cases of ethnic boundary constructions in class in the final meetings with the three teachers’ teams these issues, we delivered input based on preliminary findings of the previous steps. That might have influenced the answers teachers gave to our questions in the subsequent teachers’ questionnaire at the end of the whole project. However, there was a long Summer break in between these team meetings and the questionnaire and we drew teachers’ attention to this possible bias, so this possible reliability bias of teachers’ questionnaire findings will have remained limited.

The scripts for the interviews and group discussions highlighted experiences with diversity, kind of topics that produce tensions in class and problematic events in class involving ethnic backgrounds. When such experiences, topics and events were mentioned, they were discussed in a basic ethnographic sense asking about when and setting, who were involved, who said and did what, how did it evolve, what were the consequences, how to explain etc. We presented ourselves as researchers from another university and stressed that no consequences were involved for them, nor credits to be gained. For data analysis we used Miles and Huberman’s (1994) steps of data reduction (selective, open and axial coding), data display and drawing conclusions, using the interview topics as initial codes. Only those findings are presented below for which there is both qualitative and quantitative evidence, unless indicated otherwise.

**Ethnic boundaries in class**

… I said, I am fed up with being asked where I come from, whether I am Turkish or Moroccan, which is what I am not. I am fed up with the fact that these things are considered. I just want to sit in the bus and feel like a human being, not like Dutch or like non-Dutch, that it does not matter anymore who I am. I want to be seen as a human being.

This emphatic statement was made by Karolina³, a 22 year old SPH student at the end of a discussion in class. In the interview, she explained to us that her class is split up between an ‘autochthonous’ and an ‘allochthonous’ group according to background classifications, the latter being mainly composed of Turkish and Moroccan students. Having a Macedonian background, she recurrently feels left out by both groups. The salience of ethnic group identification she protests against is causing her ‘sleepless nights when I think I do not fit with
the Dutch, I do not fit with the foreigners, in fact, I am nothing, I am nobody, that is the feelings you get at such moments’, she said.

Ethnic group identification not only seriously limits her possibilities to develop a positive self-identity and become recognized as a human being, but also her possibilities to participate and interact in class. Her 24 year old class mate with a Turkish background, Pelin, confirmed that the class room is physically split up between the ‘allochthones’ and ‘autochthones’, each sitting on their side of the room. If you enter class all are watching whether you sit with the ethnic group you are supposed to belong to. Teams recruit their members for team assignments along ethnic lines. Both groups tend to avoid each other and at times there are tensions and conflicts between the groups, calling each other names.

We have here a clear case of ethnic boundary construction in terms of the salience of ethnic group identification and ethnic closure in students’ behaviour, even conflicts along ethnic lines. Karolina’s account was confirmed by several of her fellow students. Note that the ethnic categories used to classify each other stem from the official Dutch policy categories ‘autochthonous’ and ‘allochthonous’. Pelin said: ‘I have first heard the word allochthones when I came to The Netherlands’. Miriam, her 23 year old class mate with a Dutch background said she felt hampered in discussions in class since every statement is interpreted as confirming the position of either group, so class discussions were also structured along ethnic lines.

Karolina’s, Pelin’s and Miriam’s quite negative experiences of salient ethnic group identity and ethnic closure contrast sharply with the account of Halimah, a student from another class from the same generation with a Moroccan background. She said, her class is very ‘mixed’ in terms of autochthones and allochthones and that ‘the allochthones are very mixed as well, it’s a very mixed class’, something she evaluated as very positive. She stressed: ‘Everyone is simply who he is, we support each other’. The opposite, i.e. not supporting each other and being trapped into the categories of allochthones and autochthones, she considered as something alienating, which luckily is not the case in her class, she said.

In this ethnic boundary-free framework in which she can interact with everyone, she is able to develop quite a positive self-identity. She presented herself as a very self-confident, joyful and active student. The key-words she used to talk about her identity are ‘me’ and ‘I’, she does not want to be addressed as part of a group. She stressed: ‘Nobody is you’ (jullie in Dutch, meaning you in a plural sense) and added that such categories unavoidably trigger irritating stereotypes. She looks at herself as being ‘mixed’ as well, her Moroccan and Islamic backgrounds being parts of herself.

She acknowledges her Moroccan background ‘… as long as it is part of me and does not turn me into being part of the Moroccans’. Her Moroccan and Islamic backgrounds serve as input to underscore and profile her individual identity, not to suggest group belongingness. She uses this ethnic input in a very selective and conditional way, much in line with what Lévy-Strauss (1962) has coined as bricolage and what Hannerz (1992) and Siebers (1996) have called creolization. This selectivity comes to the fore in the fact that she started to wear a head scarf, much against the advice of her father, but after a while decided to stop doing so ‘because I cannot be myself wearing it’. In a similar way, she said that at home they used to celebrate the Dutch feast of Saint Nicholas for a few years, to please her little brother. Her stress on individuality and drawing selectively on her Moroccan background also enables her
to play an active role in her student association to open up space in that association for Moroccan students. She concluded: ‘If you ask me how do you feel, I say: “I feel like me”.

**Ethnic production or reproduction in class?**
What accounts for such a contrast between an open situation like in Halimah’s class and a closure of ethnic trenches that Karolina and her fellow students reported about? How do ethnic boundaries come about? As an actualization of cultural orientations and reproduction of ethnic in-group relations that students with different ethnic backgrounds bring to school leading to confrontations between these different orientations and feeding ethnic closure in class? Or are group dynamics in class itself mainly responsible for erecting ethnic boundaries in which confronting orientations are produced in class fuelling ethnic group formation and closure? Are ethnic boundaries and essentialism reproduced or produced in class?

