Teaching in diversity: teachers and pupils about tense situations in ethnically heterogeneous classes
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Chapter 4
Through pupils’ eyes. The reactions of teachers to tense situations in ethnically heterogeneous classes

This article investigates how pupils of ethnically diverse classes appreciate the reactions of teachers to tense situations during class discussions. Knowledge about this is relevant to gain more insight into the meaning of tense situations for citizenship education about living in an ethnically diverse society. It examines whether pupils’ appraisal varies between different ethnic groups and according to the ethnic composition of the class, as well as whether their appraisal is related to the way teachers reacted to six situations that were presented in a questionnaire. The sample comprised 1,987 pupils from 34 schools for secondary education spread over the Netherlands. The analyses presented in this article were carried out on a varying number of pupils (113 to 253). The results show that pupils’ appraisal was generally positive. Ethnic variables on the individual and class level scarcely significantly predicted the extent to which pupils appreciated their teachers’ reactions. The way in which teachers reacted did prove to be a significant predictor in some of the six situations that were analysed. The discussion relates these findings to citizenship education.

4.1. Introduction
As in other Western European countries the pupil population in the Netherlands has become increasingly ethnically diverse in recent decades. This particularly applies to schools in large and middle-sized towns and cities. Certainly 50% of the pupil population in the four largest cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht) comprises pupils from a non-Dutch background. In smaller towns the percentage is lower. The majority of pupils from a non-Dutch background in secondary education were born in the Netherlands. Their parents are immigrants from Turkey, Morocco, Surinam or the Netherlands Antilles, or are refugees from various parts of the world. The increasing ethnic diversity of the pupil population has resulted in educational policy paying more and more attention to preparing pupils to function in an ethnically diverse society. In the 1980s intercultural education was made compulsory for all schools in the Netherlands.

In recent years a negative tone has dominated public and political discussions on immigration and diversity. The existing wide concern about, for example, increasing criminality, terrorism and inadequate social cohesion are often linked to the multicultural society. Reports on conflicts and tensions in schools with an ethnically heterogeneous composition are regularly found in the

7 This chapter has been submitted for publication. Erik van Schooten and Yvonne Leeman are co-authors.
media. In the present climate these are often seen as indications of intercultural relations being under pressure and of problems related to the integration of ethnic minorities.

However, tensions and arguments about controversial issues are an inherent part of attending school. According to Parker (2003a) schools with a diverse pupil population provide an ideal context to prepare pupils for living in an ethnically diverse society and for dealing with the associated problems of schooling and living together in society. Tense situations at school present teachers with a pedagogical task. They offer opportunities to deal with values linked to living in an ethnically diverse society and for pupils to reflect on these values. Seen in this light, these situations are occasions for citizenship education of pupils (Oser, 2005; Veugelers & De Kat, 2003). Citizenship education does not only occur in lessons on this subject but also by being at school and part of the school community (Solomon, Watson & Battistisch, 2001). An example: a teacher gives a lesson on World War II to his class of Dutch, Jewish and Arab pupils. The pupils react to the subject emotionally, linking it directly to the current political conflict in the Middle East. They do not respect each other’s views on this conflict and the atmosphere becomes uneasy. The teacher seizes on the emotional involvement of the pupils to hold a discussion on the arguments for their ideas. In this way he wants to teach his pupils that there are different perspectives on social issues, to improve their ability to empathize and to take into account the communal importance of living together in society.

Very little research has been done on how pupils appreciate the reactions of teachers to tense situations. Knowledge about this is relevant to gain more insight into the meaning of tense situations for citizenship education. To make citizenship education about living in an ethnically diverse society meaningful to pupils, it is important to take seriously their experiences with the tensions that are part of attending an ethnically diverse school, as well as their appraisal of how these tensions are dealt with. Research on ethnically diverse classes has focused strongly on the thinking, actions and behaviour of the teacher (cf. Derriks, Ledoux, Overmaat, Van Eck, 2002; Hajer, Leeman & Van Nijnatten, 2002; Hanson, 2002; Stichting Voorbeeld, 2005; Wubbels, Den Brok, Veldman, Van Tartwijk, 2006). The studies that have looked at the experiences of pupils are mostly about the images pupils from different ethnic-cultural groups form about each other, and how they experience and perceive intercultural relations at school and in the classroom (cf. Kleijer, Reekum, van & Tillekens, 2004; Leeman, 1994; Lubbers, 2003; Saharso, 1992; Verkuyten & Kinket, 2000; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002; Vermeij, 2006), or about perceptions of the interpersonal behaviour of the teacher in general - so not specifically in tense situations (cf. Den Brok, Levy, Rodriguez & Wubbels, 2002; Den Brok, Levy, Wubbels & Rodriguez, 2003; Levy, Wubbels, Brekelmans, & Morganfield, 1997).

This article focuses on how pupils appraise the reactions of their teacher to tense situations. We will first examine whether pupils’ appraisal varies
between different ethnic groups and according to the ethnic composition of the class. Secondly, we will consider whether the appraisal is related to the way the teacher reacts to tense situations. We will clarify why these questions are important below.

