
Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Among Youth in Multiethnic Brussels

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Abstract

This study examined attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (referred to in the literature as *sexual prejudice*) in a sample of pupils from 70 secondary schools in Brussels. We used items measuring traditional and modern sexual prejudice and support for gay civil rights. We performed a multilevel linear multivariate response analysis to assess both the impact of individual characteristics and school influence on pupils' attitudes. Controlling for sociodemographic variables, second-generation migrants had more prejudice toward homosexuals than pupils from the ethnic majority group. Identification with the receiving society and perception of group-level institutional discrimination, however, mediated the association between ethnic origin and homonegativity. In contrast to traditional sexual prejudice and gay civil rights issues, modern sexual prejudice items were less affected by individual sociodemographic variables. Modern sexual prejudice also remained rather stable across schools; however, schools did appear to affect civil rights issues and traditional sexual prejudice. This contribution sheds light on the relationship between ethnic origin and sexual prejudice and on the variation of several sexual prejudice dimensions across social groups and schools.

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Keywords

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Together with the Netherlands, Spain, Norway, and Sweden, Belgium is one of the most liberal countries in the world with regard to family rights of homosexuals. For example, gay marriage was legalized in 2003, and a law permitting gay adoption was passed in 2006. These changes can be seen as the outcome of the increasing salience of postmaterialist values (Inglehart, 1997) in Belgian politics over the last two decades. Of course, the recent improvement of gay civil rights does not mean that the entire population has become more tolerant or more respectful toward lesbians and gay men. Negative attitudes are indeed still high among certain social groups (Pickery & Noppe, 2007). The Belgian media routinely suggest that negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men are particularly a problem among immigrant groups.

The central research concern in this study is the extent to which attitudes toward lesbians and gay men differ between youngsters of foreign origin and Belgian youngsters. In this study, such differences are considered to be "ethnic differences." This research also investigates the mediating power of sociopsychological variables in explaining the association between ethnic origin and attitudes toward homosexuals as well as the impact schools have on youngsters' attitudes toward homosexuals.

Schools not only impact academic achievement but also aim at diffusing social norms (Gellner, 1983) such as the norms surrounding tolerance toward minorities. Educational institutions also are important arenas of socialization. One's attitudes can be indeed influenced by the attitudes held in one's peer group (Herek, 1986, 1988). It follows that schools should exert a substantial influence on pupils' attitudes toward homosexuals. One striking characteristic of the school population in Brussels is considerable ethnic diversity: more than half of the pupils in Brussels are of foreign origin (Jacobs & Rea, 2007). This research is based on a survey of 3,121 pupils who attended the last year of the compulsory education in 2007 in 70 schools in Brussels, the Belgian and European capital.

The findings from the nascent literature on ethnic differences in attitudes toward homosexuals are mixed. While the results of some U.S. studies showed no differences between African American and European American attitudes on homosexuals (Herek & Capitanio, 1995; Lewis, 2003), several European studies with contemporary migrants pointed to significant ethnic differences in attitudes toward homosexuals. For instance, research on

Belgian youth (Hooghe, Quintelier, Claes, Dejaeghere, & Harrell, 2007) found that youngsters of foreign origin held significantly more negative attitudes toward homosexuals than did Belgian youngsters (by controlling for socioeconomic status [SES] and religious denominations). Moreover, the results of Dutch research (Keuzenkamp & Bos, 2007) showed that first- and second-generation migrants originating from Turkey and Morocco held more negative attitudes toward homosexuals than did the Dutch respondents (by controlling for SES and for the importance of religion). Because the studies of Hooghe et al. (2007) and Keuzenkamp and Bos (2007) were composed of ethnic minority groups similar to the ethnic minority groups living in Brussels, we would expect significant ethnic differences in attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. More specifically, youngsters of foreign origin are expected to hold more negative attitudes toward homosexuals than Belgian pupils (see Hypothesis 1).

Other studies pointed to varying results, depending on the type of measured attitude (Ellis, Kitzinger, & Wilkinson, 2002; Loftus, 2001). For instance, Ellis et al. (2002) found that British psychology students of non-European background held more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men than British psychology students of European background, while ethnic differences were nonsignificant on gay human rights issues. Similarly, Loftus (2001) showed that European Americans were more liberal in their judgments on the morality of homosexuality than were African Americans, but were more conservative on the gay civil liberty issues than were African Americans. Ethnic differences seem to vary according to the dimensions of sexual prejudice. Therefore, if one wants to focus on ethnic disparities, one should consider different dimensions of attitudes toward homosexuals.

In the study reported here, three different dimensions of attitudes are analyzed: (a) items measuring gay civil rights issues, (b) items on traditional sexual prejudice, and (c) items on modern sexual prejudice. The generic term *sexual prejudice* will be used here to refer to the three aforementioned dimensions of attitudes toward homosexuals. The reader should note that we use the term “sexual prejudice” rather than “homophobia” or “gender prejudice” because of its prior use in the empirical literature (Herek, 2004). *Homophobia* refers to an individual phenomenon and *gender prejudice* entails concepts relating to gender ideology.