Joan, a 21 year old SPH student with a Dutch background, accounted of a relevant event that occurred in her first year. The topic discussed in class was homosexuality. A Muslim male student expressed his view that homosexuality were a dirty disease, while a Dutch bi-sexual female student felt terribly offended by his statement. Things got out of hand with the two shouting at each other. Meanwhile, students with a Moroccan background sided with the boy and supported his position, while Dutch students joined the girl. When it was her turn to do her presentation in class, she showed part of a movie in which same-sex people were kissing each other, to provoke the male student, who started to make vomiting gestures. At a certain moment the boy compared the Dutch students with Geert Wilders and provoked the Dutch girls even further by stating that women were inferior to men. At a certain moment, the boy did a presentation about his religion that impressed Joan positively and represented a break-through of the polarization, but hardly any students of the opposite ethnic camp bothered to attend his presentation since he had wished for them the worst kinds of diseases in the previous meeting. Similar incidents repeatedly occurred for the rest of the year, Joan said.

This case contains a number of elements that question the ethnic reproduction thesis. The position taken by the bi-sexual student starts with her sexual orientation, i.e. something basically non-cultural or non-ethnic. The denunciation of homosexuality by the male Moroccan student may have been inspired by his background, but that does not answer the question why he felt the urge to bring those views forward in class. It makes more sense to understand the provocative movie the female student presented in class as an arm that served her in her fight with the male student than as something that unequivocally would stem from something like Dutch culture. In turn, the aggressive masculine position taken by the male student may not be something he brings to school from his cultural background, but was likely to be incited by the process of polarization and mutual aggression in class. The fact that at a particular moment he did a presentation about his religious views that contrasted very much with his previous interventions in class suggests at least that cultural orientations from his background are not unequivocal or the possibility of a more Halimah-like approach to cultural input from his ethnic background. It seems that at least in part group dynamics of polarization are responsible for the statements students have brought forward rather than a simple actualization of particular homogeneous cultural views they bring to school from their cultural background.
Joan’s account also suggests that the conflict about homosexuality made Dutch female students to rally behind the bi-sexual Dutch young woman and the Moroccan students to support the male Moroccan young man. This suggestion is supported by what students of a third year SPH class told us in our meeting with them. They indicated that such conflictive discussions usually are advanced by ‘spokespersons’, like the Moroccan young man and the Dutch bi-sexual Dutch young woman in Joan’s account. Students with a similar ethnic background support the spokesperson, but they also told us that they may personally not hold the same views as the spokesperson they support. Several teachers told us that the same students who are involved in such conflictive discussions in class express much more nuanced and personalized views on the same subjects in individual conversations with them. In the teachers’ questionnaire, teachers gave moderate support for the statement that in individual conversations students hold nuanced views regarding cultural diversity. Apparently, setting and context influence the views that students bring forward, they do not simply voice what they heard in their ‘ethnic community’.

Moreover, accounts like Joan’s not only contain an ethnic but also a gender aspect. In these cases, the few male students with a migration background tend to take the leading role in fighting the Dutch students who are predominantly female. They sometimes even challenge the teacher’s authority, like asking him or her to give them the answers to exam questions beforehand in a rather intimidating way, as several teachers told us. Some teachers ethnicize this behaviour arguing that honour, pride and not wanting to lose one’s face in public is a typically trait of Moroccan or Turkish culture.

However, contextual dynamics seem to play a crucial role in ethnic boundary constructions. If ethnic boundaries in class were simply the reproduction of ethnic boundaries in society, one would expect ethnic boundaries construction to occur in all ethnically diverse classes. Our data point to a substantial variability in this respect, though. First, the teachers’ questionnaire measured the degree to which teachers experience ethnic closure between students in class. This ethnic closure was split up in two indicators, i.e. ethnic group formation (students with the same ethnic background preferring to interact and to form teams for team assignments with each other) and ethnic confrontation (tensions and conflicts between ethnic groups) in class. On average, teachers experienced ethnic group formation in just more than half of the classes and ethnic confrontation to take place in a minority of classes in which they teach.\(^5\) So there is quite some variability in this ethnic closure between the classes. Second, both indicators (ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontation) are connected,\(^6\) but their differing values suggest that not all cases of ethnic group formation develop into ethnic confrontation. Third, a minority of teachers indicated that they see students regularly addressing each other in ethnic terms like Turk, Moroccan, Dutch and so on.\(^7\) That suggests – not proves – that ethnic group identification is also quite variable.

The students’ questionnaire confirms this variability in ethnic closure between students. A substantial minority of students confirmed ethnic group formation taking place between students in their class and a very small minority confirmed ethnic confrontation to take place between students.\(^8\) Both indicators have a similar correlation as in the teachers’ questionnaire.\(^9\) This occurrence of ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontation is related to the degree of ethnic diversity in class, but the latter explains only a limited part of these two indicators of ethnic closure.\(^10\) In brief, the variability in ethnic closure\(^11\), in the degree to
which ethnic group formation also involves ethnic confrontation and in salience of ethnic group identification underlines the importance of group dynamics in class in producing ethnic boundaries.

In addition, only two factors, i.e. whether students socialize primarily with fellow students with the same ethnic background in their previous study and being able to speak the same mother tongue with fellow students, seem to confirm the reproduction thesis, ethnic closure seen as a reproduction of cultural and social essentialism at home or elsewhere in society, as they explain 44 per cent of ethnic group formation in class. However, this ethnic group formation in their previous study may be due to ethnicization processes there that not necessarily are a reproduction of ethnic essentialism at home and friends at previous education may decide to go to study social professions together and share a particular ethnic background but that does not mean that this background plays any role in the establishment of such friendship relations (see Wimmer, 2013, for a similar argument on network formation). Being able to speak one’s mother tongue may favour socialization with students with a similar ethnic background, but the desire to speak one’s mother tongue may be particularly favoured in a class where ethnic boundaries are constructed.

Finally, other factors that might confirm the reproduction thesis like whether students’ friends outside school have the same ethnic background, whether their family encourages them to socialize with fellow students with the same ethnic background or sharing the same religious inspiration have no effect at all on ethnic group formation in class. On the other component of ethnic closure, ethnic confrontations, none of these factors related to students’ ethnic background turned out to have any effect at all. These boundary constructions are mainly due to the dynamics produced in class that turn ethnic markers into ethnic group demarcations and render cultural orientations loosely linked to students ethnic backgrounds conflictive. Ethnic markers and different ‘cultural stuff’ themselves do not explain the construction of ethnic boundaries. In short, I argue in favour of a non-essentialist understanding of the construction of essentialist ethnic boundaries in class.