### 4.2. Theoretical background

#### 4.2.1. Pupils’ appraisal: The relation with ethnic origin and ethnic composition of the classroom

On the basis of empirical research findings (see for example: Den Brok & Levy, 2005; Hermans, 2004; Luciak, 2004; Ogbu, 1992; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Saharso, 1992) we presupposed that pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of their teacher to tense situations varies according to the ethnic origin of pupils. A diversity of factors is assumed to be of influence on different experiences and perceptions that pupils from different origins have of school, such as the specific reasons for the migration of a minority group (for example, the colonial past of slavery or labour migration), the period of residence, and social-economic position. The social status of the minority group in the recipient country, the extent to which a group feels accepted, and experiences with stigmatization can also colour how pupils view the world. For example, Ogbu (1992) differentiated between voluntary and involuntary migration and linked differences in success at school to this. The results of pupils from ethnic minorities whose ancestors migrated to America for involuntary reasons were not as good as those of migrants who migrated voluntarily. Ogbu’s explanation was that involuntary migration had a negative effect on the children of migrants, which influenced their perceptions of and experiences with school as well as their achievements at school. Hermans (2004) showed that the history of Moroccan and Turkish integration in Belgium shows strong similarities to that of the involuntary migrants in Ogbu’s studies. In his ethnographical study of Moroccan parents he showed that the tense relationship they feel with Belgium possibly has a negative influence on their children’s perceptions of school.

Several explanations are put forward in the literature for differences between pupils from different ethnic origins in relation to their experiences and perceptions of school and the teacher. Firstly, there is the influence described above of the specific migration history and the relationship with the recipient society of specific migrant groups. Secondly, teachers may treat pupils from a particular ethnic background differently to other pupils. Another possibility is that pupils interpret the actions and behaviour of teachers differently, owing to different norms and values in different ethnic backgrounds (cf. Luciak, 2004; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Veldman, Van Tartwijk, Den Brok & Wubbels, 2006).

No research has been done on the relationship between how pupils appraise the reactions of their teachers to tense situations on the one hand and the ethnic origin of pupils on the other. Research has been done, however, on the perceptions of pupils in ethnically diverse classes of teachers’ interpersonal
behaviour in general. Den Brok and Levy (2005) carried out a review study of research in various countries (the United States, Australia, the Netherlands and a few Asian countries) on, for instance, the relationship between the ethnic origin of pupils and their perceptions of teachers’ interpersonal behaviour. They defined teachers’ interpersonal behaviour in two dimensions: influence (the extent to which the teacher demonstrates controlling behaviour) and proximity (the extent of teacher-student co-operation). On the basis of their review, it was concluded that pupils from ethnic-minority groups find their teachers more dominant and more co-operative than Western pupils. The results at class level gave a similar picture: a larger proportion of non-Western pupils in the class proved to be coupled with stronger perceptions of the extent of the influence and proximity of teachers. A Dutch study on this subject showed that Moroccan pupils found their teachers more dominant than Dutch pupils and than pupils from other non-Dutch backgrounds (Den Brok, Veldman, Wubbels & Van Tartwijk, 2004).

In line with the theory and empirical findings above, we surmised that pupils differ along ethnic lines in the extent to which they appreciate the reactions of their teacher to tense situations and that their appraisal would be related to the ethnic composition of the class. Influenced by the increasing tendency to think in the Netherlands in antitheses like ‘we the Dutch’ and ‘they the foreigners’, we assumed that pupils from a non-Dutch background would generally be more negative about the reactions of teachers than their Dutch classmates. We expected this to apply in particular to Moroccan pupils, given the negative reports in recent years.

The actual ethnic origin of pupils – defined in this study in congruence with the Central Office of Statistics’ definition\(^8\), namely based on the country of birth of both parents – is not necessarily the same as the group a pupil identifies with most. A sense of affinity indicates how pupils experience their own ethnic identity. In our study we therefore not only included differences in pupils’ ethnic origin, but also looked at differences in ethnic identity.

Based on the above, the first two research questions that are central to this article are formulated as follows:

*Research question 1. Is pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of teachers to tense situations related to the ethnic origin or the ethnic identification of pupils?*

*Research question 2. Is pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of teachers to tense situations related to the composition of the class by pupils’ ethnic origin or ethnic identification?*

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\(^8\) The categorization of ethnic groups corresponds to the definition used by the Central Office of Statistics. Ethnic origin is determined by the place of birth of one or both parents. The definition thus includes the second generation born in the Netherlands, whose parents were born abroad.
4.2.2. Pupils’ appraisal: The relation with teachers’ specific reactions to tense situations

Teachers can react in many different ways to tense situations. The question is whether pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of the teacher differs according to the specific way teachers react.