Traditional and modern sexual prejudice measures are derived from modern racism theory (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). According to this theory, the growing presence of normative pressures not to endorse overt prejudicial attitudes has lead people to reject blatant forms of prejudice

(traditional prejudice) although supporting more subtle ones (modern prejudice). The theoretical framework of modern racism has been extended to other forms of prejudice, such as sexism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) and, to a far less extent, sexual prejudice (Morrison, Morrison, & Franklin, 2009; Van Wijk, van de Meerendonk, Bakker, & Vanwesenbeeck, 2005).

Accordingly, traditional sexual prejudice is characterized by an old-fashioned, moralistic, and religious perception of homosexuality. By contrast, modern sexual prejudice is a more subtle kind of prejudice that is said to be free from any normative societal pressure (Van Wijk et al., 2005). Because of the recent evolution of Western society with regard to the protection of lesbians and gay men against discrimination, sexual prejudice has become normatively proscribed (Kuyper & Bakker, 2006). Consequently, Western societies tend to endorse modern sexual prejudice to a greater extent than traditional forms of sexual prejudice (Van Wijk et al., 2005).

The aforementioned theoretical framework of modern and traditional prejudice can provide an explanation for the varying ethnic differences in attitudes toward homosexuals. Indeed, most youngsters of foreign origin have been socialized in multiple cultural contexts. Consequently, they could be less aware than Belgians of the normative pressures of the receiving society surrounding tolerance toward lesbians and gay men. Accordingly, youngsters of foreign origin are expected to express traditional sexual prejudice to a larger extent than Belgians. By contrast, the attitudes of youngsters of foreign origin and Belgian youngsters on the modern sexual prejudice scale are expected to be more alike, since those items are not affected by any normative pressure (exerted by the receiving society). Indeed, Van Wijk et al. (2005) showed that ethnic origin correlates with traditional sexual prejudice but not with modern sexual prejudice. Thus, we expect larger ethnic differences in the traditional sexual prejudice dimension than in the modern sexual prejudice dimension (see Hypothesis 2). The third attitudinal dimension included in our survey concerns gay civil rights issues and is composed of items on equal rights for homosexuals and heterosexuals, gay marriage and gay adoption rights. These items refer not only to civil liberty issues but also to moralistic values (Kite & Whitley, 1998). Consequently, both traditional sexual prejudice and civil right issues measured in our survey relate to moralistic and religious values. Therefore, ethnic differences observed in the gay civil rights dimension are expected to be similar to those observed in the traditional sexual prejudice dimension (see Hypothesis 3).

This contribution also aims to test the mediating power of two sociopsychological variables in explaining ethnic disparities in sexual prejudice:

bidimensional identification and perceived group-level institutional discrimination. The existing empirical literature does not provide any explanation for the association of ethnic origin with sexual prejudice, with the exception of one study among Mexican migrants in the United States (Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006). Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera (2006) found that Mexican migrants who identify with U.S. Americans have more positive attitudes toward homosexuals than migrants who consider themselves Hispanic or Mexican. Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera theorize that as Mexican migrants who identify with Americans consider discrimination against homosexuals similar to the discrimination they suffer from, they adopt more tolerant attitudes toward lesbians and gay men.

Recent cross-cultural psychological research on the dimensionality of acculturation has shifted from a unidimensional concept to a bidimensional one. Several authors (Berry, 1997, 2001; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997) point out that identification with the receiving society is conceptually distinct from identification with the ethnic group. Considering oneself as member of the receiving society does not preclude a coexistent identification with the ethnic group. To accurately measure the identification of youngsters with an immigrant background, the mediating variable introduced by Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera should therefore be enlarged by two distinct dimensions (ethnic identification and identification with the receiving society). These two dimensions should be allowed to vary independently from each other.

The positive association between identification with the receiving society and the endorsement of positive attitudes toward homosexuals may be explained by social identity theory (Turner, 1999) and normative theory (Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002). According to social identity theory, people who identify highly with a group are influenced by the group norms to a greater extent than people who do not identify strongly with the group (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1999). Moreover, people who highly identify with a group will tend to display behaviors corresponding to the normative criteria of that group. Furthermore, the rejection of minorities by an individual is conditioned by his or her cultural beliefs, social representations, and social norms; prejudice, in its types, forms, expressions, and targets, is contextual and culturally dependent (Crandall & Martinez, 1996). In other words, according to normative theory, individuals internalize the norms of the social group to which they belong. Social norms are thus powerful predictors of attitudes and behaviors of individuals, including the expression of prejudice (Crandall et al., 2002). We would thus expect youngsters of foreign origin who identify highly with the receiving society to hold attitudes toward

homosexuals that are similar to those held by Belgian youngsters. In other words, the more pupils of foreign origin identify with Belgians, the more positive their attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (see Hypothesis 4). Moreover, identification with the receiving society is expected to partially explain the association between ethnic origin and sexual prejudice.

