MULTICULTURALISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN DISCOURSE: KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TALK ABOUT THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN THRACE, GREECE

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Abstract: Cultural diversity poses a challenge to many countries, which implement different policies to promote cultural adaptation. At the same time, people themselves hold different beliefs or ideologies on how cultural adaptation should be achieved. Multiculturalism as both a policy and ideology holds that people's differences should be brought to the fore and cultural difference should be promoted and celebrated in a spirit of equality between different groups. On the other hand, colour-blindness stands for the abolition of difference: all people are the same, equal before the law and state and any differences are part of the private domain. In this article, we examined the 'different category' constructions with respect the Muslim minority of Western Thrace, Greece, that primary school and kindergarten teachers mobilized in a discussion on minority education. These category constructions were associated with the support of different educational practices towards the minority: if the minority was constructed as a religious minority, then multiculturalism was sustained as an educational paradigm; if the minority was constructed in ethnic terms then a colour-blind perspective was adopted arguing that there should not be different provisions for minority members.

Key words: Colour blindness, Education, Multiculturalism, Muslim minority, Rhetorical psychology

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INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism, as a policy in dealing with cultural diversity, has become an important feature of many Western societies, especially in the end of the previous century (Taylor, 1994). As an ideology, which also leads to certain policy options (Berry, 2016), multiculturalism calls for respect and equity between people of different cultural backgrounds who live together in a culturally diverse society. Although it is often under criticism, especially nowadays due to the so called "radicalization" of Muslim populations mainly in Western Europe, for not being able to incorporate some cultural groups such as Muslims in Western countries (Alexander, 2013), multiculturalism still represents the major driving force behind policies aiming to the adaptation of culturally diverse groups, despite occasional laws that seem to be in opposition to it in different countries (like the banning of headscarf in French schools). An important topic in the study of multiculturalism is the issue of identity that people hold and perform or is imposed by others upon them (Andreouli & Chryssochoou, 2015; Taylor, 1994; Verkuyten, 2006). In this article, we examine the way in which kindergarten and primary school teachers construct multiculturalism and the identity of the Muslim minority in Thrace, Greece.

The Muslim minority in Greece is an indigenous historical minority that resulted from the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and the Laussane treaty that ended the Greco-Turkish war in 1924. For many years explicit discriminatory policies were followed by the Greek state, especially in periods where tensions between Greece and Turkey were high. From the 1990s a new policy was established that lifted most of the discriminatory laws and "administrative harassment" (Ηρακλείδης, 1997). Some measures also intended to improve the education of the Muslim minority. At the end of the 1990s an intervention research programme, which ran for several years and is scheduled to continue, was established (Δραγώνα & Φραγκουδάκη, 2008) aiming (among other things) to decrease the high rates of school dropout and to help school teachers deal with cultural diversity in the classroom (Ασκούνη, 2008). In this context examining the way educators construct both multiculturalism and the Muslim minority in discourse and the implications these constructions carry for intergroup relations may provide important insights for minority education.

Multiculturalism

The increased diversity among many societies necessitated the exploration of ways to accommodate cultural difference. In many Western countries multiculturalism consisted the backbone of policies that aimed at promoting harmonious co-existence

among different groups of diverse cultural backgrounds. Of course, the term "multiculturalism" does not imply that there is only one version of it. Many countries seem to follow different variations of multicultural policies (Verkuyten, 2007). According to Berry, Kalin, and Taylor (1977) two basic elements are needed to define multiculturalism: firstly, the existence of cultural diversity within a society and, secondly, equitable participation by all cultural groups that co-exist within that society. In this sense, multiculturalism is, first of all, in a descriptive manner, a demographic fact: in many societies migration, asylum seeking, or the existence of indigenous populations and historical minorities means that cultural diversity is taken for granted. In addition, multiculturalism is an ideology (Berry, 2016) and/or an attitude, according to which people who reside in a culturally diverse country hold (positive) views about diversity. Finally, this multicultural ideology is instantiated in policies adopted by the state, such as actively seeking to promote equal participation by all cultural groups and the promotion of diversity, including programmes of multicultural education at schools, which attempt to incorporate students of diverse cultural background without loss of cultural identity—celebrating their differences. Equality as the other core feature of multiculturalism safeguards that the participation to a common society does not end up in assimilation (Berry, 2016).

