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Different pathways to student guidance in mainstream primary and secondary education : results from a parent survey

**Reference:**

Bodvin Kathleen, Verschueren Karine, Struyf Elke.- Different pathways to student guidance in mainstream primary and secondary education : results from a parent survey

International journal of school & educational psychology - ISSN 2168-3603 - (2018)

Full text (Publisher's DOI): <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2018.1469100>

Blinded manuscript revised.

**Different pathways to student guidance in mainstream primary and secondary education:  
Results from a parent survey.**

Abstract

Students of lower socioeconomic status and ethnic minority groups are underrepresented in extramural support services and overrepresented in special education. This raises questions about their participation in other student guidance trajectories and the support they receive from the school during the student guidance process. Therefore, a quasi-representative sample of 4005 parents of children aged 2.5-18 in mainstream education in Flanders completed a survey. Logistic regression analyses indicate differences in initiation and type of used student guidance program, and in involvement of different persons during the referral process, in the disadvantage of students of lower socioeconomic status and ethnic minority groups.

Keywords: student guidance, socioeconomic status, ethnic minority, referral process, parent.

Running head: pathways to student guidance

**1. Introduction: Theoretical framework of integrated guidance**

Student guidance has become increasingly important in educational systems worldwide (Galassi & Akos, 2004). It is defined as guidance that benefits students' academic and socioemotional development which is provided in addition to the standard support for learning in schools. Ideally, student guidance at school is a comprehensive program integrated into the educational curriculum, aimed at enhancing both the learning process and well-being of every student (Galassi & Akos, 2004).

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3 This is labelled as *integrated guidance* in Dutch literature (e.g., Authors et al., 2013), *comprehensive*  
4 *guidance* in American literature (e.g., Gysbers & Henderson, 2000), and *whole school approach to*  
5 *guidance* in Hong Kong's and British literature (e.g., Hui, 2000). In this approach to student guidance,  
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7 all school personnel are involved, and teachers in particular play an important role in the early  
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9 signaling and guidance of students with problems in school. Ideally, guidance is first provided school-  
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11 internally by school personnel and gradually becomes more intensive as more professionals can be  
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13 involved, including school-external professionals. If necessary, students can also change schools.  
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17 In most countries, a school counselor coordinates and implements school-internal student guidance  
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19 in collaboration with teachers, the principal, and parents (Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2012). School-  
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21 internal counselors conduct individual and group counseling sessions and make referrals to and  
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23 collaborate with extramural support services (Erford, 2014; Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2012). School  
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25 counselors can have varying **diplomas** in different countries: a teacher degree (mostly with an extra  
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27 diploma in student guidance) or a (school) **psychology degree**<sup>1</sup> (Authors et al., 2015). Frequently,  
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29 financial constraints limit the help they can offer to students (Harris, 2013; Nouwen, Van Praag, Van  
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31 Caudenberg, Clycq, & Timmerman, 2016), in which case **students of lower SES and ethnic minority**  
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33 **groups** may be particularly affected (Dierckx, Coene, Raeymaeckers, & Burg, 2015). In Flanders,  
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35 school counselors are school-internally assisted by special education teachers and Pupil Guidance  
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37 Centers. The latter are government-financed multidisciplinary centers, joining school psychological,  
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39 social work and youth health services.

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41 Collaboration with external partners might also be necessary in the process of guidance (Epstein &  
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43 Van Voorhis, 2010; Galassi & Akos, 2004). Here, the term extramural support services in education  
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45 refers to the guidance offered to students by professionals who are not affiliated to the school or its  
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47 associated Pupil Guidance Center, but who work independently, either in the private or the subsidized  
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49 sector. Their support may address both student learning (e.g., remedial teaching) and well-being (e.g.,  
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51 mental health care).

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53 **When students' needs cannot be fulfilled within the current mainstream school, with or without**

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55 <sup>1</sup> In Flanders, professionals with a school psychology degree mainly work in a Pupil Guidance Center and  
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57 exceptionally as a school-internal counselor. Most of the school-internal counselors in Flanders only have a  
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59 teaching degree (Authors et al., 2015a).

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3 aide of extramural support services, one can opt for a change of school within mainstream education.  
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5 In Flanders and in other countries with (also) a separate special education track, another option is to  
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7 change to a separate school providing special education.

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9 School-parent collaboration is essential when organizing student guidance (Atici, 2014; Lott,  
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11 2001; Pameijer, 2016). In addition, research has identified several positive effects of school-parent  
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13 collaboration. More specifically, the latter improves children's educational outcomes, in terms of  
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15 school attendance, achievement and college enrolment (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2010). School-parent  
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17 collaboration is also empowering for parents (Crozier & Davies, 2007) and builds networks of trust  
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19 that help their children succeed (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2010), which facilitate an exchange of  
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21 knowledge across cultures, and decrease the gap in cultures, values and expectations between home  
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23 and school (Huang & Gibbs, 1992). Finally, strong school-parent collaboration can increase the  
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25 guidance capacity of schools (Schraepen, Lebeer, Vanpeperstraete, & Hancké, 2010). School-parent  
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27 collaboration is, however, not always present (Gamble & Lambros, 2014). Furthermore, positive  
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29 collaboration between schools and disadvantaged families tends to be infrequent due to mutual distrust  
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31 (Huang & Gibbs, 1992).