**Contextual factors**

The quantitative and qualitative data on ethnic boundary constructions between students as well as between students and teachers as presented above (see also notes five to twelve) suggest that such constructions do take place, occasionally even taking the form of outright ethnic confrontations. These data also suggest that these constructions are very much bound to time and place. The questionnaire data suggest that the majority of students do not experience such boundaries permanently. If these ethnic boundaries in class are very much bound by time and place, what are the factors that fuel such dynamics?

**Diversity-related aspects of social professions**

Such dynamics in class are fuelled by the fact that the work of social professions contains elements that are particularly diversity-related, i.e. have the potential of triggering differences in views and norms that can be associated with ethnic categories. When these differences are discussed in class, they tend to organize the students in opposing ethnic groups.

Both students and teachers gave a number of examples of diversity-related issues that social professionals have to deal with in the field and are discussed in class. For example, the
39 year old MWD part-time student Bettina with an Antillean background said that it makes a difference whether you have to address the father or the mother first when dealing with a family of a Moroccan or Antillean background. Other ethnicity-related behavioural issues are shaking hands with someone of the opposite sex, the use of face-covering dress, direct eye-contact, different educational norms, and so on. In the teachers’ questionnaire, 37.0 per cent of the teachers indicated they experience these issues leading to fierce discussions in class and 41.3 per cent reported that these issues lead to feelings of being hurt and offended and non-recognition among students.

There are two major clusters of diversity-related aspects of social professionals’ work that particularly trigger ethnic boundaries in class. The first one includes a number of issues involving gender and sexuality. The case reported by Joan discussed above about homosexuality presents an example. Other examples include honour killing of sisters and daughters, circumcision, marrying off one’s daughter, transsexuality and gender patterns. As Joan’s case illustrates, these issues touch the identity and feelings of students themselves. Here the adolescent age of especially full-time students (see below) interferes as well. In the teachers’ questionnaire, 57.7 per cent indicated they discuss these issues in class. Of them, 40.6 per cent experience that these issues lead to fierce discussions in class and 31.3 per cent report that these issues lead to feelings of being hurt and offended and non-recognition among students. In the experiences of these teachers, fierce discussions about these issues make up 14.2 per cent of ethnic confrontations in class and explain 13.0 per cent of ethnic group identifications among students. Also in their experience, feelings of being hurt and offended and non-recognition produced by discussions about these subjects among students explain 13.8 per cent of ethnic group formation in class.15

Another cluster of topics that incites ethnic confrontations in class refers to crime. Crime statistics show that particular migrant groups like Moroccan or Antillean youth are overrepresented and crime possibly committed by clients is an important subject for social professionals. Ina, a 61 year old teacher with a German and Eastern European background, accounted of a lecture she gave in class about Moroccan youth being involved in crime. Afterwards a colleague informed her that a group of students with a Moroccan background felt offended and discriminated by her lecture. She decided to go and talk to the class and apologized for offending them. She explained that if she talks about Moroccans, for example, that no individual Moroccan students should feel addressed. She also accounted of her own problems of being seen as a representative of Germans as a group when she was treated badly by the Dutch after arriving in The Netherlands in the 1960s, i.e. not long after the war.

Ina’s account illustrates how statistical discrimination and essentialism referring to ethnicity works. First, it created ethnic categories, like Moroccan youth, and individual students in her class felt addressed as representing those categories. Second, it stigmatizes these individual students as being responsible for crime as part of their category that is overrepresented in crime statistics. Third, by labelling the category as ‘Moroccan youth’, the suggestion is made that the Moroccan background is responsible for those within the category who are involved in crime, something that only recently has been proven to be a wrong suggestion (Driessen et al., 2014).

In the teachers’ questionnaire, 47.2 per cent indicated they discuss these issues in class. Of them, 32.0 per cent experience that these issues lead to fierce discussions in class
and 44.0 per cent report that these issues lead to feelings of being hurt and offended and non-recognition. In the experiences of these teachers, fierce discussions about these issues explain 20.2 per cent of ethnic group identifications among students. Also in their experience, feelings of being hurt and offended and non-recognition produced by discussions about these subjects among students explain 13.8 per cent of ethnic group formation in class.16

Age and interests
Diversity-related aspects of social professions fuel ethnic boundary constructions in class, but they are only able to do so due to a number of conditions. A first condition refers to the age and interests of students.

We are all adults in our part-time class, youngsters are more involved and they are more impetuous in these things ... If you’re older and have more experience, when you already work, then it is different. You reflect differently.

Talking about problematic discussions in class about ethnic or diversity issues, Bettina stressed that ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontations take place in the full-time rather than in the part-time programme. She referred to the younger age of full-time students and to a different attitude to school. Youngsters may be dealing much more with identity issues because they are in an identity-formative phase of their lives and take things much more personally, whereas people with more experience in the part-time programme have a more instrumental attitude. They want to take something out of their study and are less tempted to become involved in impetuous discussions about diversity issues.

The students’ questionnaire confirms that, on average, part-time students are 11 years older than full-time students.17 Ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontations occur significantly more in full-time classes than among part-time students.18 Apparently, a less instrumental attitude towards one’s study and a relatively young age, converging in the difference between part-time and full-time programme, constitute favourable conditions for the emergence of ethnic boundaries in class.

Didactics of personal reflection
Another condition that favours the transformation of diversity-related aspects of social professions into ethnic boundaries in class constitutes the didactic approach to such subjects that is common to social professions, i.e. a strong emphasis on personal reflection. Students feel it leaves the m ill equipped to deal with these issues in the field. Miriam said about sexuality-related issues and ethnicity:

You do not know how to deal with these issues. You do not have the theory plus your own norms, values and feelings hinder you, perhaps because you hardly know anything about it.

She argues that your own norms, values and feelings hinder you to deal with these matters, but students are encouraged to draw on exactly those norms, values and feelings due to the emphasis on personal reflection in social professions. The method of personal reflection is
key to social professions to open up space in the social workers’ minds for the experiences of their clients, to be able to understand their clients in a relatively open-minded way.\(^\text{19}\) Therefore, personal reflection is very often the starting point of a discussion on whatever subject in class. It always starts with ‘who am I, where do I stand’, a 60 year old teacher with a majority background told us.