Certainly, multiculturalism has also met criticisms. It has been argued that multiculturalism tends to essentialize group differences, which can lead to negative stereotypes, undermining social unity and harmony (Brewer, 1997), while it ignores that cultural groups may undergo changes through time and adopt different strategies of cultural adaptation (Schnapper, 2008). In addition, it often ignores the internal diversity existing within various cultural groups (Barry, 2001) while it may also legitimize illiberal treatment of members of the ingroup, especially of women and children (Okin, 1999). In many public spheres politicians and lay people often articulate arguments about the "failure" of multiculturalism, especially referring to the supposed "inability" of certain cultural groups (mainly Muslims) to adapt to Western societies (Alexander, 2013; van Reekum, Duyvendak, & Bertossi, 2012).

Despite the criticisms and the anti-multiculturalism discourses, indexes monitoring the evolution of multicultural policies, such as the Multicultural Policy Index (MPI), seem to suggest that multicultural policies are still pursued around the globe. Multiculturalism is not the only ideology or policy related to the adaptation of different cultural groups. Assimilation, instead of actively seeking to maintain and celebrate groups differences, asks minority populations to abandon their culture and to "diffuse" to the wider society. Uniformity and homogeneity are preferred over the celebration and accentuation of cultural difference (Guimond, de la Sablonnière, & Nugier, 2014). For reasons of brevity we will not analyse this ideology/policy in detail

as it is not of direct relevance for the present argument. Another ideology that is relevant for cultural diversity is colour-blindness (Guimond, de la Sablonnière, & Nugier, 2014; Ratan & Ambady, 2013).

Colour-blindness

Colour-blindness means that all people within a society are considered as the same and equal, regardless of ethnic origin or cultural background. Although theorists argue that traces of a colour-blind perspective can be found in various periods of the American history, such as judicial decisions (Ratan & Ambady, 2013) or the famous speeches of Martin Luther King (Jones, Dovidio, & Vietze, 2014), its ideological origins can be possibly traced in the Enlightenment and French revolution. Universal human rights were the main proponent of Enlightenment philosophy, which also claimed that all citizens are equal in front of the law (Guimond, de la Sablonnière, & Nugier, 2014).

It has been hotly debated which of the two perspectives yields better results for intergroup relations. Research evidence seems to support the benefits of multiculturalism over colour-blindness. For example, Richeson and Nussbaum (2004), for example, found that exposure to a colour-blind message resulted in greater automatic racial bias. Other research has suggested that putting emphasis on the minimization of group differences reinforces majority dominance and minority marginalization (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009). It has been also found that racial colour-blindness decreases support for affirmative action among low prejudice White participants (Mazzocco, Cooper, & Flint, 2012). Other research findings have yielded a more complex picture. Wolsko, Park, and Judd (2006) argue that colour-blindness may lead to more prejudice but less stereotyping, while a multicultural perspective may also lead to perceive the out-group more positively (see also Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). Finally, some researchers suggest that in high conflict situations colour-blindness may reduce out-group bias (Apfelbaum, Norton, & Sommers, 2012).

The above mixed findings suggest that it is not easy to discern which of the two approaches is more beneficial for improving intergroup relations and an eclectic approach, which combines elements of both, might be a more fruitful approach (Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). People may hold a mix of multicultural and colour-blind beliefs or ideologies on intergroup relations rather than clear-cut categories of beliefs or ideologies (Rattan & Ambady, 2013). In addition, examining these ideologies or beliefs in an abstract manner does not say much about how these ideologies are instantiated and negotiated in specific political and social contexts (Guimond, de la Sablonnière, & Nugier, 2014). Depending on the historical relations

between countries, for example, certain intergroup ideologies and policies may be followed for certain minorities but in relation to other minority groups a different set of principles may apply (Verkuyten, 2007). In this article, we examined what type of beliefs/ideologies participants mobilized in relation to the Muslim minority in Thrace and, subsequently, the policies they may favour, especially in relation to the education policies targeting the minority children.