In addition, identification and adaptation strategies of migrants to the receiving society are intrinsically linked to their perception of the surrounding society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Hence, adaptive strategies are influenced by, and interact with, the receiving society's degree of hostility toward migrant groups (Bourhis et al., 1997). The perception of institutional discrimination can lead to the endorsement of reactive acculturation strategies or rejection of the norms of the receiving society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). As tolerance toward lesbians and gay men is seen as normative by the receiving society (Kuyper & Bakker, 2006), this countercultural reaction could be expressed by negative attitudes toward homosexuals. People of foreign origin who experience strong institutional discrimination against their group might express reactive acculturation orientations through the rejection of those social norms of the receiving society and might thus endorse more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. The perception of group-level institutional discrimination is therefore expected to be positively associated with sexual prejudice (see Hypothesis 5). Moreover, the perception of group-level institutional discrimination is expected to partially explain ethnic differences in sexual prejudice. We expect this identification with the receiving society and perceived group-level institutional discrimination to mediate the association of ethnic origin with sexual prejudice (see Hypothesis 6).

Attitudes toward lesbians and gay men can be affected by one's religious education or one's socialization within the family, but schools may also play a significant role in reducing sexual prejudice among youngsters (Pelleriaux, 2003). Hence, analyzing the role of schools may give us a better understanding of the multiple contexts affecting youngsters' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. The role that schools may play on pupils' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men should be nevertheless differentiated: it seems unlikely that schools will have the same influence on traditional sexual prejudice, modern sexual prejudice, and gay civil rights issues. More specifically, as one of the aims of compulsory education is to teach the social norms of the broader society (Gellner, 1983), it is expected that the impact schools exert on pupils' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men will be larger on attitudinal dimensions that are influenced by social norms, such as traditional sexual prejudice and gay civil rights issues rather than on the modern sexual prejudice dimension that is free from normative pressure (see Hypothesis 7).

To summarize our hypotheses concerning ethnic differences in sexual prejudice, we have the following:

Hypothesis 1: Youngsters of foreign origin are expected to hold more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men than Belgians.

Hypothesis 2: Ethnic differences will be larger in the traditional sexual prejudice dimension than in the modern sexual prejudice dimension.

Hypothesis 3: Ethnic differences observed in the gay civil rights dimension are expected to be similar to those observed in the traditional sexual prejudice dimension.

Hypothesis 4: The more youngsters of foreign origin identify with Belgians, the more positive their attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. (This positive association should be independent of a possible association of sexual prejudice with ethnic identification.)

Hypothesis 5: The perception of group-level institutional discrimination will be positively associated with sexual prejudice.

Hypothesis 6: Bidimensional identification variables and perceived group-level institutional discrimination variable will attenuate differences between pupils of foreign descent and Belgian pupils in their attitudes toward lesbians and gay men.

Hypothesis 7: It is expected that the impact schools exert on pupils' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men will be larger on the traditional sexual prejudice and gay civil rights dimension than on the modern sexual prejudice dimension.

The aforementioned hypotheses will be tested while controlling for the effects of other sociodemographic variables that have been shown to influence attitudes toward homosexuals, including gender (Davies, 2004; Herek, 1988; Kite & Whitley, 1996), religion (Negy & Eisenman, 2005; Scheepers, Te Grotenhuis, & van der Slik, 2002; van de Meerendonk & Scheepers, 2004), and SES (Hooghe et al., 2007).

Method

Sample

Seven out of the 19 municipalities of the Brussels region were selected because of their representativeness of the geographic and demographic diversity of Brussels. All secondary schools of the seven municipalities were included in the sample. Seventy of the selected schools took part in the survey

(response rate of 88%). Pupils attending the last year of the secondary education in one of the selected schools were asked to participate in the survey. In total, 3,121 pupils responded to the study in 2007 (response rate of about 70% within the participating schools). The pupils who took part in our survey comprise almost one third of the total school population of Brussels in the last grade of the secondary education. Respondents were on average 18 years old. The questionnaire was introduced to the pupils as a survey on their attitudes and opinions, and the anonymity of their answers was guaranteed. The data were not weighted, and cases with missing values on variables were included in the model.

Statistical Analysis

A multilevel linear multivariate response analysis was performed to assess both the impact of individual characteristics and the influence of the school on pupils' attitudes. Multilevel regression techniques are necessary to accurately analyze our hierarchical sample (pupils aggregated within schools) for two main reasons. First, the parameter estimations of individual characteristics obtained with a multilevel analysis are unaffected by the hierarchical structure of the sample. Second, this statistical technique enables us to estimate (without any atomistic fallacy) the influence of schools on pupils' sexual prejudice. In addition, the use of multiple quantitative responses presents two main advantages over the reduction of the sexual prejudice items into an index. Third, ethnic differences, the mediators, and other sociodemographic variables are allowed to vary according to each sexual prejudice item. This enables a thorough assessment of the variation in ethnic differences in the three sexual prejudice dimensions. Second, the influence of schools on pupils' sexual prejudice can also vary across the eight items. Thus, the effects of individual characteristics, such as ethnic origin, and of the school on sexual prejudice can be compared across the different items in the same model. This methodological approach will provide us with a deeper insight into the dimensions underlying sexual prejudice and their variation through social (and ethnic) groups and schools.