It is difficult to see, though, how students’ norms, values and feelings can be relativized unless they are confronted with expertise and knowledge or with constructive-critical feedback from others. Several students indicated that ample space is given for personal views to be expressed but little input is provided in terms of theory and knowledge by the teachers. Joan told us about the case of ethnic boundary constructions presented above: ‘We got so much space to make this discussion so big’. Apparently, the didactical positive appreciation of personalized views feeds the reification of students’ personal views that may derail into polarized and essentialist positions taken in events of ethnic boundary constructions in the absence of knowledge and constructive feedback.

In turn, this key didactic principle of personal reflection has itself become the object of ethnicizing dynamics. For example, in their focus group meeting, several majority teachers brought forward that minority students often reject the method of providing feedback to each other and often are not willing to reflect and accept criticism on themselves. These students do so arguing that such behaviour does not fit into their cultural background, as several teachers indicated.\(^\text{20}\) One majority teacher said that allochthonous students do not look critically at themselves and always say that everything goes well. Especially Moroccan male students would reject criticism because in their culture it is not done to lose face in public, another majority teacher told us. In their focus group and in individual interviews, majority teachers tended to follow this ‘ethnicizing’ understanding of this rejection by students with a migration background.

However, those teachers who indicated in their questionnaire that they have experienced that students reject self-reflection and giving feedback on each other referring to their cultural background and group norms, tended to agree with the proposition that such a rejection is fed by insecurity and becomes stronger when students with different cultural backgrounds enter into discussion with each other.\(^\text{21}\) Moreover, 45 per cent of teachers’ experiences that students rejection of self-reflection and giving feedback on each other referring to their cultural background and group norms is explained by experiencing ethnic confrontations in class and the reproduction of standpoints from media and politics in class.\(^\text{22}\) Apparently, contextual factors like insecurity, ethnic confrontations in class and students reproducing what they have heard from politicians and media explain an important part of migrant students’ rejection of self-reflection and giving feedback to each other. Again, the essentialist explanation of this rejection does not convince very much, a contextual explanation referring to external factors and group dynamics in class seems much more plausible.

*Teachers’ paralysis*

The space for polarizing and essentialist positions that students experience in class is, of course, limited by what teachers allow to happen. Regarding this space allowed by teachers and the degree in which teachers intervene in class, there is a remarkable difference between
the quantitative and the qualitative data we collected. In the teachers’ questionnaire, five items were included to measure their hesitation or determination to intervene and set limits in discussions in class regarding cultural diversity. Teachers are quite robust in denying such hesitations. About two of those items, students are already less convinced.

However, from the interviews an altogether different picture emerges, i.e. of hesitant teachers finding it very difficult to deal with ethnic boundaries in class and to intervene when needed. The MWD teachers even sent a delegation to meet us at the scheduled focus group meeting with MWD teachers to cancel the meeting and to tell us that the subject of diversity is too delicate to discuss openly. They explained that the subject is very difficult for them to deal with and that they prefer to ignore it in class as much as possible. They gave several explanations why this is the case, but all of them are connected to the traumatic impact of the Equal Treatment Commission’s condemnation of their team in 2008. One of the teachers said: ‘We have found a fearful way of talking about these matters’. Miriam said: ‘There is lots of fear about this subject [diversity – ed]’. One of the SPH classes told us: ‘They [teachers – ed] simply look the other way’. Joan said about the case discussed above: ‘The whole thing went on for a year; they should have intervened much earlier’. A few teachers with a minority background said that their majority colleagues fear accusations of discrimination by minority students.

Of course, it is difficult to judge in case of a discrepancy between quantitative and qualitative data, but I tend to confer more reliability to the qualitative data in this case. While completing a questionnaire, it is much easier to assert a robust way of dealing with diversity-related issues than when discussing cases with an interviewer who needs to be convinced. Moreover, the need for intervention in specific cases may only become apparent after discussing cases in detail as we did in the interviews. So, I prudently argue that teachers’ hesitation to intervene in case of ethnic boundary construction is another condition that feeds such boundaries.

**Essentialist diversity discourse 1: politics and media**

Conditions of a relatively young age, didactics of personal reflection and teachers’ hesitation to intervene set the stage for diversity-related aspects of social professions to fuel the construction of ethnic boundaries in class. But how and why are these aspects fuelling such boundaries? Basically, the answer to this question is provided by a cultural essentialist and to some extent even fundamentalist discourse that has gained dominance in the interpretation of these diversity-related topics and subjects.

This discourse is illustrated by what students of a third year SPH full-time class told us. One of them said: ‘Regarding diversity, I think about different ideas and views on the same subject’. Another student added: ‘The customs you have with your own culture, various cultures each having its own norms, values and views’. ‘Is this about an individual or about a group?’, we asked. ‘It is about a group’, a student replied. These are statements that neatly represent what Grillo (2003) calls cultural essentialism, the mapping of the world into bounded and different cultures side by side that determine individual’s identities. In addition, they also confirmed what Stolcke (1995) has called cultural fundamentalism, i.e. the notion of cultural communities and categories being incompatible and clashing with each other. One students in class said:
We are much in conflict. That does in fact come to the fore the past few years. Regarding cultural diversity, I think about clashes between different cultures.

There are various sources of this cultural essentialist and fundamentalist discourse to shape discussions in class about diversity-related subjects. The first source is constituted by students taking over what they heard from politicians and the media. References to political statements and media events are interwoven in many of the cases of ethnic boundary construction that our respondents accounted of. For example, in Joan’s account the Moroccan boy compared the Dutch students with Geert Wilders. Ina told us that she used to bring newspaper articles to class to discuss Moroccan youth crime, but she stopped doing so and started to problematize such articles after she found out that these articles had an essentializing and stigmatizing impact on her students. Bettina said that she has become aware of her ethnic difference vis-à-vis her Dutch majority friends after events like 9/11.