With every reaction to a tense situation (or lack of reaction), the teacher is giving a moral message (Hansen, 2001). Studies, in which so-called ‘critical incidents’ are seen as opportunities for teachers to be able to work purposefully on pupils’ moral education, differentiate various educational strategies (Maslovy, 2000; Oser & Althof, 1993; Veugelers & De Kat, 1998). These vary in the extent of teacher-centrality and the extent to which teachers adopt a personal stance on the subject. On the basis of their review of research on moral education, Solomon, Watson & Battistisch (2001) differentiate two types of educational strategies, namely direct and indirect approaches. This differentiation can be used to interpret the different types of reactions by teachers to tense situations. Direct approaches are teacher-centred and oriented on the transfer of values. The teacher gives instruction on specific values, explicitly propagates them and encourages their use via rewards and punishment. In citizenship education via indirect teaching strategies, greater value is attributed to a democratic learning environment and to the active learning of pupils. Dialogue and co-operative learning are examples of indirect ways of teaching. The aim of indirect strategies is to teach pupils to develop carefully considered viewpoints, thereby learning to take different perspectives, interests and conflicting values into account. This is seen as an important skill for citizenship in democratic, pluriform societies (Parker, 2003a; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). For pupils to feel sufficiently safe and confident to want and to dare to make a contribution themselves, there must be sufficient mutual respect, involvement and care in the school and the class. Proponents of citizenship education using indirect educational strategies therefore place a great deal of importance on a supportive climate in both the classroom and the school. Solomon and his colleagues (2001) concluded in their review study of research on moral education that there seems to be more evidence of the effectiveness of indirect educational strategies for the moral development of pupils than for direct strategies.

The extent to which teachers should stimulate specific values by indirect approaches is under discussion. In recent decades there has been wide support for the notion that it is neither desirable nor possible for the teacher to have a value-neutral position (Oser, 1999; Veugelers & Vedder, 2003). A neutral position would mean that pupils would be given the message that all values are equally important, which could result in a value-relativistic attitude in pupils. According to Veugelers (2000) and Oser (1999), what is necessary is an optimal balance between pupils developing values independently and teachers stimulating certain values.
Radstake & Leeman (2007) carried out a survey in 2003/2004 on teachers’ experiences of tense situations in ethnically diverse classes. This showed that teachers did not passively ignore these situations. They reacted immediately to most situations and sometimes came back to them later. A minority of teachers reacted in a disciplinary fashion but only in a few situations. Most teachers entered into discussion about tense situations, both with the pupils involved and the whole class. They themselves mostly expressed a point of view in these discussions.

As mentioned, research tells us little about what pupils think of the actions and behaviour of their teacher in tense situations. An exception is a Dutch study on incidents that had escalated in ethnically diverse primary and secondary schools (Roede, Karsten & Leeman, 2008). This study shows that pupils judge the behaviour of their teacher in such situations differently. Some pupils pointed out that teachers trivialize the situation and the underlying problems; others were of the opinion that a rigid, strict approach by teachers was partly the cause of the escalation. Others again thought that teachers should have intervened earlier and more forcibly to prevent escalation. On the whole, pupils indicated that they would prefer to have more discussions with the whole class when a situation escalates. Teachers in this study pointed out that they usually only entered into discussion with the pupils who were directly involved and only to engage the whole class in discussion in more serious situations.

Based on the above we assumed that pupils would appreciate teachers’ reactions more when they were given the opportunity to discuss the situation and when their opinions were taken seriously, than when the teachers’ reactions were more teacher-centred. We also expected that pupils would appreciate it when not only they, but also the teacher expressed his/her own viewpoint, thereby creating reciprocity in the relationship between teacher and pupils. These assumptions are in line with the findings of an exploratory study (Radstake, 2005). In this study we discussed with pupils in five ethnically diverse classes in different schools providing pre-vocational secondary education (vmbo) in Amsterdam their experiences of tense situations. In general these pupils found that teachers often acted unfairly or resorted too easily to using their authority (such as sending pupil(s) out of the class or deducting marks). They had the feeling that teachers did not listen to them properly and did not feel that the teacher took them seriously. Most pupils also found that they were not given enough room to have their say when tense situations occurred in the class. Some complained about the lack of decisiveness on the part of the teacher. They remarked that teachers intervened earlier if the problem not only involved the pupils, but also themselves or colleagues. They indicated that teachers are often unaware of problems between pupils.

To gain insight into the relation between pupils’ appraisal and the way teachers reacted, the third research question of this article is formulated as follows:
Research question 3. How do pupils appraise the specific reactions of teachers to tense situations?

4.3. Method

4.3.1. Selection of the sample

Schools with an ethnically diverse pupil population are mainly located in large and middle-sized towns and cities. We wanted schools of both types of towns and cities to be equally represented in the sample. As a result we decided that half of the sample should comprise schools in the four large cities and the other half of schools in middle-sized towns and cities all over the Netherlands. As situations that occur in a classroom context are central to this study, the class level was of prime importance in the selection of the sample. Our aim was for 100 classes to participate in the study. This number offers sufficient possibilities for relations between class and pupil variables to be identified (cf. Snijders & Bosker, 1999). Because we also wanted to be able to detect possible relations with school variables we strived for 34 schools to participate with 3 classes each. We chose mentors and pupils in the second year because then pupils still have many lessons together taught by the mentor; the class then still has meaning as a unit.