However, the complexity of the multilevel linear multivariate response model had to be reduced to reach convergence. First, the model at the school level was limited to a null model (i.e., without explanatory variables at the school level). Second, no interaction within a level was introduced. Last, the model was built in two steps. In the first step, the effect of a variable was allowed to vary across each of the sexual prejudice items. Then a Wald test (Goldstein, 2003) was performed on the coefficients of the same explanatory

variable on the different items. The multivariate Wald statistic enables us to test whether a set of parameter coefficients is simultaneously equal to zero or whether two or more coefficients are equal to each other. If some of the parameter coefficients were not significantly different from each other, they were grouped into a single coefficient. This procedure allows us to interpret items regrouped according to their common variation across social groups within the model and not according to their a priori content similarities. As the empirical literature on the nature of sexual prejudice and its dimensions among ethnic minorities is far from extensive, this procedure will allow us to shed light on the variation of ethnic differences across different sexual prejudice dimensions without making a priori assumptions on those variations.

Measures

Explanatory variables on the individual level. Female (56.7% of the sample) is the reference category for gender. The education degree of the mother is used as proxy for the SES of pupils and is composed of three categories: low education (at most a primary degree, reference category, 16.5%); moderate education (at most a secondary degree, 35.0%) and high education (a tertiary degree, 41.1%). Five categories represent the religions in which pupils were raised by their parents: none (reference category, 30.0%); Catholicism (31.3%); Islam (27.4%); Protestant (6.1%); and Other (3.5%). The frequency of religious service attendance is composed of three categories: never (reference category, 37.1%); at most once a month (34.0%); at least once a month (26.7%).

Ethnic origin of pupils is measured with the country of birth of the mother. Besides several countries of origin that are well represented in the sample (Democratic Republic of Congo, Turkey, Morocco, and Belgium), the 92 other countries of origin are regrouped by regions following the United Nations Statistics Division classification. Ten categories represent the origin of the mother: Sub-Saharan Africa (except Congo; 3.1%), North Africa (except Morocco; 2.4%), Asia (except Turkey; 2.0%), Middle East (1.2%), East Europe (1.8%), South Europe (5.5%), Morocco (17.7%), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, Belgium's largest former colony; 5.3%), Turkey (4.6%), and Belgium (reference category, composed of pupils whose mother was born in Northwest Europe; 53.7%). The origin category with the fewest number of observations is the Middle East (with 36 cases). The sizes of the origin categories are large enough to obtain good regression estimates (Babayak, 2004). It should be noted that these 10 ethnic origin categories are only rough approximations of the precise ethnic origin of the respondents.

Some of these categories represent indeed very large regions of origin that are composed of multiple ethnic groups.

The so-called 1.5 generation migrants (i.e., foreign-born pupils) did not significantly differ in their sexual prejudice from second-generation migrants (i.e., pupils born in Belgium whose mother was born in a non-Northwest EU country). For the sake of clarity, this distinction will not be presented in the results.

Even if Belgium is a multination state (Kymlicka, 1995), the “receiving society” refers to the state society. Thus, a variable on identification with Belgians will be used as a measure of identification of youngsters of foreign origin with the receiving society. The item measuring identification with the receiving society is composed of two categories: “I have a lot/some/neither-nor things in common with Belgians” (74%) and “I have few or nothing in common with Belgians” (reference category; 23.2%). Belgians can equally score on this variable.

Two categories represent identification with the ethnic community: “I have a lot/some/neither-nor things in common with the people from my country of origin” (reference category; 80.6% of the second-generation migrants) and “I have few or nothing in common with the people from my country of origin” (16.7%). All Belgian respondents were given a missing value for this variable. The variable of perception of group-level institutional discrimination measures the perception of discrimination of the group one identifies with (either people with an immigrant background or Belgians) by the police, the school, employers, and the authorities as well as for social housing. This variable is composed of three categories: no perceived discrimination (reference category; 51.7%), some (38.9%), and a lot (9.2%). Belgian pupils can perceive Belgians as institutionally discriminated against (in favor of the immigrant population). They can thus equally score on this variable.

Explanatory variables on the school level. To explore the influence of schools on the sexual prejudice dimensions, we will limit the school level to a null model without any explanatory variables.