The crucial role of media and politics to essentialize differences is illustrated by what happened in December 2009. Several respondents told us that the communication department had decided that the yearly habit of putting a large Christmas tree in the central hall had become a bit boring so they decided to install a show with light effects instead. The website No Decency (Geen Stijl in Dutch) took the case as an instance of the school giving in to Islamization pressures and denying the Christian background of many of its students. The issue was subsequently taken over by more dominant media and even questions were raised in parliament about it in the same sense of cultural polarization. A group of students, including students with a migration background, felt very bad about such polarization, went to town, bought a number of Christmas trees and put them in the central building.

This example shows how politics and media transform cultural differences into an essentialist and fundamentalist discourse, but efforts of resistance, like those of the students fetching Christmas trees, are not always successful. Views and events in media and politics have a substantial impact turning diversity-related subjects into a source of ethnic boundary constructions in class, as confirmed by both the teachers’ and the students’ questionnaire data.

Of the teachers, 36.5 per cent indicated that they regularly hear statements from the media and politicians reproduced in the statements by students on cultural diversity related topics and 31.4 per cent have experienced that if they hear students reproducing such statements from media and politics that these statements trigger radical reactions from other students. In the experience of the teachers, such statements by students and radical reactions from other students explain 13.4 per cent of teachers’ experiencing that discussions about ethnicity-related behavioural issues engender feelings of being hurt and offended and non-recognition. In the experience of the teachers, such statements by students and radical reactions from other students triggered by media and politics also explain 22.2 per cent of fierce discussions involving students and teachers on sexuality and gender-related topics in class and 18.5 per cent of discussions about such topics engendering feelings of being hurt and offended and non-recognition. In addition, in the experience of the teachers, such statements by students and radical reactions from other students triggered by media and politics explain 50.6 per cent of fierce discussions involving students and teachers on crime-related matters in class and 47.1 per cent of discussions about such matters engendering
feelings of being hurt and offended and non-recognition. Above (see also notes 17 and 18), we discussed the impact of fierce discussions in class about these diversity-related subjects on ethnic group identification, ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontations.

In the students’ questionnaire, we measured the impact of diversity-related subjects discussed in media and politics on ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontations in a more direct way. Having experienced discussions in class about political and media-related subjects (terrorism, attacks of 11/9 and similar attacks, Geert Wilders’ views, migrants and crime, [homo]sexuality and Islam, and so-called Islamization and immigration) leading up to fierce tensions and conflicts between students with different cultural or national backgrounds in which students feel called upon as members of their cultural or national group and defend their group are confirmed by 19 per cent of the students. Such media and politics-triggered conflicts between students explain 19.8 per cent of ethnic group formation in class and 53.6 per cent of ethnic confrontations in class.

In other words, I argue that the essentialist discourse in media and politics on diversity-related matters triggers conflicts between students on diversity-and-social professions-related subjects in which this discourse is taken over by students. To a considerable extent, these conflicts are responsible for ethnic closures in class (for a similar argument on ethnic closure between colleagues at work see Siebers, 2010, and Siebers and Dennissen, forthcoming).

Essentialist diversity discourse 2: diversity framing in class
Cultural essentialist discourses trickle down from Dutch politics and media in class. The same holds true for cultural essentialist discourses in academia and the diversity industry. Students refer to models by John Berry and David Pinto being used in courses on diversity. These approaches map the world into cultural/national communities and portray individuals as moving from one community to another in processes of ‘acculturation’ (Berry) or as representing their own community in ‘intercultural communication’ (Pinto).

Ruben, a 19 year old MWD student whose mother was born in Surinam told about a teacher comparing various groups like Moroccans and Surinamese in Dutch society, arguing that Moroccans have ‘integrated’ best because they partly maintained their ‘culture’ whereas Surinamese people would have assimilated and forgotten their own ‘culture’. Ruben said he got very angry not only because the teacher compared groups on a normative scale with integration as the norm, derived from Berry, but also that the teacher simply denied the specific norms and values he had learned from his mother and his family.

His reaction illustrates not only the fact that he feels offended by such approaches, but also the force of essentialist categorizing since he felt addressed as a member of the Surinamese community. However, later on in the interview he said about thinking in terms of ‘cultures’:

Is that really useful? In a professional interview with a client, you get to know such issues [whether the clients’ family is important – ed] anyway. If someone says ‘My family is important to me’. Fine, then I know that.
He argued that it is not helpful to know whether his client belongs to a ‘we-culture’ and therefore would attribute much importance to family life. What matters is whether that holds true in his clients’ case and he can simply ask about that. Cultural group categories will not serve him at all in his future work, he indicated. So, eventually he managed to escape from essentialism.

The teacher Ruben referred to told us that he uses Pinto’s texts to deconstruct prejudices and stereotypes in his course on intercultural communication. He subdivides classes into subgroups according to ethnic background and each subgroup has to write down the prejudices and stereotypes they hold about the other subgroups. Subsequently, these prejudices and stereotypes are discussed in a critical way. Ruben had participated in the course and told us that all students felt very uncomfortable about this approach. They had good reasons for feeling this way, since what the teacher did is to try to deconstruct stigmatization, but by reinforcing the categorical groundwork on which such stigmatization is based, i.e. the essentialist mapping of the world into bounded and homogeneous cultures, represented by individual students.

The resistance of students like Ruben against cultural essentialism in diversity courses is telling. Joan told us that her class got the assignment in which teams had to pick out an ethnic group and to write a paper about their backgrounds and culture. She said her team deliberately picked out the Moluccans since there was no Moluccan student in her class, i.e. to avoid essentialist confrontations. She also indicated that in her course on youth crime, the teacher started with showing a movie featuring a Dutch Nazi skinhead versus Moroccan street gang. One of the students’ focus group confirmed her account. They all felt uneasy about such stereotyping.

Not only students but also some of the teachers with a migration background try to avoid such essentialism, but we may assume that especially the students will not remain immune for it.