Identity

Most of the research and theory on cultural diversity and cultural adaptation is closely linked to issues of identity. After all, much of the ongoing research is about how people understand their place in society in relation to others, that is, the social identities people assume (Andreouli & Chryssochoou, 2015; Crys., 2000; Verkuyten, 2007). According to Social Identity Theory (SIT, Tajfel, 1981) and Self-Categorization Theory (SCT, Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), when we categorize ourselves in terms of groups, we develop common understandings about the identity we share, which has a collective emotional significance and also leads to a collective behaviour. SCT though argues that the process of categorization is not passive. The social context, often understood as the other social categories that are present, play an important role in the way we understand these categories and the meaning they carry. People actively examine whether the categorizations they impose match the social knowledge they have about categories (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). This postulate has important ramifications for studying diversity: cultural adaptation and the study of intergroup relations cannot be studied in abstract but in concrete social settings. Therefore, to understand the outcome of any social encounter we need to pay attention to specific social encounters in various social milieus.

What has also been argued is that social identities do not only involve a process of ascribing meaning to social situations but their construction aims at altering social relations and provide people a basis for action (Chryssochoou, 2000; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Reicher and Hopkins (2001), following the seminal work of Billig (1996) on argumentation, giving it a Social Identity spin, argue that different constructions of identities are used to counter alternative constructions and to mobilize people towards specific ends. Specifically, in relation to the Muslim minority of Thrace there is research demonstrating the different category labels ascribed to the minority and the possible effects of these categorizations (Figgou & Condor, 2007). For example, often the category "Turk" was treated as inappropriate because it excluded them from the category "Greek citizen". It could be argued that such a

category construction aimed at a colour-blind perspective to diversity. On other instances, the category "Greek Muslims" was objected on the grounds that it contradicted their self-identification as "Turks". In any case, the categories "ethnic Turk" and "Greek citizen" were treated as incompatible. Finally, the category "Muslim minority" was on some instances objected on the basis that it obscured the different ethnic groups that comprise the minority. This last construction could be argued that it could be used to rhetorically "divide and rule" the minority which was constructed as an amalgam of different ethnic groups, implying thus that different policies should be implemented towards it. In this article, we are examining whether the different constructions of the minority implied different policies towards it and different approaches to deal with diversity.

Background to the Study

The Muslim minority in Greek Thrace is an officially recognized minority whose presence dates back to the 14th century and to the establishment of the Ottoman Empire in the area (Βογιατζής, 1998). The treaty of Lausanne, which was signed in 1923 in the aftermath of the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922, exempted the Muslim populations of Thrace (and the Orthodox Christians of Istanbul accordingly) from the exchange of population that was provided in the agreement. The exchange of populations took place to create ethnically homogeneous populations. The estimated number of the Muslim population in Greek Thrace ranges from around 80.000 (Μαυρομμάτης, 2005) to 120.000 (Ασημακοπούλου, 2002). Most of them live in the prefecture of Xanthi and Rodopi. The minority comprises three different linguistic groups: Turkish-speakers, Pomak-speakers (a Slavic idiom) and Romani-speakers[1]. Due to agreements signed between Greece and Turkey in relation to the education of the Minority, the vast majority of the Minority population is proficient in Turkish, independently of their mother tongue. According to Μαυρομμάτης (2005), today most of the Muslim population has Turkish national consciousness.

The designation of the minority as Muslim (and Christian accordingly) in the treaty of Lausanne is not coincidental. Both Greece and Turkey wanted to keep minorities within their territories in an ante-nationalism condition (Μαυρομμάτης, 2005).