Outcome variables. Sexual prejudice is measured with eight items. These items and some descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 1. The traditional and modern sexual prejudice items were inspired by the scale proposed by Van Wijk et al. (2005). The gay civil rights items refer to the recent evolution of the Belgian legal system with regards to gay civil rights. The items were answered with a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Reverse coding was performed when necessary, so that a score of 0 represents the strongest negative attitude and 4 means the greatest positive attitude toward lesbians and gay men. These attitudinal items are treated as quantitative variables. The internal reliability of the eight sexual prejudice items is high (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Eight Items Measuring Sexual Prejudice

Dimension	Label	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Missing (%)
Traditional sexual prejudice	HomoT1	“Children, in Belgium, should learn that homosexuality is something normal”	1.98	1.41	5.7
	HomoT2	“Lesbians are abnormal”	1.34	1.36	6.0
	HomoT3	“In my opinion, the equality of rights for homosexuals is a threat to Belgian norms and values”	1.57	1.33	6.6
Modern sexual prejudice	HomoM1	“If gay men want to be treated the same way as everybody else, they shouldn’t make such a fuss about their sexual preference”	2.17	1.18	6.2
	HomoM2	“Gay men shouldn’t be so immoderate, ostentatious”	2.23	1.19	6.6
Gay civil rights issues	HomoR1	“Homosexuality and heterosexuality should be treated the same way”	2.25	1.37	6.3
	HomoR2	“It is a good thing that gay marriage is allowed in Belgium”	2.06	1.37	6.0
	HomoR3	“It is a good thing that adoption by gay couple is allowed in Belgium”	1.50	1.38	6.2

Note: $N = 3,121$. The items could be answered with a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Reverse coding was performed when necessary, so that a score of 0 represents the strongest negative attitude and 4 means the greatest positive attitude toward lesbians and gay men.

The construct equivalence of the eight sexual prejudice items was assessed with an exploratory factor analysis carried out separately in each subsample (i.e., in each category of origin) followed by a target rotation procedure and the computation of factorial agreement (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Tucker’s Phi was employed as criterion for factor equivalence. Following (van de

Vijver & Leung, 1997), values higher than .95 point to evidence of factorial similarity. The ethnic categories of pupils were compared to the reference group (pupils whose mother was born in Northwest Europe). The lowest Tucker's Phi values obtained after target rotations on the factors are .97 for the group of pupils whose mother was born in Morocco. These results mean that the items were understood in a similar way by pupils with a migrant background so that further analyses on the items can be performed.

Results

Results on the Individual Level

The parameter coefficients of the sociodemographic explanatory variables on the eight sexual prejudice items at the pupils level are presented in Table 2. School variation is taken into account in this first model.

The direction of the coefficients regarding gender, SES, religion, and religious services attendance corroborate the findings from previous research. That is, being female, less religious, and of higher SES is related to more positive attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. In addition, youngsters of foreign origin hold significantly more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men than Belgian pupils. Most of these ethnic differences are significant, even after controlling for gender, SES, religious denomination, and religious services attendance. These results confirm our first hypothesis: pupils of foreign origin hold more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men than Belgian pupils. These differences vary across the region of origin of the mother and across the sexual prejudice items. The items can be regrouped into three groups affected similarly by ethnic origin. One group comprises HomoT1 and HomoR2, another group is composed of HomoT2, HomoT3, HomoR1, and HomoR3. The two modern sexual prejudice items constitute the last group. Disparities due to the origin of the mother on the modern sexual prejudice items are thus different from the disparities observed on the other sexual prejudice dimensions. The amount of explained variance (R^2) was calculated following the formula suggested by Snijders and Bosker (1999). The sociodemographic explanatory variables on the individual level explain between 19.5% (HomoR3) and 34.2% (HomoR2) of the total variance for the traditional sexual prejudice items and the civil rights issues. However, only 3.3% and 7.9% of the total variance for HomoM1 and HomoM2, respectively, is explained by the sociodemographic characteristics of pupils.

Table 3 shows the regression coefficients on the individual level when the mediating variables are added to the model (i.e., identification with the

Table 2. Sociodemographic Predictors of Sexual Prejudice at Level 1 (Controlling for School Variation)