Essentialist diversity discourse 3: ethnicized professionalism
Several respondents – both students and teachers – indicated that there is more to professional education than the free space students feel in expressing their personal views due to the didactics of personal reflection and teachers’ hesitation to intervene. They emphasized that in the end what matters is whether students will be able to adopt a professional attitude towards their clients and citizens, relatively independent of what their personal views are. Ina said: ‘You must take a professional distance, step over your own experiences, background and socialization process’.

However, to enable students to do so, teachers need to be able to offer a legitimate professional discourse for students to hold on to. This legitimacy is seriously undermined, though, by the fact that both teachers and students tend to classify the social professions’ discourse as a typical Dutch or at least Western discourse. Isaac, a 56 year old male teacher with a Dutch background, told us: ‘They [students – ed] get a Western diploma and have to reflect on their performance using Western methods... We do all this from a Western perspective’. Karolina said: ‘The courses you get have a sort of Dutch perspective, a sort of Western perspective’.
This ethnicizing framing of the discourse of social professions as a cultural particularity not only epitomizes the dominant position of cultural essentialism, i.e. essentialism manages to frame the professional discourse instead of vice versa, it also fuels ethnic confrontations in class. By framing the need for self-reflection as a Dutch or Western cultural particularity, for example, teachers lose their legitimacy to oblige students whom they frame as non-Dutch or non-Western to become involved in self-reflection. Simultaneously, these students interpret such an obligation as a kind of cultural imposition and feel they have the right to reject such an imposition due to the official embracement of diversity by the school. In their view, such obligation becomes an act of discrimination. Thus, professionalism is unable to offer a third position, a way out of the ethnic stalemates in class.

Both students and teachers with a migration background pointed to the need for internationalizing their careers by way of using more international texts, inviting guest lecturers from abroad, organizing internships abroad and paying more attention to non-Western art in CMV, for example.

**Discussion and conclusions**

I argue that the presence of ethnic markers (language and language accents, religious practices, specific clothes, tastes for specific music or cinema like Bollywood movies etc.) as well as cultural orientations that are loosely coupled to background and origin may provide the input for individuality-focused identity constructions and behaviour patterns as we saw in Halimah’s case. These markers and orientations may also provide the groundwork for ethnic boundary constructions, though, in which these markers come to represent ethnic group demarcations and these orientations and demarcations come to mutually constitute each other. The ethnic boundaries thus constructed include salient ethnic group identification as well as ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontation as part of ethnic closure.

I also argue that these boundaries cannot be understood as a reproduction of such boundaries in the wider society, but are mainly produced within the dynamics of polarization in class and fuelled by contextual conditions and factors. Within the conditions of a relatively young age, didactics of personal reflection and teachers’ hesitation to intervene, diversity-related aspects of social professions become ethnicized through the impact of cultural essentialist discourses that dominate Dutch politics and media and the contents of the special courses on cultural diversity and manage to ethnicize even social professions themselves as cultural particularistic phenomena. Thus, ethnic boundaries are erected in class involving both ethnic group identifications and ethnic closure (ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontations).

This study discloses the viability and fruitfulness of a non-essentialistic approach to the interplay between superdiversity and social or cultural essentialism, in this case applied to ethnicity. It puts superdiversity on the side of an enabling – both in terms of meaningful constructions and of social ability – identity formations as epitomized by Halimah. She illustrates how superdiversity differentiates itself from atomization and anomy by representing a relatively unregistered, unclassified, undetermined and enabling way of being different. Such a superdiverse construction of identity seems to be very much in line with the learning requirements that are ‘nested’ in a school setting.
This study also highlights the oppressive impact of essentialistic ethnic boundaries erected in class, imposed on individual students who seem far from comfortable with them. It creates tensions, frustrations and non-recognition among the students. These boundaries also disrupt the institutional logic that should be operational in education in several ways. First, they distract from the individual nature of learning processes by flocking students into ethnic categories. Second, they favour the solidification of defensive viewpoints in ethnic polarization and confrontations whereas learning assumes the opposite, i.e. knowledge development. Third, it disqualifies the nature of the social professions as such by simply representing them as cultural particularistic constructions. In other words, they essentialize social constructivism.

These contributions to the debate on superdiversity are matched by contributions derived from this study to the literature on ethnic boundary constructions. A first contribution stems from the confirmation of the importance of contextual dynamics and factors in the production of such boundaries instead of assuming that they have a pre-existing ontology in society and are simply reproduced in class. The dynamics of ethnic boundary construction and polarization in class seems to be the motor that uses cultural orientations and ethnic markers as ‘raw materials’ for the construction of ethnic boundaries instead of these markers and orientations themselves reproducing such boundaries in a mechanical way, as claimed by essentialistic approaches to ethnicity discussed above.

A second contribution to the ethnic boundaries literature stems from the particular contextual factors this study has identified as fuelling boundary constructions. Ethnicity-relevant aspects of social professions provide important leads for ethnic boundary constructions in class. Important conditions for such constructions are the relatively young age of students, the didactics of personal reflection and teachers’ hesitation to intervene due to the traumatic impact of the conviction of discrimination. Crucial, however, has been the impact of cultural essentialist (Grillo, 2003) and fundamentalist (Stolcke, 1995) discourses in media and politics and in diversity courses that turn these ethnicity-relevant aspects into building blocks of ethnic boundaries.

Third, although Barth and Wimmer are not very outspoken on this issue, the opposite of ethnic boundaries seems to be non-ethnicity in their views. So they rule out the possibility of a mode of ethnicity that is not related to ethnic boundaries, in other word a non-essentialistic form of ethnicity. The superdiversity perspective helps us to identify another and non-essentialistic mode on ethnicity as represented by Halimah and discussed above. In other words, the baseline for ethnic boundary constructions may not just consist of the absence of ethnicity but also the development of a more superdiverse form of ethnically-underscored individuality (Siebers, 2009). The identification and recognition of what appears to be a new form of ethnicity, focused on socially enabling individuality instead of ethnic group identity and formation, has been made possible by the concept of superdiversity.