We selected the sample as follows. Firstly, we made a file of all secondary schools in the four big cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) and a file of all secondary schools in the middle-sized towns and cities. From these two files we deleted schools with less than 10% pupils from a non-Dutch background. We then took three random samples, each comprising 17 schools, from both files. This resulted in three samples of 17 schools for both files. Firstly, we approached all of the schools from the first sample from both files with the request to participate in the research. If a school from the first sample did not want to participate, we asked a school from the second sample with a comparable percentage of pupils from a non-Dutch background and providing a similar type of education as the school that had declined the invitation to participate. If the school from the second sample also declined, we picked a school from the third sample in a comparable way. In line with the national distribution of the pupil population, we wanted 60% of the classes participating to be pre-vocational secondary education classes (vmbo) and 40% to be general secondary education classes (havo and vwo). When it was known which schools wanted to participate, we then selected the general secondary education classes (havo-vwo) and the pre-vocational secondary educational classes (vmbo) on the basis of the 40-60% ratio.

4.3.2. Response

To find 34 schools that were prepared to participate in the research, we approached 71 schools in the way described above. The response was thus 48%. Schools that did not want to participate gave lack of time (often due to a
reorganization) or involvement in other research projects as reasons. We approached 102 classes in total, of which 89 ultimately returned the questionnaires (a response of 87%). The sample comprised 1,987 pupils. The analyses presented in this article were carried out on varying numbers of pupils. This was mainly because we were interested in situations that had actually been experienced and in the actual reactions of the teachers. Pupils only answered the questions about how the teacher had reacted to a situation and how they appraised the reaction if they had actually experienced a situation as described. Only the data of these pupils were analysed.

4.3.3. Characteristics of the sample
We were on the whole able to fulfil the selection criteria described above for the sample. Half of the participating classes were from schools in the four big cities and the other half from schools in middle-sized towns and cities. The sample comprised 59 classes providing pre-vocational secondary education (basic vocational education, middle management, combined and theoretical) and 30 classes providing general secondary education. This is 66% pre-vocational secondary education and 34% general secondary education. There were therefore relatively slightly more pre-vocational secondary education classes in the sample than nationwide (60%).

Taking the distribution of the pupil population over the different types of education into account (66% pre-vocational secondary education and 34% general secondary education), the proportion of pupils from a non-Dutch background in our sample was reasonably distributed over the types of education (see Table 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of pupils from a non-Dutch background</th>
<th>10-30%</th>
<th>30-50%</th>
<th>50-80%</th>
<th>80-100%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-vocational secondary education</td>
<td>22 (69.7%)</td>
<td>18 (68.0%)</td>
<td>10 (66.7%)</td>
<td>9 (56.3%)</td>
<td>59 (66.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General secondary education</td>
<td>10 (30.3%)</td>
<td>8 (32.0%)</td>
<td>5 (33.3%)</td>
<td>7 (43.7%)</td>
<td>30 (33.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32 (100%)</td>
<td>26 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
<td>89 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Percentage of pupils from a non-Dutch background in the class, by level of education (N=89 classes)

The level of urbanization (schools in the four big cities versus schools in middle-sized towns) and the percentage of pupils from an ethnic-minority background in the class are closely related (Cramer’s V = .822; p < .01). All the
classes with more than fifty per cent non-Dutch pupils were in schools in the four large cities.

Pupils’ ethnic origin was defined on the basis of the country of birth of both parents. 44.7% of the pupils have two Dutch parents, 12.6% have parents of Moroccan origin, 10.6% of Turkish origin and 10.1% of Surinamese or Antillean origin. 11.7% of the pupils have parents from another non-Dutch background and 10.3% has one Dutch parent and one parent from a non-Dutch background. The last group are referred to in this article as ‘diverse Dutch’. We did not categorize this group further by the ethnic origin of the non-Dutch parent. When we refer to pupils from a non-Dutch background in this article we mean pupils with two parents from a non-Dutch background and the pupils from the group ‘diverse Dutch’.

The ethnic origin defined above does not necessarily coincide with the group that a pupil identifies with. As already mentioned, we also included ethnic identification as a variable. The pupils could choose a single (such as ‘Moroccan’) or double identification (such as ‘Dutch/Moroccan’). Of the pupils from a non-Dutch background (N= 928) 40.2% described themselves with a double identity and 13.3% said they felt Dutch. More than a quarter (26.7%) felt most related to an ethnic identity that corresponded with the original background of their parents (Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese or Antillean). 19.8% chose the option ‘other’.

4.4. Operationalization
4.4.1. The dependent variable: Pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of their teachers to tense situations

To answer the research questions in this article we analysed six potentially tense situations that occur in class discussions. These situations are derived from an interview study carried out by Leeman in 2002 in which she asked teachers to name situations that presented them with dilemmas related to teaching in an ethnically diverse class (Leeman, 2003, 2006).

There were several reasons for restricting ourselves to situations during class discussions to answer the research question. Firstly, it is an advantage that the situations concern all pupils, as they occur at moments when the whole class is being taught. This means that there were relatively fewer missing data than in situations whereby only some of the pupils were involved. Secondly, the previous survey on teachers mentioned above showed that they found it particularly difficult to decide how to react to tensions during class discussions. Insight into pupils’ appraisal of teachers’ reactions to this type of situation is therefore relevant to teaching practice. Thirdly, deeper insight into class discussions is important because it is a preferred strategy from the perspective of citizenship education.

The situations were formulated in such a way that they could occur in every class. Religious, political or cultural issues were referred to in some situations without the content of the values that were at issue being specifically
named, for example the situation: ‘one or more pupils do not respect each other when talking about political or religious subjects’.