	HomoT1	HomoT2	HomoT3	HomoM1	HomoM2	HomoR1	HomoR2	HomoR3
Constant	2.57	3.15	2.85	2.17	2.11	2.72	2.63	1.92
Gender								
Male	-0.39**	-0.39**	-0.39**	-0.39**	-0.39**	-0.39**	-0.39**	-0.39**
Education of mother								
Middle	0.19**	0.19**	0.19**	—	—	0.19**	0.19**	0.19**
High	0.23**	0.23**	0.23**	—	—	0.23**	0.23**	0.23**
Religion								
Catholic	-0.17**	—	—	—	—	—	-0.12*	—
Muslim	-0.85**	-0.77**	-0.53**	—	—	-0.61**	-0.84**	-0.59**
Protestants	-0.42**	-0.37**	-0.40**	—	—	-0.42**	-0.52**	-0.29**
Other	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.33*
Religious service attendance								
Occasional	-0.22**	-0.22**	-0.22**	-0.18**	-0.18**	-0.22**	-0.22**	-0.24**
Regular	-0.60**	-0.60**	-0.60**	-0.13*	-0.13*	-0.60**	-0.60**	-0.43**
Origin of mother								
Sub-Saharan Africa	-0.40*	-0.26*	-0.26*	—	—	-0.26*	-0.40**	-0.26*
North Africa	—	—	—	-0.37**	-0.37**	—	—	—
Asia	-0.44**	-0.31*	-0.31*	-0.42**	-0.42**	-0.31*	-0.44**	-0.31*
Middle East	-0.75**	-0.68**	-0.68**	—	—	-0.68**	-0.75**	-0.68**
East EU	-0.44**	—	—	-0.62**	-0.62**	—	-0.44**	—
South EU	-0.27**	-0.20**	-0.20**	-0.23**	-0.23**	-0.20**	-0.27**	-0.20**
Morocco	-0.28**	-0.20*	-0.20*	-0.22**	-0.22**	-0.20*	-0.28**	-0.20*
Democratic Republic of Congo	-0.59**	-0.38**	-0.38**	-0.19*	-0.19*	-0.38**	-0.59**	-0.38**
Turkey	—	—	—	-0.27**	-0.27**	—	—	—
R ²	.301	.272	.229	.033	.079	.244	.342	.195

Note: N = 3,121; Table reports unstandardized regression coefficients. Nonsignificant coefficients are not shown. Reference category of gender = female; reference category of education of mother = low; reference category of religion = none; reference category of religious attendance = never; reference category of origin of mother = Belgium and Northwest EU. R² values were calculated following the formula proposed by Snijders and Bosker (1999, p. 102).
*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 3. Identification With Host Society, Ethnic Identification and Perception of Institutional Discrimination as Mediating Variables for the Sociodemographic Predictors at Level 1 (Controlling for School Variation)

	HomoT1	HomoT2	HomoT3	HomoM1	HomoM2	HomoR1	HomoR2	HomoR3
Constant	2.39	2.98	2.70	1.99	1.93	2.57	2.46	1.77
Origin of mother								
Sub-Saharan Africa	-0.17*	—	—	—	—	—	-0.17*	—
North Africa	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Asia	-0.18*	—	—	—	—	—	-0.18*	—
Middle East	-0.71**	-0.56**	-0.56**	—	—	-0.56**	-0.71**	-0.56**
East EU	-0.24*	—	—	-0.37**	-0.37**	—	-0.24*	—
South EU	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Morocco	-0.10*	—	—	—	—	—	-0.10*	—
Democratic Republic of Congo	-0.43**	-0.22**	-0.22**	—	—	-0.22**	-0.43**	-0.22**
Turkey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Identification								
With Belgians	0.19**	0.19**	0.19**	0.19**	0.19**	0.19**	0.19**	0.19**
Ethnic	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Discrimination								
Some	-0.08*	-0.08*	-0.08*	-0.08*	-0.08*	-0.08*	-0.08*	-0.08*
A lot	-0.28**	-0.28**	-0.28**	-0.28**	-0.28**	-0.28**	-0.28**	-0.28**
R ²	.315	.277	.233	.032	.083	.248	.350	.197

Note: N = 3, 121; Table reports unstandardized regression coefficients. Nonsignificant coefficients are not shown. The coefficients of gender, education of mother, religion, and religious service attendance do not differ from those of Table 1 and are not shown. Reference category of gender = female; reference category of education of mother = low; reference category of religion = none; reference category of religious attendance = never; reference category of origin of mother = Belgium and Northwest EU; reference category of identification with host society = none; reference category of ethnic identification = none ($n = 1,501$); reference category of discrimination = none. R² values were calculated following the formula proposed by Snijders and Bosker (1999, p. 102). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

receiving society, ethnic identification, and perceived group-level institutional discrimination). Note that school variation is controlled in this second model.

Identification with the receiving society has a positive and significant predictive effect on the eight attitudinal items. In other words, pupils of foreign origin who identify with Belgians hold more positive attitudes toward lesbians and gay men than pupils of foreign origin who do not identify with Belgians. These results confirm our fourth hypothesis and the results obtained by Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera (2006). Moreover, the effect of identification with Belgians is uniform across the eight attitudinal items. By contrast, identification with the ethnic community is not significantly related to sexual prejudice. This means that identification with the receiving society varies independently from ethnic identification, as identification with the ethnic community and identification with the receiving society do not show inverse effects. The second mediating variable—perception of group-level institutional discrimination—has a significant negative relationship to the eight attitudinal items. In other words, the more one feels discriminated against by institutions because of group membership, the more negative are one's attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. These results confirm our fifth hypothesis (i.e., the higher the perception of institutional discrimination, the higher the degree of sexual prejudice). The effect of perceived group-level institutional discrimination varies uniformly across the eight sexual prejudice items. The introduction of the mediating variables (i.e., identification with Belgians and perceived group-level institutional discrimination) into the model increases the amount of explained variance at the individual level only by 1%. However, the two mediating variables greatly reduce the differences between pupils of foreign origin and Belgian pupils. Most of the coefficients of the ethnic origin categories in Table 2 become either nonsignificant or less significant in Table 3. This means that the variables—identification with Belgians and perceived group-level institutional discrimination—significantly mediate the association between ethnic origin and sexual prejudice, confirming our sixth hypothesis. Hence, the mediating variables do not reduce much of the unexplained variance on the individual level but rather attenuate differences between pupils of foreign descent and Belgians in their attitudes toward lesbians and gay men.