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[1] The division into linguistic groups is preferred here to the division into "ethnic" groups. The latter has been often promoted by the Greek state to stress the internal division of the minority, in an attempt to put a bulwark to the influence Turkey excreted in the area, which has led most of the people of the minority to define themselves as Turks (Μαυρομμάτης, 2008).

Minority members were (and are) free to practice their religion and have special provisions in terms of their education; moreover, as Greek citizens hold electoral rights. Nevertheless, ethnic minorities have been regarded a threat to national homogeneity. As it can be easily concluded, the stance of the Greek state in relation to the minority depended on the evolution of the Greek-Turkish relations. Both Greek and Turkish nationalisms tried to approach, enlist and use the minority for their own purposes (Μαυρομμάτης, 2005). At times of Greek-Turkish rapprochement favourable measures were taken for the minority. In 1951 the Greek state signed an agreement with Turkey handing over part of its responsibilities for the education of the minority, while at times of conflict such as the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus repercussions followed. During the 1980s members of the minority were persecuted and convicted for referring to the minority as "Turkish" (Anagnostou, 2001; Figgou & Condor, 2007). In addition, in the 1970s and 1980s the Greek state and local Greek officials refrained from giving minority members permits that would enable them to engage in various economic activities (Stavros, 1996).

A change took place in the 1990s when the Greek state started to follow a different policy towards the minority aiming at "equality before the law". This was partly due to the criticisms by international organizations because of the treatment of minorities in Greece but also due to the realization that the unfair treatment of the minority favoured the self-identification of Pomak-speakers as Turks (Ηρακλείδης, 1997).

The education of the Muslim minority of Thrace is regulated by the Lausanne treaty and various bilateral agreements between Greece and Turkey (Μπαλτσιώτης & Τσιτσελίκης, 2008). In so far as primary education is concerned, the minority's children have the opportunity to study at the bicultural schools that operate in the area (they number around 150 schools) (Μαυρομμάτης, 2005; Δραγώνα & Φραγκουδάκη, 2008). Within these schools the pupils follow a bilingual curriculum where half modules are taught in Turkish and the other half in Greek. The Turkish modules are being taught with the assistance of textbooks that are provided by the Turkish side and approved by the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. The textbooks used for the Greek modules till the beginning of 2000 proved to be quite ineffective for pupils whose mother tongue is not Greek. The low competence in Greek by Muslim children, especially in areas where there are homogeneous Muslim populations, along with inefficiency of the Greek curriculum resulted in high school dropout for minority pupils (Ασκούνη, 2008; Δραγώνα & Φραγκουδάκη, 2008).

Since 1997 and for several years, an intervention research programme which aimed at improving the education of the Muslim minority in Thrace took place. In addition, since 1996 a new bill passed which established intercultural education as

one of the aims of the Greek educational system. What's more, in many university departments that train primary school teachers and kindergarten teachers emphasis is placed on multicultural education. Nevertheless, at the same time Greek education and curricula remain highly ethnocentric and inappropriate for a multicultural audience (Fass, 2011; Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2011) and often schoolteachers consider cultural difference as a hindrance to the pupils' academic career (Φίγγου, Μποζατζής, & Τσονίδης, 2008). The aim of the present study was to examine the way educators construct the category "Muslim minority of Thrace", within an interview context relating to its education. Our interest was to scrutinize the different argumentative lines deployed and the rhetorical ends which the invocation of the different category constructions seem to serve.

METHOD

Research site and participants

The research took place in Komotini, the biggest town in the prefecture of Rodopi, where the majority of the Muslim minority resides, representing 55% of the minority's population (Figgou & Condor, 2007). Participants were 18 people, 5 men, all primary school teachers[2], 13 women, of which 4 primary school teachers and 9 kindergarten teachers. The age of participants spanned from 28 to 54 years and their experience as educators ranged from 2 to 34 years.