The six situations that occur during class discussions were formulated as follows:

- **Situation 1 – withholding opinion**: one or more pupils do not give their opinion during a class discussion because they do not like saying anything personal in the class.
- **Situation 2 – not showing respect**: one or more pupils do not respect each other when talking about political or religious subjects.
- **Situation 3 – not listening**: one or more pupils do not want to listen to classmates during a class discussion because they are not interested in other opinions on the subject.
- **Situation 4 - discriminating**: one or more pupils make discriminatory comments about someone’s appearance or cultural background during a class discussion.
- **Situation 5 - excluding**: one or more pupils exclude classmates from a class discussion because, according to them, they have nothing to say on the subject, for example because they belong to another group or are not religious
- **Situation 6 – not participating**: during a class discussion one or more pupils who have a different opinion on the subject than the majority do not dare to open their mouths.

For these six situations, the extent to which pupils appreciate the reactions of the teacher was operationalized by asking the pupils what they thought of the way the teacher reacted to the situation (answer categories ranging from 1 to 6, whereby 1 = very poor and 6 = very good). As the situations were formulated on the basis of what teachers reported (Leeman, 2003), we asked the pupils also to indicate the extent to which they found the situations stressful (three-point scale) and to what extent they related the situations to ethnic diversity in the class (three-point scale).

Given our research questions, we were interested in tense situations that pupils had actually experienced and in their appraisal of the actual reactions of teachers. For these reasons we did not formulate any hypothetical situations, which would have had the advantage that everyone would have been able to answer them. Pupils would then have had to guess how their teacher would have reacted and how they would have appraised the reaction. Our first question was whether pupils had experienced the six situations described above during the current school year (autumn 2003 / early 2004). If they had, we then asked them to answer further questions. These concerned, for example, the frequency of the situation, the intensity of the tension pupils experienced and their appraisal of the reactions of the teacher. If pupils had not experienced a situation then they were told not to answer the questions on that situation.

A disadvantage of this approach is that pupils did not answer the questions when they had not experienced the situation concerned. This
systematically resulted in missing data in the data base. The number of pupils that answered the question on how they appreciated the reactions of the teacher in the situation in question ranges from 100 to 368 for the six situations.

4.4.2. The independent variables: Ethnic origin and ethnic identification
The first research question is about the relationship between pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of the teacher and ethnic pupil variables. As mentioned, we included both ethnic origin based on the country of birth of the parents and ethnic identification as felt by the pupil. We also included the ethnic composition of the class as a variable in research question 2. This was determined by the percentage of pupils of Dutch origin in the class and the proportion of pupils in the class with a particular ethnic identification (indexed by two variables, namely the percentage of pupils with a mixed Dutch identification and the percentage of pupils with Surinamese, Dutch-Antillean, Turkish, Moroccan or other foreign identification).

4.4.3. The independent variable: The specific reactions of teachers
The reactions of the teachers in tense situations were measured in two steps. When pupils indicated that they had experienced a situation, we first asked whether the teacher had reacted to the situation or not. If the teacher had reacted, we asked in what way. We used the research of Maslovaty (2000), Oser and Althof (1993), Van Veen et al., 2003, and Veugelers and De Kat (1998) on the reactions of teachers to critical situations for this. Based on the differentiation between direct and indirect approaches in the introduction, we varied the answer categories in the extent of teacher orientation and pupil orientation. In addition, the answer categories differed in the extent to which the teacher guided the content of the discussion by differentiating between reactions in which the teacher expressed his own viewpoint and reactions when he did not. We put forward the following possible answers (whereby more than one answer was possible):

- A: I punished the pupil(s) and/or sent them out of the class;
- B: I had a talk with the pupils involved about the situation, without expressing my own point of view;
- C: I had a talk with the pupils involved about the situation, in which I expressed my own point of view;
- D: I had a class discussion, without expressing my own point of view;
- E: I had a class discussion, in which I expressed my own point of view;
- F: I merely gave my point of view on the situation.

The variable that indicates whether and how the teacher reacted is not a class-related variable but a pupil-related variable. There are two reasons for this: firstly, in a specific situation pupils may have differing opinions on how a teacher reacted to the situation; secondly, it is possible that pupils were not thinking of the same specific incident when asked about a type of tense situation.
4.4.4. Control variables
In order to exclude alternative explanations as far as possible when answering the research questions, we controlled for a few variables that were possibly related to pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of the teachers. An overview of all the control variables, or covariates, is included in appendix 2. These covariates relate to background characteristics of pupils (such as gender, parents’ education and religious conviction), individual experiences of pupils with specific tense situations, (including the frequency), the extent to which they felt involved in the situations, and the intensity of the tensions experienced. For the third research question, on the correlation between the reactions of the teacher and pupils’ appraisal, we controlled for ethnic origin and ethnic identification in addition to the variables named above.

4.5. Analyses
For each of the six tense situations we made a separate analysis with the help of multi-level regression analyses of the extent to which pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of the teacher is related to pupils’ ethnic origin and ethnic identification. The influence of these ethnic variables was checked both at pupil level (research question 1) and class level (research question 2). Using the same technique we also analysed the extent to which teachers’ reactions are related to pupils’ appraisal of these (research question 3).

