

Pupils' claims of teacher racism

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Pupils' definitions of teacher racism

1. Humiliate, insult or show a general disrespect to such pupils.
2. Apply stricter or less favourable standards in evaluating classroom-behaviour or test-related performance.
3. Accuse these pupils wrongly for being deviant.
4. Punish such pupils more frequently or strictly, or reward these pupils less or not as well compared to other pupils.
5. Are not willing to help such pupils as much as others.
6. Expect less from such pupils than they consider themselves capable.
7. Are not neutral in solving conflicts between these pupils and other pupils, but instead take sides (usually) on the basis of their own colour, culture or national descent.

Ambiguous meaning of resources indicative of racism

- **PS:** “Do you think that teachers are sometimes racist to pupils?”
- **HIGHFLY:** “Em yes, like Mr. Gerrard for example, he sometimes tells a racist joke, to the Moroccans, but yeah, they themselves, Turks and Moroccans, start to insult each other... really racist! I think that they all just say that as a joke, not seriously intended as racist”
- (...)
- **MARLEY:** “I think they just do that as a joke...”
- **PS:** “And you Tijn, do you think that there are teachers who are, em, racist...?”
- **TIJL:** “Like Mr. Gerrard, but like the others, I just think he means it as a joke... but I do think that he sometimes means what he says, like a couple of days before, he said like ‘what are you doing here?!’ like that and, ‘are you really Belgian?! Don’t you have a Turkish passport?!’, things like that, like a bit ambiguous, so, but apart from that...”

Pupil group interview 5VC– *Riverside* January 2002, p.5: Four Flemish boys.

Ambiguous meaning of resources indicative of racism

- **PS:** “(...) Are there teachers that you think don’t treat you correctly?”
- (...)
- **PAKI:** “Ah yes, Gerrard, but no, I don’t like it that he tells these jokes, like you know, about foreigners, but come on, these jokes are like you know... like with racist intentions...”
- **CHAMP:** “Anyway, he is always joking to the Turkish pupils (laughs)!”
- **SHAKUR:** “Moroccans are dangerous (laughs)!”
- **MOISIU:** “He always says... to Turks he is always a bit, a little bit, but he doesn’t show it...”
- **PAKI:** “He doesn’t want to show it, he says it in a different way, like with jokes and all that, but he doesn’t want to show it, because you know...”

Pupil group interview 5VC– *Riverside* January 2002, pp.6-7: Three Moroccan boys and one Albanian boy.

Ambiguous meaning of resources indicative of racism

- **ASHLE:** “Yeah, there was this lady, (name teacher) and ah, she was just the worst teacher, I have never seen anyone as bad as her, (...). But really bad you know, she was very racist, she was really very, you could really see that very well!”
- **UNIDENTIFIED:** “Yeah.”
- **PS:** “And how could you see that?”
- **ASHLE:** “Like...”
- **AISHA:** “Like the way she looks at you?”
- **ASHLE:** “Yeah, just the way she looks at you, like ‘if you can’t do it, well I don’t care!’(...)”

**Pupil group interview 3EML/EM – *Mountain High* May 2002, p.9:
Three Turkish and three Moroccan girls.**

Ambiguous meaning of resources indicative of racism

- **UITEKOP:** “Like Giovanni just said, like really emphasising ‘foreigners’, I also had teachers in my former school who really picked on foreigners.”
- **PS:** “And how does that go, what are they saying or what are they doing?”
- **UITEKOP:** “Like em, most of the time they give specific remarks that half the class don’t understand, but if you think about them a little bit more, then you can see that they are actually insulting pupils or making insinuations... yeah, like really humiliating these people!”

Pupil group interview 3TIS – *Riverside* October 2001, p.4: Four Flemish boys.

Ambiguous meaning of resources indicative of racism

- **PS:** “And now you talk about differences in expectations... but do you also see sometimes like racist comments or...”
- **YILDIZ:** “Teachers tend to be more diplomatic with their comments. Although there are certain explicit comments, not directly in to race, they are implicit ones which actually do... QUESTION the ability of some people because of their race. It does happen, but as I said, because it is implicit, you can't take the comment and complain, because it won't work because it is implicit.”

Pupil group interview 10LF – *Park Lane* March 2002, p.6: One Turkish boy, one Syrian boy, one Syrian girl, one Chinese boy and one African-Caribbean girl.

Ambiguous meaning of resources indicative of racism

- Another incident, involving Twist (a black pupil) and Mr. Alonso shows how something is sometimes wrongly perceived as an expression of racism. Twist asked if he could wash his hands, Mr. Alonso suspected the pupil of trying to sneak out because he hadn't been working very hard. So, Mr. Alonso asked the pupil if he could show his hands, the pupil showed his clean hands and Mr. Alonso responded irritated: 'But your hands are not black (*zwart*), they are white! (*Zwart* in Dutch can mean both 'dirty' and the colour 'black'). The boy felt very insulted and shouted 'You racist!' to the teacher.

Fieldnotes 24/05/02 *Riverside* – 3V and 5VC in workshop car-mechanics, p.56.

Contradictory meaning of resources indicative of racism

- After introducing myself and answering questions from pupils in 5VC who were waiting outside the classroom, Turkish and Moroccan pupils started teasing each other by making racist-jokes (...). One Turkish guy, for example, told me out of the blue that ‘Moroccan guys do it with camels!’. One of the Moroccan guys counter-attacked and asked me: ‘When are you allowed to spit on a Turkish woman’s face?’. When I replied that I didn’t know, the Moroccan boy continued: ‘When their moustache is on fire!’.

Fieldnotes 08/01/02 *Riverside* – 5VC at playground in between two lessons, p.6.