Some of the participants were acquaintances of the second author, primary school and kindergarten teachers who work in the prefecture of Rodopi. Snowballing was also employed to expand the initial sample.

Data collection and analytic procedure

A semi-structured interview protocol was employed to co-construct the data with the participants. The interview was framed as an interview about the participant's career and experience in the education section. When participants referred (most of the times unprompted) about the particularities of the area they were asked questions about their experience with minority children, whether pupil's culture should be brought to the fore, whether certain measures should be taken regarding national commemorations, etc.

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[2] As in most countries, in Greece the vast majority of early childhood educators are women.

Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed focussing on the content; thus, most paralinguistic elements were omitted. Initially a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) was employed to discern the basic themes or categories participants used to account for the cultural "otherness" of their pupils and how this affected schooling, both as a social environment and also as an educational procedure. From the start, as we would have expected, it was evident that different ways to categorize the minority were employed and these categorizations in turn affected the policies educators favoured in respect to the minority's education. The main findings, in terms of themes, were the following: the role of language in inhibiting or assisting integration in school, school dropout as result of a different cultural background, amiable or unfriendly relations between Muslim minority and the majority, the acceptance of the minority's religious and cultural identity within school, and how national commemorations can be celebrated taking account of the different cultural background of the minority. The present analysis focused on the last two themes.

The analysis of the data followed the principles of rhetorical psychology (e.g., Baka & Dikaiou, 2011) as outlined by Billig (1996). Specifically, in terms of the categories employed it is understood that categories can be sites of contestation where different arguments collide. There is often a clash over which instances or essences belong to a certain category. Every construction of a category is conceived of as an argument that may invoke its counterargument. Moreover, people do not only categorize: often they argue that specific instances are special cases that do not fall into a specific category, a process Billig (1996) named 'particularization'. In this way categories are always open to contestation. What is also important is that different constructions of categories usually declare or sometimes imply a certain position towards social issues. Reicher and Hopkins (2001), following Billig, add another important dimension to category construction: categories are strategically constructed to mobilize people towards certain political actions. In our case we examined whether different categorizations of the minority implied different educational policies, either of a multicultural perspective or one that favours colour-blindness. In previous research constructions of immigrants as refugees who enter a society without any personal choice, were often accompanied by favourable views on multiculturalism and welfare, while the opposite was the case when immigrants were constructed as entering a society on their own free will (Verkuyten, 2005). We expand on the above-mentioned research by examining specifically how categorizations may imply different educational practices in the classroom.

Thematic analysis

The extracts presented below represent the main themes in relation to the minority's culture and whether it should be represented within the school. Most of the participants were in favour of bringing elements of the minority's culture in school, to facilitate the minority's education. At the same time when participants were asked about national commemorations, they argued that since the minority's national identity is Greek, they should follow suit and participate just like the majority.

The first extract is from an interview with a primary school teacher aged 48. He is from Komotini and he has been teaching in a school in the same town. Before the following extract, which is from the beginning of the interview, he was talking about his career in public schools. At that stage, the second author, who conducted the interview, asked him how it is different to teach in the prefecture of Rodopi.

Extract 1

> *Interviewer:* How is it for someone to teach here in Rodopi?
> *Participant:* Certainly, there are particularities, but I believe that having such a large population of immigrants in Greece I believe this happens in most schools in Greece. Everywhere, in almost every school in Greece there are foreign pupils, palinostountes, there is a, an interculturality now in the classrooms, so I do not see that there is much of a difference between Rodopi and the schools in the rest of Greece.

In the beginning of the extract the participant is asked about teaching in Rodopi. Although such a question may appear simple and straightforward, given the history of intergroup relations in the area, which is common knowledge between interviewer and participant, the question can be quite challenging since it requires participants to position themselves towards a delicate topic. The participant constructs schools in Rodopi as prototypically multicultural, placing them in a common category as the rest of the Greek schools. This commonality is constructed through the term "interculturality". At the same time, though, by presenting the education of the Muslim minority of Thrace as a general example of intercultural education, the participant tackles the problem of having to account for the specific educational issues of the Muslim minority. Quite ironically, the whole context of intergroup relations can be easily omitted if the general category intercultural education is applied to the Muslim minority of Thrace.