To answer the first two research questions we proceeded as follows. For each situation, first the model that reflects the distribution of the variance at the different levels, without the addition of independent variables (model 0), was analysed. In model 1 the ethnic variables at an individual level were then added, so that we could determine whether there was a correlation between ethnicity and pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of the teacher. We then added the ethnic variables at class level to construct model 2. Adding variables at an individual level first prevents the effects at class level being overestimated (Hauser, 1970). In model 3 the control variables were added to the empty model (model 0 without the independent variables). The covariates for research question 1 pertain to pupils’ background characteristics (including parents’ education, religious conviction) and pupils’ experiences with specific tense situations (including the frequency they experienced the situation and the extent to which they felt involved in the situation). In model 4 the ethnic variables were then added at an individual level again, this time to be able to ascertain their unique effect after having controlled for covariates. In model 5 the ethnic variables at class level were added.

We followed a similar method of working to answer research question 3. First a null model without explanatory variables was determined, followed by model 1 in which the variable was added that indicates whether the teacher has taken action, as well as the variables representing how the teacher has taken action. Six different reactions were differentiated, A to F. In model 2 all the
control variables have been added to model 0. These covariates differ from those that were used to answer research question 1. Now the ethnic variables at an individual and class level have also been used as covariates to correct for the relationship of these variables with pupils’ appraisal of the teachers’ reactions. In model 3 the variable which indicates whether the teacher has taken action, as well as the six ways of reacting that have been differentiated (A to F), have been added to model 2. In this way, after correcting for differences in the variables included in model 2, we determined whether pupils’ appraisal of the reaction of the teacher is related to whether he took action and to the specific way he acted.

The effect sizes of variables were determined with the help of the proportions of unique explained variance, at class and pupil level together. The effect sizes were calculated by reducing the proportion of explained variance of an extensive model (with covariates and independent variables) by the proportion of explained variance of a clustered model with only covariates. We used Cohen’s criteria (see Hoyle, Harris & Judd, 2002) to determine the effect sizes. We consider a proportion of unique explained variance that is less than .09 to be a small effect, a proportion between .09 and .25 as an average effect and a proportion greater than .25 to be a large effect.

4.6. Results
Appendix 3 includes the results of the 12 (6 situations and 2 groups of independent variables) series of analyses. These tables show that the variance at pupil level ranges from 80 to 91% over the situations and at class level from 9 to 20%. This last result is greater than the findings from other educational research for non-cognitive outcomes in which the variance between classes and/or schools is generally not more than 5% (cf. Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). The mean appraisal of pupils of teachers’ reactions is between 4.17 and 4.36 on the original six-point scale ranging from 1 (= very poor) to 6 (= very good). In short, on average pupils appraise the reactions of their teacher positively for all six situations which they were questioned about.

Below we discuss the correlation between the separate independent variables on the one hand and the dependent variables on the other for all research questions. In addition we discuss the results of the models which include control variables. These results, as already mentioned, are presented in appendix 3 (Tables 1 to 6 for research questions 1 and 2; Tables 7 to 12 for research question 3).

Research question 1: is pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of teachers to tense situations related to the ethnic origin or ethnic identification of pupils?
This research question was answered by checking the extent to which ethnic factors are related to pupils’ appreciation of the reactions of the teacher. This correlation was determined twice, that is to say, both with and without controlling for covariates. The covariates used are described in appendix 2.
The results of the analyses in which covariates were not controlled for (model 1 in Tables 1 to 6 in appendix 3) show that the addition of the variables ethnic origin and ethnic identification only result in a significant contribution to predicting pupils’ appraisal in the situation withholding opinion. With 9.2% explained variance (class and pupil levels together), the effect size is average. Looking at the diverse ethnic groups for all the situations, it is noticeable that in two situations (withholding opinion and not showing respect) Moroccan pupils appraised the reactions of their teacher significantly more negatively than pupils of Dutch origin. The appraisal of pupils with Antillean identification was also significantly more negative than that of pupils with a Dutch identification in two situations, namely withholding opinion and discriminating. Pupils with a Surinamese identification appraised the reactions of the teachers significantly more negatively than pupils with a Dutch identification for the situation withholding opinion. The effect sizes are small in all of these cases.

After the addition of covariates (model 4 in Tables 1 to 6 in appendix 3), of which the variable indicating the intensity of the tension experienced by the pupil in the situation proved to be particularly important, Moroccan pupils were shown not to judge teachers differently than Dutch pupils. The differences mentioned earlier between pupils with a Surinamese or Antillean ethnic identification on the one hand and pupils who feel Dutch on the other, do remain significant for the situations in question.

Research question 2: is pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of teachers to tense situations related to the composition of the class by the ethnic origin or ethnic identification of pupils?

The effect of the composition of the class by ethnic origin and identification was determined by extending the models, which included the variables ethnic origin and ethnic identification at an individual level, with the equivalents at class level. In model 2 in the tables in appendix 3 (without the inclusion of the control variables) there proved to be a significant negative correlation in two situations, namely not showing respect and not listening, between the percentage of pupils with a mixed Dutch identification and pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of the teacher to that situation - the higher the percentage of these pupils, the more negatively pupils in these classes judged the reactions of the teacher. The effect sizes are small in both cases.