Sexual prejudice items can be regrouped into three groups regarding their variation across the origin categories. These three groups in Table 3 are identical to those formed in Table 2. HomoT1 and HomoR2 vary in the same way across the origin categories, while both the modern sexual prejudice items show a similar variation across the origin groups. Disparities between the origin categories are identical across the remaining items. By analysing these

groups, our second hypothesis (i.e., ethnic differences are larger on the traditional sexual prejudice dimension than on the modern dimension) is supported. Indeed, only one of the origin categories—pupils whose mother was born in East EU—significantly differs from the attitude of Belgians regarding modern sexual prejudice items. By contrast, between two and five origin categories still differ significantly from the attitudes of Belgians on the traditional sexual prejudice dimension. Thus, ethnic differences are larger on the traditional sexual prejudice dimension than on the modern sexual prejudice dimension.

Moreover, most of the traditional sexual prejudice items (i.e., HomoT items) and civil rights issues (i.e., HomoR items) are similarly affected by the origin of pupils. This partly confirms our third hypothesis (i.e., ethnic differences observed in the gay civil rights dimension are expected to be similar to those observed in the traditional sexual prejudice dimension). By taking the mediating variables into account, only two out of the nine origin categories differ significantly from Belgian pupils on most of those items. However, inconsistent with the hypothesis, the coefficients of six out of the nine origin categories remain significant on HomoT1 and HomoR2. Further analyses are required to understand why the mediating variables did not help reduce ethnic disparities on those two items as much as on the other items.

Results on the School Level

If we focus on the sexual prejudice items and their variance on the school level, one main pattern stands out: schools vary only weakly on the modern sexual prejudice items. As already shown on the individual level, the sociodemographic characteristics of pupils have much less predictive effect on the modern sexual prejudice items (i.e., HomoM1 and HomoM2) than the other items. Interestingly, the same disparities between modern sexual prejudice items and most of the other items are to be found on the school level. Table 4 shows the variance–covariance matrix on the school level once the sociodemographic and the mediating variables are introduced on the individual level. The three items that vary the least across schools are HomoT2 and the modern sexual prejudice items. The modern sexual prejudice items share therefore few similarities with the traditional sexual prejudice items and gay civil rights issues, and this is not only on the individual level but also on the school level.

The items that vary most across schools are the gay civil rights issues (i.e., HomoR items). They all have a similar amount of unexplained variance on the school level when the sociodemographic characteristics of pupils and the mediating variables are taken into account. By contrast, the disparities

Table 4. Variance–Covariance Matrix on the School Level for the Model Comprising the Sociodemographic Predictors and the Mediating Variables at the Individual Level

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. HomoT1	0.104**	0.049**	0.073**	0.033**	0.048**	0.101**	0.088**	0.094**
2. HomoT2		0.040**	0.053**	—	0.033**	0.054**	0.057**	0.051**
3. HomoT3			0.076**	—	0.043**	0.071**	0.082**	0.068**
4. HomoM1				0.039**	0.041**	0.032*	—	0.032*
5. HomoM2					0.051**	0.051**	0.042**	0.046**
6. HomoR1						0.108**	0.085**	0.090**
7. HomoR2							0.094**	0.091**
8. HomoR3								0.099**

Note: $N = 70$. Nonsignificant covariances are not shown.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

between schools vary differently on the three traditional sexual prejudice items (i.e., HomoT items). The intraclass correlations of the model comprising the sociodemographic and mediating variables on the individual level support this interpretation. Hence, only 2.9% and 4% of the total unexplained variance for HomoM1 and HomoM2, respectively, is due to the between-school variation (not shown in table). By contrast, between 6.3% (HomoR3) and 7.5% (HomoR1 and HomoR2) of the total unexplained variance for the civil rights issues is due to between-school disparities. In-between is the intraclass correlation for the traditional sexual prejudice items ranging from 2.9% (HomoT2) to 7.4% (HomoT1).

The influence schools exert on pupils' sexual prejudice appears to vary depending on the measure of sexual prejudice. Schools may have the most impact on pupils' opinions regarding the acceptance of gay civil rights because gay civil rights issues comprise the group of items that vary the most across schools. However, the role schools play seems to have much less effect on the modern sexual prejudice dimension. These results confirm our last hypothesis (Hypothesis 7): the impact of schools is indeed larger on the sexual prejudice dimensions influenced by social norms (i.e., gay civil rights issues and traditional sexual prejudice) than on the dimension that is free from normative pressure (i.e., modern sexual prejudice).