Notes
1. Dutch official agencies like the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) have classified ‘allochthones’ as those who have at least one parent born abroad. They differentiate this abroad into so-called ‘Western countries’, so-called ‘non-Western’ countries and Indonesia / former Dutch East Indies. The ‘non-West’ includes Latin America, the
Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, except for Japan and Indonesia. As opposed to so-called ‘Western’ migrants, these so-called ‘non-Western’ migrants face much more difficulties in participating in societal sectors like the labour market (Huijnk et al., 2014) and education (CBS, 2012).

2. The research was carried out by the author and a research assistant.

3. All names are pseudonyms.

4. Average of 2.56 on a 5-points Likert scale ranging from 0 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree) on the statement: ‘I have experienced that in individual conversations students hold nuanced views regarding cultural diversity’, SD = 1.022, N = 54. All items of both the students and teachers questionnaires are translated from original Dutch.

5. In the teachers’ questionnaire, ethnic group formation was measured by a construct made up of two items (‘Students with a similar cultural background prefer to mingle with each other’ and ‘Students with a similar cultural background prefer to constitute teams together for carrying out tasks and assignments’), Cronbach’s Alpha .903. Ethnic confrontation was measured by a construct made up of two items (‘The constitution of groups of students with a similar cultural background coincides with tensions between these groups’ and ‘The constitution of groups of students with a similar cultural background coincides with conflicts between these groups’), Cronbach’s Alpha .862. Teachers could score in a scale from ‘In no classes in which I teach’ (0), to ‘In a minority of classes in which I teach’ (1), to ‘In half of the classes in which I teach’ (2), to ‘In the majority of classes in which I teach’ (3) and ‘In all classes in which I teach’ (4). Average scores of ethnic group formation was 2.42, SD = 1.09, N = 53, and of ethnic confrontation was .94, SD = .91, N = 52.

6. Correlation of .586, p = .000.

7. Item ‘I regularly experience that students address each other in ethnic terms: as Turks, Moroccan, Dutch etc.’ Average score: 1.41 on a scale from ‘I totally disagree (0) to ‘I totally agree’ (4), SD = 1.23, N = 54.

8. In the students’ questionnaire ethnic group formation was measured by four items (‘At the beginning of my study, I mostly had contacts with fellow students with the same cultural background of from the same country as me’, ‘That is still the case’, ‘In my class / (tutor) group, students with the same cultural or national background socialize most with each other and less with students with another cultural or national background’, and ‘Groups of students in my class / (tutor)group with the same cultural or national background communicate little with students with other cultural or national backgrounds’), Cronbach’s Alpha .675. Ethnic confrontation was measure with two items (Sometimes there are tensions and conflicts between students in my class / (tutor)group with different cultural or national backgrounds and ‘Students in my class / (tutor)group with different cultural or national backgrounds make bad remarks to each other that are related to their cultural or national background’), Cronbach’s Alpha .869. Students could score on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4). Ethnic group formation average: 1.54, SD = .94, N = 110. Ethnic confrontation average: .80, SD = 1.11, N = 110.

9. Correlation of .442, p = .000.

10. Ethnic diversity was measured with the following item: ‘In my class or (tutor)group, the percentage of students who were born abroad or whose parents were born outside of The
Netherlands is about (rough estimation)’, with answer categories 0% (1), 20% (2), 40% (3), 60% (4), 80% (5) and 100% (6). Linear regression of ethnic diversity on ethnic group formation showed a β of .309, \( p = .001 \) with an \( R^2 \) of .096. Linear regression of ethnic diversity on ethnic confrontation showed a β of .505, \( p = .000 \) with an \( R^2 \) of .255. That means that degree of ethnic diversity in class explains 9% and 25% of ethnic group formation and ethnic confrontation respectively.

11. These findings are in line with Baerveldt et al. (2007) on ethnic closure in intermediary level second education in The Netherlands and Flanders.

12. Linear regression of Ethnic socialization at previous school and of Being able to speak one’s mother tongue with fellow students have a significant effect (β = .529, \( p = .000 \) and β = .305, \( p = .001 \) respectively) on ethnic group formation. Together they produce a \( R^2 \) of .443. Ethnic socialization at previous school was measured with the item: ‘In my previous school, before I started my current study, I mostly socialized with students with the same cultural or national background as me’ on a Likert scale going from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4). Being able to speak one’s mother tongue with fellow students was measured with the item: ‘Those students with whom I socialize most I can speak my own language with, something I cannot do with other students’ on a Likert scale going from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4). Scores on items like ‘My friends outside school have the same cultural or national background as me’, ‘My family encourages me to socialize with students with the same national or cultural background as me’ and ‘Those students with whom I socialize most I share the same religious inspiration with’ had no effect on ethnic group formation.

13. Checked in the students’ questionnaire.


15. Linear regression of ‘I have experienced that these topics [of gender and sexuality - ed] lead to fierce discussions involving students and/or teachers [in class – ed]’, measured on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4), on Ethnic confrontations, β = .377, \( p = .036 \), \( R^2 = .142 \), and on ‘I regularly experience that students address each other in ethnic terms: as Turks, Moroccan, Dutch etc.’, measured by a scale from ‘I totally disagree’ (0) to ‘I totally agree’ (4). Linear regression of ‘I have experienced that these topics [of gender and sexuality - ed] engender feelings of being hurt, offended and non-recognition’, measured on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4), on Ethnic group formation, β = .372, \( p = .036 \), \( R^2 = .138 \).

16. Linear regression of ‘I have experienced that these topics [of crime and migrants - ed] engender feelings of being hurt, offended and non-recognition’, measured on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4), on Ethnic group formation, β = .449, \( p = .028 \), \( R^2 = .202 \). Linear regressions of ‘I have experienced that these topics [of crime and migrants - ed] engender feelings of being hurt, offended and non-recognition’, and of ‘I have experienced that these topics [of gender and sexuality - ed] lead to fierce discussions involving students and/or teachers [in class – ed]’ on ethnic confrontations only just produced no significant results, but that may be due to a small \( N (= 24) \).

17. The average age of part-time students is 32.6, of full-time students 21.7.

18. The average score of full-time students on ethnic group formation is 1.78, SD = .96, on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4), while part-time students average
score is 1.06, SD = .71, \( p = .000 \) in a T-test. Average score of full-time students on ethnic confrontations is 1.02, SD = 1.22, on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4), while part-time students average score is .37, SD = .71, \( p = .001 \) in a T-test.