Having controlled for covariates (model 5 in the tables in appendix 3) the correlations named above remain significant and in the same direction, albeit small. The addition of the class-composition variables to the model, which also includes the covariates for the situations in question, does not result, however, in the model fitting the data better.

Research question 3: How do pupils appraise specific reactions by teachers to tense situations?
Table 4.2 (see below) presents an overview of the results on research question 3. An explanation is given below the table. The table indicates per situation whether the variables representing the reactions of the teacher were significantly related to pupils’ appraisal without controlling for other variables (column NC = no control) and whether there are significant relationships after controlling for the background variables (column C = with control). The control variables are described in appendix 2. These include the ethnic origin and the ethnic identification as well as the class-composition variables. The direction of a significant relationship is represented by + (positive) and – (negative) in the table.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation: Withholding opinion</th>
<th>Not showing respect</th>
<th>Not listening</th>
<th>Discriminating</th>
<th>Excluding</th>
<th>Not participating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reaction:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NC: no control variables
C: with control variables
ns: not significant

Reaction: whether the teacher reacted to the situation
A: I punished the pupil(s) and or sent them out of the class;
B: I had a talk with the pupils involved about the situation, without expressing my own point of view;
C: I had a talk with the pupils involved about the situation, in which I expressed my own point of view;
D: I had a class discussion, without expressing my own point of view;
E: I had a class discussion, in which I expressed my own point of view;
F: I merely gave my point of view on the situation.

The complete tables with results are included in appendix 3 (Tables 7 to 12). For all six situations, adding all of the reaction variables together (whether the teacher reacted to the situation and the six different ways of reacting) produced a significant improvement in the model fit. In one situation (not listening) the effect size with 8.9% explained variance was small. In all the other situations
there were average effect sizes (explained variances between 11.0 and 22.1%). There were no differences between models with and without covariates, with one exception: in the model with covariates, the effect size of the teachers’ reactions for the situation excluding dropped from average (11.0%) to small (6.4% unique variance).

That the teacher reacted was generally regarded as positive by pupils, although this effect is only significant in two of the six situations (namely not showing respect and discriminating), as long as no control variables were included in the models. When the control variables were added to the models, the effect still proved to exist in the situation not showing respect, but not in the situation discriminating, although it then did exist in the situation not listening. In the discussion we will look at a possible explanation for the differences found between the situations.

For each tense situation, six different ways were differentiated in which the teacher could react (see paragraph 4.4.3). Pupils’ appraisal of these six reactions scarcely differs from situation to situation. Pupils regarded holding a class discussion in which the teacher takes a stance (alternative E) as positive, although it is only significant in four of the six cases, and only if we do not correct for other variables. If corrected, then this reaction is only significantly positively related to pupils’ appraisal of the situations not listening and discriminating. For the situation withholding opinion the negative appraisal of punishing pupils (alternative A) is significant without and also with control for other variables. Pupils’ negative appraisal of the teacher holding a discussion, without taking a personal stance himself, and with only the pupils involved (alternative B), is significantly negative for the situation discriminating. After controlling for covariates, this relation remains significantly negative. Holding a discussion with only the pupils involved and in which the teacher expresses a point of view (alternative C) is not related to pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of the teacher in any of the situations. Alternative D (holding a class discussion but the teacher did not express a viewpoint) is only related to positive appraisal in the situation not listening, and then only in the model without control variables. Only giving a point of view (alternative F) is significantly positively related to pupils’ appraisal of the situations not listening and excluding in models without control variables. After control, there is a significantly positive relation between this alternative and pupils’ appraisal of the situations not listening and discriminating.

Summarizing, we see that pupils’ appraisal of both alternative A (punishing pupils or sending them out of the class) and alternative B (only talking about the situation with the pupils involved without expressing a viewpoint) is significantly negative for at least one situation and never significantly positive. Three reactions were considered to be significantly positive in at least one situation and never negative. These were holding a class discussion in which the teacher expresses his/her viewpoint (alternative E; in 6 of the 12 model tests), only expressing his/her viewpoint (alternative F, in 4 of
the 12 model tests) and talking with the whole class about the situation without the teacher expressing his/her viewpoint (alternative D, only 1 of the 12 model tests).

4.7. Conclusions and discussion
The aim of this chapter was to provide knowledge on pupils’ appraisal of their teachers’ reactions to tense situations in ethnically diverse classes. Pupils in ethnically diverse schools all over the Netherlands were questioned about six potentially tense situations that occurred during class discussions. Teachers had reported these situations, which for them had evoked moral dilemmas related to teaching in an ethnically diverse class, in a previous study (Leeman, 2003, 2006).