Discussion

This article has hopefully contributed to a more accurate understanding of the relationship of one important sociodemographic variable—ethnic

origin—with sexual prejudice. The attitudes toward lesbians and gay men were examined among an ethnically diverse sample of pupils in Brussels. First, we found significant ethnic differences on sexual prejudice controlling for other sociodemographic variables, confirming the findings of previous studies. Youngsters of foreign origin hold more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men than Belgians. Second, the items representing traditional sexual prejudice and gay civil rights dimensions showed larger ethnic differences than the modern sexual prejudice items. The fact that ethnic differences were larger on the sexual prejudice dimensions influenced by societal normative pressure suggests that a differentiated awareness of normative pressure may explain the ethnic differences on sexual prejudice. According to our results, youngsters of foreign origin seem to be less aware of societal normative pressure surrounding the expression of sexual prejudice compared to Belgians. These disparities may be due to the different cultural contexts in which youngsters of foreign origin were primarily socialized.

The third research issue dealt with variables that might account for the association between the ethnic origin of youngsters and their attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Hence, identification with the receiving society, ethnic identification, and the perception of institutional discrimination were introduced as possible mediators. Most of the disparities on sexual prejudice observed between youngsters of foreign origin and Belgians became either nonsignificant or less significant once those mediating variables were included in the analysis. Identification with the receiving society and experienced institutional discrimination could account for a large part of the ethnic differences, although the association between ethnic identification and sexual prejudice remained nonsignificant. This helps refine the results obtained by Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera's (2006): the effect of identification with the receiving society on sexual prejudice is independent from any identification with the ethnic community. Moreover, our results suggest that identifying with the receiving society is positively associated with the adoption of the social norms of the receiving society, such as those surrounding tolerance toward homosexuals. Second, our results suggest that to a great extent ethnicity is not directly related to sexual prejudice. Identification with the ethnic community does not seemingly affect pupils' sexual prejudice. Moreover, the mediators that significantly influence sexual prejudice concern both youngsters of foreign origin and Belgians.

It is true that youngsters of foreign origin often feel more institutionally discriminated against and also identify less with the majority group than Belgians. These differences in the perception of group-level institutional discrimination and identification with Belgians explained a large part of the

sexual prejudice gap between youngsters of foreign descent and Belgians. One straightforward conclusion can be drawn from these results. Acculturation is a mutual process, in which both the nondominant and the dominant groups are involved (Berry, 2001). The acculturation orientations adopted by the receiving community toward immigrants (Bourhis et al., 1997) could therefore contribute to reducing the sexual prejudice gap between youngsters of foreign origin and youngsters from the majority group. The acculturation orientations of both receiving institutions and the majority group may indeed have an impact on the mediators, namely, identification with the receiving society and the perceived institutional discrimination among youngsters of foreign origin. Hence, as Berry (2001) pointed out, "there is little doubt that there are intimate links between being accepted by others and accepting others" (p. 623). Adequate acculturation orientations of the receiving society could not only benefit ethnic minorities but also indirectly benefit minorities in general. Implementation of adequate integration policies could help reduce the stigmatization of lesbians and gay men among immigrant populations. Thus, although the media routinely suggest that people with a migrant background are highly prejudiced against lesbians and gay men, our results show that cultural explanations for such ethnic differences on sexual prejudice are much too simplistic. The role of social norms, the identification process, and the experience of institutional discrimination because of group membership can, to a great extent, explain why youngsters of foreign origin are more prejudiced against lesbians and gay men than Belgians.

The use of multilevel linear multivariate response analysis in this study was a first attempt to shed some light on the impact schools might exert on diverse dimensions of sexual prejudice. The traditional sexual prejudice items and the gay civil rights issues showed great similarities in their variation across social groups and across schools. Moreover, modern sexual prejudice items remained fairly stable across schools and reacted only weakly to the traditional sociodemographic characteristics of pupils. Given the role some schools are able to play in fighting traditional sexual prejudice and promoting gay rights, one cannot boldly claim that school is a "deeply heterosexist institution" (Buston & Hart, 2001). Overt sexual prejudice might have become politically incorrect; the heterosexist presumption (the idea that heterosexuality is the natural or the most legitimate form of sexuality) is, nevertheless, still omnipresent. This leaves a tremendous challenge for schools with regard to sexually unprejudiced education.

There are some limitations to our research. First, the modern sexual prejudice scale was measured by only two items. Future research should consider more aspects of traditional and modern sexual prejudice. Second,

our analyses are based on a sample from the youth of a highly urbanized and multicultural EU area. Therefore, it is debatable how generalizable our results are to other contexts and geographical areas. Third, the potential of multilevel models for assessing the impact of schools and education on youths' civic attitudes still remains underutilized. For instance, combining longitudinal surveys with hierarchical linear models could shed more light on the relationship between schools and the process of creating more civic attitudes among pupils. A deeper insight in school influence on pupils' civic attitudes might help reduce intolerance toward minorities among future citizens.

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