The next two extracts are from an interview with a woman school teacher, 32 years old, who worked in Komotini for 10 years.

Before the following extracts the interview revolved around the issue of national commemorations.

Extract 2

> *Interviewer:* Do you think there should be a different provision for those children who have a different cultural identity?
> *Participant:* Regarding what? Commemorations?
> *Interviewer:* Yes.
> *Participant:* I don't think so. It is not something that relates to their religion. It is something, an event that happened in the country they were born and raised and I believe they should know the history of the country they were born and raised. It is a different thing the religious culture, which we have to respect, and a different thing the history of a country in which they live and practice. I believe it is good to know the national commemorations and to participate.

The question posed relates to national commemorations. Since one of the goals of schooling is to instil a sense of national identity the question may lead the interviewee to account for the need of participation to national commemorations. In that respect, she draws a distinction between religious and ethnic categories. While religious difference should be respected and different arrangements in that respect should be made, with regards to national identities minority children are categorized as an ingroup and thus they should be treated equals, without having different provisions. It is quite interesting that the ingroup is not constructed explicitly, since the word "Greek" or "Greece" is not referred, but banal (Billig, 1995) references to the national category are made (of the country). In this way, the participant avoids using the names of delicate ethnic categories which were at clash for many years.

The participant in this extract seems to differentiate between religious and ethnic categories. While for the first category a differential treatment is accepted, which could be said that it is apt for multicultural education, when the minority pupils are categorized in ethnic terms they are categorized as an ingroup and thus a colour-blind perspective is prioritized.

The following extract is from the same interview. At this point the discussion evolved around the issue of cultural difference at the school.

Extract 3

> *Interviewer:* Do you think that transferring cultural elements in schools helps? If yes which ones?
> *Participant:* I believe that yes, it would be nice to discuss with children their own cultural, their culture. It makes them feel more at home in school, and they bring a piece of home at school according to me. I urge them many many times to tell me

things, what they do in specific religious festivals and holidays, and I have designed a programme to implement for these children. There are no borders, what we can find in their culture, we can find in our culture as well. We will implement a programme of Turkish literature, where there are some poems, like the lullaby of Hikmet, which has been translated by Ritsos. We will have a lesson about that both in Turkish and in Greek, with the assistance of the Turkish-speaking teacher and under my urge. (...) I am interested in fostering this culture. When they tell me their stuff I will try to see if they match with ours. In Kurban Bairami they slaughter a lamp, for us it just like Easter, for me it is important to show that we are not that different, the only difference is their religion and culture, the language is, these children are bilingual so it is something good, I am interested in this thing.

The interviewer asks a question relating to whether pupils' culture should be represented at school. Since intercultural education is an official educational policy, the question may trigger a normative concern to demonstrate her adequacy as an educator. We would like to focus on three different elements in this extract. Firstly, while the participant acknowledges and celebrates religious difference at school constructing difference in religious terms there is a slippage between religious and ethnic categories. In relation to the literature programme explicitly the word "Turkish" is referred. This ambivalence to an extent is expected, since on the one hand the official Greek policy recognizes the minority as a religious one, but on the other hand at the same time most of the minority seem to have a Turkish ethnic identity and the minority is often caught in a tug-of-war between Greece and Turkey.

The second element we would like to stress is that the acceptance of difference and the implementation of multiculturalism relates mainly to innocuous manifestations such as literature, religious celebrations and religious feasts. This serves to demonstrate that the participant respects the basic principles of multiculturalism, but at the same time more thorny issues of intergroup relations remains unaddressed. Of course, it could be debated whether such issues can be discussed at school with young children.