The first two research questions concerned the relationship between the ethnic origin and ethnic identification of pupils and their appraisal of the reactions of teachers to tense situations at both an individual level (question 1) and class level (question 2). On average pupils proved to have a positive appraisal of teachers’ reactions to tense situations. We surmised that pupils from a non-Dutch background would appraise the reactions of their teachers to tense situations more negatively. This conjecture was based on the assumption that the migration history and the relationship with the recipient society experienced by ethnic-minority groups influence the perceptions and experiences of pupils in relation to school and the teacher. Given the widespread concern in the political climate in the Netherlands about the integration of minorities, we assumed that this influence would be in a negative direction. However, we scarcely found any meaningful differences by ethnic variables at an individual and class level and if there were differences, the effect sizes (in terms of the proportion of explained variance) were small. The expectation that pupils from a non-Dutch background appraise the reactions of their teachers to tense situations more negatively was therefore not confirmed. A possible explanation for this is that the experiences and perceptions of school and the teacher of pupils from a non-Dutch background are not more negative than those of their Dutch classmates, as we had assumed. Another study by Vedder, Boekaerts and Seegers (2005) provides similar indications. They found, for example, that Turkish and Moroccan pupils experience more instructional support from their teachers than Dutch pupils.

The third research question concerned the relation between the specific reactions of teachers to tense situations and pupils’ appraisal. Firstly, we examined whether pupils’ appraisal was related to whether the teacher reacted at all, regardless of the way he reacted. In only two situations, namely not showing respect and not listening, did the fact that the teacher reacted prove to have a significant, positive relation to pupils’ appraisal. It is possible that these situations affect pupils more personally than the other situations and they therefore feel that is more critical for the teacher to do something. Perhaps these two situations are too important for pupils to let them pass unnoticed.

On the basis of knowledge in the field of citizenship education we then studied whether pupils appraised ways of reacting that gave them the
opportunity to make their contribution, and in which teachers expressed a viewpoint, more positively than more disciplinary reactions that were strongly teacher-centred. It can be concluded that the results did not confirm our expectations in the majority of cases. For three situations, namely not showing respect, excluding and not participating, no significant relation was found between the reactions of the teacher and pupils’ appraisal of these when all the control variables in the analyses were included. For the other three situations, namely not listening, discriminating and withholding opinion, our expectations were confirmed a number of times. In the case of holding a class discussion in which the teacher expresses a viewpoint, when controlled for all the covariates, there was a significant positive relation with the extent to which pupils appreciated the reactions of the teacher in the situations not listening and discriminating. For the situation withholding opinion, pupils’ appraisal was significantly negative when the teacher took disciplinary measures. These results give some support to the expectation that disciplinary, teacher-centred ways of acting and behaving are negatively appraised and that reactions which give pupils more room to contribute and whereby the teacher expresses a viewpoint are considered positive. That the teacher takes a personal stance during a discussion on tense situations was not only found to be relevant in preventing value relativism (cf. Veugelers, 2000), it does also seem to be appreciated more by pupils. These findings indicate that when teachers expect pupils to share their opinions and experiences during a class discussion, pupils expect the teacher to do the same (cf. Radstake, 2005).

However, the alternative of having a talk with only the pupils involved in which the teacher expressed his/her point of view did not prove to be related in any of the situations to pupils’ appraisal. These findings give the impression that pupils prefer the whole class to be involved when attention is paid to tense situations that occur during class discussions, rather than the teacher only discussing the situation with the pupils involved. We do not know how the class discussions progressed in practice and hence also do not know the grounds for pupils’ positive assessment. On the basis of theory and research (Solomon, Watson & Battistisch, 2001) we assumed that pupils appreciate having the opportunity to contribute themselves, appreciate their contribution being taken seriously and appreciate the teacher taking a personal stance in the discussion by expressing a viewpoint. However, a class discussion does not by definition mean that there is a lot of room for pupils to contribute. It is possible that in practice the discussions are strongly teacher-centred. Further research is necessary to gain insight into this.

The results contain indications that it depends on the specific situation whether pupils appreciate the reactions of the teacher in a particular way. In that connection it would be interesting to do further research on finding explanations for why pupils particularly appreciate teachers holding class discussions in certain situations, as in this study in the situations not listening (‘pupils do not want to listen to classmates during a class discussion because they are not
interested in other opinions on the subject’) and discriminating (‘pupils make discriminatory comments about someone’s appearance or cultural background during a class discussion’).

An added value of the research method used is that situations were analysed that pupils actually had experienced, thereby staying as close as possible to pupils’ perceptions. We made this choice because knowledge about pupils’ experiences in ethnically diverse classes with tense situations was previously non-existent. However, there was also a price to pay for questioning pupils about situations they had actually experienced: pupils who had not experienced a situation fell outside the scope of the analyses. Hence a large number of the respondents in the original group of almost 2,000 pupils could not be included in the analyses. Therefore, the results on pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of teachers to potentially tense situations cannot be generalized to the pupil population as a whole. If we want a more general picture of the expectations pupils have of their teachers in dealing with this type of situation, further research could also be directed at questioning pupils about hypothetical situations. All pupils could answer these questions.

This study provides insight into the factors related to pupils’ appraisal of the reactions of teachers to potentially tense situations during discussions in ethnically diverse classes. The conclusion that ethnic variables proved to be scarcely related to this, but the way in which teachers act is, provides important knowledge about these situations as opportunities to prepare for living in an ethnically diverse society. Pupils’ appraisal of the way their teachers reacted in tense situations during class discussions proved to be generally positive. The study also gives some indications that pupils appreciate it when the teacher chooses to hold a class discussion when these situations occur. This expresses confidence in the reactions of the teacher.