Contradictory meaning of resources indicative of racism

- Mr. Gerrard combines strictness with a sense of ‘humour’. For example, when an immigrant pupil insults him for being an asshole (*klootzak*), he immediately turns to the pupil and says: “For you black-ass (*zwartzak*), it’s SIR asshole, understood!?!”.

(Fieldnotes 14/01/02 *Riverside* – 5VC in workshop car-mechanics, Mr. Gerrard, p.15)

Contradictory meaning of resources indicative of racism

- **MR. GERRARD:** “When you come here with your girlfriend, you won’t ask me ‘how to do it?’, will you?”
- **TATU:** “I don’t have a girlfriend Sir... I have a friend!”
- **OTHER PUPILS:** “(laughing)”
- **MR. GERRARD:** “Oh, but then I definitely have to be careful!”
- **EVERYBODY:** (laughing)

(Fieldnotes 10/01/02 *Riverside* – 5VC during technical drawing, Mr. Gerrard, p.14)

Selective activation of resources indicative of racism

- Mr. Gerrard started talking about the fact that they refuse to speak Dutch to each other: “In the classroom, you should have a look, they all speak Turkish there, and I may reprimand them a hundred times. And sometimes, like yesterday, it all gets too much and I explode, and then I say things like ‘you black ass!’ (*Gij zwartzak*), because they have dark hair you know (raises shoulders)... but who is racist? Them, because they don’t respect me!”.

Fieldnotes 07/01/02 *Riverside* – 5VC in workshop car-mechanics, p.5.

Selective activation of resources indicative of racism

- **Context:** Mr. Gerrard is irritated because some Turkish pupils communicate in Turkish and ask the teacher to go slower, and to translate words in Dutch.
- **MR. GERRARD:** “If you think that Europe will become like Turkey... it won’t happen!”
- **HAGI:** “Yes, but I want to copy...”
- **PEPSI:** “Yes, why do you always have to talk about Turkey!?!”
- **MR. GERRARD:** “Hagi is a Turk, isn’t he?!”
- **HAGI:** “(serious) No, I am Belgian!”
- **MR. GERRARD:** “You don’t behave like a Belgian!”
- **HAGI:** (Keeps on talking about his map and that he cannot follow the teacher.)
- **CIMI:** (Says something in Turkish to Hagi.)
- **MR. GERRARD:** (Angry because Cimi talks in Turkish.) “Cimi, I’ve got a job for you... they need monkeys in the zoo of Antwerp!”

Fieldnotes 17/02/02 *Riverside* – 5VC during theory lessons auto-mechanics in workshop, pp.31-32.

Selective activation of resources indicative of racism

- **SHAKUR:** “There are foreigners who are very quick in saying ‘you are a racist, you are a racist’. There are like some teachers or pupils who insult you sometimes, who laugh with you, yeah, foreigners are quick to say that they are racist, but it can just be that they, you know, hate you, but not ALL the foreigners [...]”

Pupil group interview 5VC– *Riverside* January 2002, p.9: Three Moroccan boys and one Bosnian boy.

Selective activation of resources indicative of racism

- Cimi and his (unfamiliar) friend told me spontaneously: “Gerrard, he’s a racist, isn’t he!?!”. I asked Cimi to tell me what he thought of Gerrard and he said: “You have to ask Jimmiboy!” (probably not feeling able to explain it to me in Dutch properly). Jimmiboy said (seriously): “I don’t have any problem with Gerrard, if you do your work well, you don’t have any problems with Gerrard”.

Fieldnotes 17/05/02 *Riverside* – 5VC during break-time on playground, p.53.

Activation of different, compensating resources

- (Tatu's mobile telephone starts ringing)
- **MR. WHITEBREAD:** "One more time and I will take it away from you, and you can collect it at the Reception!"
- (5 minutes later: Tatu's mobile telephone starts ringing again)
- **MR. WHITEBREAD:** "Yeah, but I mean it you know, normally I would take it away from you right now... you can call me then a racist, but I warned you... and besides, you're not allowed to have a mobile in the classroom!"
- **THE LEGEND:** "No Sir, you're not a racist, you're the best teacher!"

(Fieldnotes 24/01/02/ *Riverside* –5VC during Electricity, p.42)

Activation of different, compensating resources

- **PS:** “So who do you think is a good teacher? Yes, The Legend?”
- **THE LEGEND:** “I know whom, Mr. Dudek and Gerrard are good teachers, because they make a lot of jokes, they also don’t give their lessons constantly at the same pace, it’s always jokes you know! It is more easy to learn your lesson in such a way, it’s easy to follow the lesson...”
- (...)
- **PS:** “Do you think that some teachers discriminate against certain groups of pupils?”
- **(no response)**
- **PS:** “Or do you think that some teachers are racist?”
- **THE LEGEND:** “In specific areas, like Mr. Gerrard, he sometimes behaves racist.”
- **PS:** “And how does he do that?”
- **THE LEGEND:** “He gives like little insults, like ‘Look at those Turkish people with their caravan, hundreds of children at the back’... You know, you DON’T SAY THAT between all those guys! He makes us look ridiculous you know! But em, I think that he is a racist, I don’t know, but he behaves like that!”

Activation of different, compensating resources

(continued)

- **PS:** “And do you think that he also treats you differently? Because you are talking now about things that he says, but does he treat you differently too?”
- **THE LEGEND:** “Em, no, I don’t think so, because I did my practical exam well and he gave me a mark of 85 (/100), so good marks, he says like: ‘when you do your work, you get your marks’, but I tell you, in specific areas he is racist.”
- **PS:** “Are there other teachers?”
- **THE LEGEND:** “(thinks)... No.”

Pupil group interview 5VC– *Riverside* January 2002, p.1 and pp.6-7: Five Turkish boys.