Thirdly, while bringing different cultural elements in school is acceptable, the aim of this practice is to demonstrate that pupils are not that different irrespective of their cultural background. This seems to imply, for the speaker, that cultural difference is potentially problematic, especially in the specific context.

The next two extracts are from an interview with a 32-year-old kindergarten teacher who lives and works in the city of Komotini the last six years. Before this extract the discussion evolved around the issue of school religious celebrations.

Extract 4

> *Interviewer:* In relation to national commemorations, e::h, do you believe that there should be a different provision for groups of different cultural identity?
> *Participant:* No. Let me tell you why. Because we live in Greece, OK? I do not accept the change of status quo, just because let's say I have Muslims to do what with them? Now that we talk about Muslims. Or if I had Russian pupils, what, what shall I do? No, we live in Greece we will go forward according to what our ministry says, I just try to modify it so that I can include these children to the commemoration. I will do it.
> *Interviewer:* Yes.
> *Participant:* Are they going to tell me no? What will happen next?
> *Interviewer:* Are there no guidelines from someone?
> *Participant:* No, and let me tell you something. That's better. What can they possibly tell me to do within a Greek school? I do not accept for example another, another language to be heard within a Greek school. (...) That is what I think. Me yes, it is my responsibility, I will not go to a Muslim child to tell him/her about Jesus Christ and Virgin Marry, I will respect his/her religion. Just like me if I was living in Turkey I wouldn't want them to do the same to me.

In the above extract the participant picking on the question posed by the interviewer adopts a national frame of reference. She frames the school as Greek but does not adopt a similar (national) category for Muslim children. Not only she does not accept any change in relation to national commemorations but she also argues that the status quo that gives predominance to Greek culture should not change. By declaring that this should be the case irrespective of the ethnic groups that comprise the classroom she avoids the stigma of prejudice regarding the specific group. Towards the avoidance of the stigma of prejudice also works the assertion that she tries to include minority children to the commemorations by altering them and that religious difference is respected. The extract ends by an argument of analogy: if the participant was living in Turkey she would not want to be indoctrinated to a different religion. Apart from dealing with the stigma of prejudice this argument helped the participant to deal with another stake: presenting herself as an adequate and skilled educator who carries out her job quite efficiently.

    In this extract, the participant argues for the predominance of Greek culture and the maintenance of the existing status quo in schools. This is to an extent contingent upon a national reading of the frame of reference: these comments are made when the interviewer poses a question about different provisions in national commemorations. Regarding religion, the differential treatment of Muslims is accepted.

The following extract is from the same interview. At this stage of the interview the interviewer and the participant were discussing which language pupils use at school and what cultural element they bring there and whether teachers encourage pupils to do so.

Extract 5

> *Interviewer:* Do you think the educators should take this kind of initiatives?
>
> *Participant:* Look, I believe it helps, because these children start to loosen up, and their self-esteem gets higher, they feel more self-assured, they are very happy. But I am telling you this should be implemented as a curriculum. It has to start from the educator, because on its own, the child is five years old, it can't be done. For example, it worked well last year. They liked it a lot, the Muslim children, they brought their toys, their fairytales, truth be told they are an element of their civilization. What food they liked, which on many occasions we possibly did not have these foods, it was very nice. Because this is how they learn and they get to know each other. This year we do not implement this, we will see whether we will implement it during the schoolyear. But I am telling you again, it needs to start by the educator. It is difficult to start on its own. They are quite young of course.

The interviewer poses a question regarding whether educators in Rodopi should bring cultural elements of the Muslim minority at schools. The word "initiatives" that the interviewer uses, allows the participant to present herself as an active educator who does not only follow the official curriculum, but also introduces different educational practices to deal with cultural diversity. There are three aspects in this extract we would like to refer to. Firstly, the initiative for the incorporation of Muslim culture to the curriculum is attributed to the teacher. With this formulation, she presents herself as non-prejudiced, accepting cultural difference, but also as an active and competent educator. Secondly, the cultural elements children bring at school are a folklore type of culture, namely, toys, fairy tales and food. Other cultural elements that could potentially problematize intergroup relations are left aside. Certainly, it is questionable whether a different approach can be applicable to young children—one that touches upon so difficult issues; but approaches such as anti-racist education argue that such an approach may be beneficial. Finally, difference is accepted in so far as it is framed in religious terms.