19. Teachers are very strong on this. In their questionnaire they answered on average a 3.79, SD = .414, on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4), to the question ‘Students must learn to reflect about themselves and to give feedback to each other as part of the work of a social professional’.

20. In the teachers’ questionnaire, 28.3 per cent indicated that they have experienced that some students reject self-reflection and giving feedback on each other referring to their cultural background and group norms.

21. Average of 2.59 on a 5-points Likert scale ranging from 0 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree) on the statement: ‘I have the impression that this rejection [of self-reflection and giving each other feedback referring to own cultural background and group norms – ed] is fed by uncertainty’, SD = .925, N = 34. Average of 2.06 on the same 5-points Likert scale on the statement: ‘I have experienced that this rejection [of self-reflection and giving each other feedback referring to own cultural background and group norms – ed] becomes more firm when students with different cultural backgrounds enter into discussion with each other’, SD = .998, N = 33.

22. Linear regression of Ethnic confrontations and ‘If I hear standpoints from the media and politicians reproduced in statements by students, they provoke radical reactions from other students’ have a significant effect (\( \beta = .375, p = .003 \) and \( \beta = .464, p = .000 \) respectively) on ‘I have experienced that some students reject self-reflection and giving feedback on each other referring to their cultural background and group norms’. Together they produce a \( R^2 \) of .450.

23. On a 5-points Likert scale ranging from 0 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree), average teachers’ scores on ‘I personally sometimes feel a hesitation to discuss topics regarding cultural in class’ = 1.44 (SD = 1.25), ‘I sometimes feel tensions if I discuss topics regarding cultural diversity in class’ = 1.48 (SD = 1.22), ‘I usually hesitate to intervene if there are tensions in class related to cultural diversity’ = .96 (SD = .89), ‘If I observe tensions related to cultural diversity, I usually seek for a solution in dialogue’ = 3.21 (SD = .84) and ‘I feel I am cautious sometimes regarding what I say to avoid students’ complaints about discrimination’ 1.14 (SD = 1.09).

24. On a 5-points Likert scale ranging from 0 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree), average students’ scores on ‘Teachers intervene to discipline students in case there are tensions in class between students of different cultural or national backgrounds (in case there are no such tensions in your class/group, leave all boxes open)= 2.17, (SD = 1.07) and ‘In case there are tensions in class between students with different cultural or national backgrounds, the teacher brings the opponents together to talk problems out (in case there are no such tensions in your class/group, leave all boxes open)= 1.86, (SD = .82).


26. On a 5-points Likert scale ranging from 0 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree), 36.5 per cent agreed or totally agreed with the Proposition ‘I regularly hear statements from the media and politicians reproduced in the statements by students on cultural diversity related topics’ (N = 52) and 31.4 per cent agreed or totally agreed with the Proposition ‘If
I hear views from media and politicians reproduced in the statements by students, they provoke radical reactions from other students’ (N = 51).

27. Linear regression of ‘If I hear views [on ethnicity-related behavioural issues - ed] from media and politicians reproduced in the statements by students, they provoke radical reactions from other students’ on ‘I have experienced that these topics [on ethnicity-related behavioural issues - ed] engender feelings of being hurt, offended and non-recognition’, β = .366, p = .010, R² = .134. Both items measured on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4).

28. Linear regression of ‘If I hear views [on sexuality and gender - ed] from media and politicians reproduced in the statements by students, they provoke radical reactions from other students’ on ‘I have experienced that these topics [on sexuality and gender - ed] lead to fierce discussions involving students and/or teachers [in class – ed]’, β = .472, p = .013, R² = .222. Linear regression of ‘If I hear views [on sexuality and gender - ed] from media and politicians reproduced in the statements by students, they provoke radical reactions from other students’ on ‘I have experienced that these topics [of gender and sexuality - ed] engender feelings of being hurt, offended and non-recognition’, β = .430, p = .025, R² = .185. Items measured on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4).

29. Linear regression of ‘If I hear views [on crime and ethnicity - ed] from media and politicians reproduced in the statements by students, they provoke radical reactions from other students’ on ‘I have experienced that these topics [of crime and ethnicity - ed] lead to fierce discussions involving students and/or teachers [in class – ed]’, β = .711, p = .000, R² = .506. Linear regression of ‘If I hear views [on crime and ethnicity - ed] from media and politicians reproduced in the statements by students, they provoke radical reactions from other students’ on ‘I have experienced that these topics [on crime and ethnicity – ed] engender feelings of being hurt, offended and non-recognition’, β = .687, p = .000, R² = .471. Items measured on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4).

30. Until the time of data collection (2011) Geert Wilders mainly focused on Islam and migration-related issues, only later Europe became one of his favourite targets.

31. Construct Media and politics-triggered conflicts between students has been composed of item ‘Discussions about one or more of these topics [terrorism, attacks of 11/9 and similar attacks, Geert Wilders’ views, migrants and crime, (homo)sexuality and Islam, and so-called Islamization and immigration – ed] lead up to fierce tensions and conflicts between students with different cultural or national backgrounds in class’ and the item ‘In discussions on one or more of these topics [terrorism, attacks of 11/9 and similar attacks, Geert Wilders’ views, migrants and crime, (homo)sexuality and Islam, and so-called Islamization and immigration – ed], students feel called upon as members of their cultural or national group and start to defend their group’, Cronbach’s Alpha = .765. Average = 1.39, SD = 1.15, on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4).

32. Linear regression of Media and politics-triggered conflicts between students on Ethnic group formation, β = .445, p = .000, R² = .198, and on Ethnic confrontations β = .732, p = .000, R² = .536. Items measured on a scale from ‘Totally disagree’ (0) to ‘Totally agree’ (4).

33. See, for example, http://www.davidpinto.nl/ and Berry (2005).
References

Siebers, H. (1999). ‘We are children of the mountain’. *Creolization and modernization among the Q’eqchi’es of Guatemala*. Amsterdam: CEDLA.