DISCUSSION

In this article, we tried to unravel some of the complexities of cultural adaptation, contributing to the discussion on multiculturalism and colour-blindness. Although in the past the two forms of adaptation have been treated as two different things researchers have claimed that in different social and historical settings mixed policies and ideologies may be followed towards different social groups (Guimond, de la Sablonnière, & Nugier, 2014; Verkuyten, 2007). In our research, following a rhetorical psychology approach, we focused on the Muslim minority of Thrace, a historical minority in Greece, and more specifically on the way in which primary school and kindergarten teachers construct cultural adaptation and educational practice in a multicultural environment. Particular attention was paid on the different categorizations participants mobilized regarding the Muslim minority and the different educational policies these seemed to imply. For some social psychologists, identity is not seen as a passive matching to a category but an active process aiming at social action (Chryssochoou, 2000; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

The way participants categorized the Muslim minority seemed to play an important role in promoting either a multicultural or a colour-blind perspective in schools. When the minority was constructed in religious terms, as its name indicates, participants argued that bringing their culture at school was something they welcomed and argued that it would help to make them feel more comfortable. Of course, most of these cultural elements revealed a folklore conceptualization of culture: food, religious festivals, fairytales and occasionally language. Needless to say, all these cultural features would not be used to question the status of intergroup relations. Although to an extent such an approach is understandable in young children, recent approaches to intercultural education such as anti-racist education argues that group differences should be explicitly addressed.

When the minority was framed in ethnic terms, in relation to national commemorations, a colour-blind perspective was preferred by participants. Participants occasionally used banal national terms (they live here) or included them in the Greek national category to argue that there should not be different provisions for Muslim pupils in national commemorations. Although this inclusion for some social psychologists may have beneficial outcomes for reducing prejudice (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005) this colour-blind perspective means often the abandonment of policies promoting the welfare of minority groups and thus the maintenance of an unequal status quo. Finally, in some instances participants argued that the situation in Thrace is no different to any school in Greece where there are large immigrant populations. In this way participants constructed the Muslim minority as another

instance of multiculturalism avoiding in this way to address the thorny issue of intergroup relations between Greek majority and the Muslim minority.

It should be acknowledged that the interview context and the question mobilized by the interviewer also played an important role during the interaction and possibly introduced different stakes in talk. Educators apart from dealing with the dilemma of prejudice, they had to manage their professional identities: They had to present themselves as competent educators who, on the one hand, deal successfully with cultural diversity in school (since intercultural education is an official policy), while on the other they also infuse a sense of national consciousness on students (which is also one of the aims of the curriculum).

The above findings to an extent reflect the way official Greek policy has treated the issue of the Muslim minority: it is recognized as a religious minority and any attempt to be recognized as an ethnic one was resisted by the Greek state. Nevertheless, these ideological resources can be flexibly used in different rhetorical contexts. This also indicates the interplay between official policies and educational policies in practice: the categorization of the Muslim minority in religious terms was accepted and the educators actively promoted a form of multiculturalism, bringing the pupils' culture to the fore, while its categorization in ethnic terms was resisted claiming that they belong to the national ingroup. In the last case, a colour-blind perspective was favoured.

This research aimed at contributing to the discussion on the different forms of cultural adaptation and how these relate to different educational policies, following a qualitative approach. Such an approach acknowledges that the data is the outcome of a particular interaction within a certain context and, as a result, generalization of results is difficult. In essence, qualitative analysis does not aim at that. Nevertheless, it pinpoints to the ideological resources educators may mobilize, and, hopefully, in a reflexive way it can be used to inform educational practice.

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