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33 This study focused on student guidance trajectories, both school-internal and school-external. The  
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35 predictive effect of child, family, and school related variables were examined in mainstream education  
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37 in Flanders. In Belgium, education is compulsory and free of charge from the age of 6 through 18.  
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39 Children from 2.5 to 6 can attend nursery education, which is also free of charge but noncompulsory.  
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41 Primary education is provided for children aged 6 to 12 years old and comprises 6 consecutive years  
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43 of study. Secondary education is provided for adolescents aged 12 to 18 years old. Students are  
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45 awarded a diploma of secondary education after successfully completing six or seven years of  
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47 schooling. High poverty schools – often situated in urban areas – receive more governmental resources  
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49 because of their disadvantaged student population (Nicaise, 2016). Alongside mainstream education, a  
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51 separate track of “special education” exists for pupils with a disability and who pursue individual  
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53 adjusted final terms. Special education is provided from nursery through secondary education in  
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55 separate schools, and since recently also in mainstream schools.

## 1.1. Possible predictors for (referral to) student guidance programs

Literature (e.g., Authors et al., 2017) suggested various predictors for the use of and referral to school-internal student guidance, extramural support services, and separate schools providing special education: SES, ethnicity, gender, grade retention, educational level, and school climate . Related literature findings are described consecutively in this paragraph.

### 1.1.1. Socioeconomic status and ethnicity

Students who are from lower socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnic minority backgrounds confront many barriers during their school career compared to their counterparts. As a result, they exhibit a higher dropout rate and achieve proportionately lower at school (Dierckx et al., 2015). The latter is partly explained by the limited financial and non-dominant cultural resources of families living in deprivation (Dierckx et al., 2015; Hindman, Skibbe, Miller, & Zimmerman, 2010).

However, several additional explanatory variables at the school level have also been identified. Scholars have argued that students are not always offered equal opportunities and, moreover, the educational system maintains and even reproduces social inequality; schools thus seem more adapted to meeting the needs of the majority rather than the minority (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001). Other theorists, in contrast, suggest that the educational system is democratic and facilitates upward mobility for low SES and ethnic minority groups . Indeed, schooling is increasingly seen as a means to bring the necessary guidance to disadvantaged students to counter further social exclusion (Farmer, Burns, Phillips, Angold, & Costello, 2003; Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001).

Given the increased risk of educational difficulties throughout their school trajectories (Deschenes et al., 2001; Dierckx et al., 2015), the use of student guidance programs could play an important role for students who are from lower SES and ethnic minority backgrounds. Indeed, student guidance programs can optimize and enhance their educational achievement. Research indicates that disadvantaged students are over- and underrepresented in certain student guidance programs: disadvantaged students are overrepresented in separate schools providing special education (Dierckx et al., 2015; Sullivan, 2011; Zhang, Katsiyannis, Ju, & Roberts, 2014), and underrepresented in

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3 extramural support settings (Authors et al., 2017)<sup>2</sup>, both **extramural support for student's** learning  
4 (Santos de Barona & Barona, 2006) and well-being (Kataoka, Zhang, & Wells, 2002).  
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7 Many scholars identified both access and resource difficulties in providing extramural support  
8 services to disadvantaged families. For example, disadvantaged families often have other priorities  
9 such as fulfilling their basic needs for food and shelter, have less (correct) information about  
10 extramural support services, fewer opportunities to access these services, and have insufficient  
11 financial resources to pay for these services or the transportation required to attend them (Authors et  
12 al., 2017; Gamble & Lambros, 2014).  
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19 As well as SES, ethnicity may also play a role in reduced access to certain types of extramural  
20 support service (Authors et al., 2017; Garland et al., 2005). **For families of ethnic minority groups,**  
21 **little acquisition of the majority** language and a more distrustful attitude towards specialized guidance  
22 (e.g., the fear that a professional might take away their children) hampers access. Moreover,  
23 insufficient cultural competencies of professionals along with stereotyping and discrimination can  
24 impede effective guidance for ethnic minorities (Authors et al., 2017; Gamble & Lambros, 2014).  
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29 Some ethnic minorities may also prefer to solve problems within the private context of their own  
30 family (Authors et al., 2017).  
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35 Research on the referral process to extramural support services in Flanders indicated that **parents**  
36 **who are from lower SES and ethnic minority backgrounds** take less initiative in contacting extramural  
37 support services than their counterparts. Furthermore, school counselors make fewer referrals of  
38 disadvantaged students to extramural support services (Authors et al., 2017).  
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43 Regarding the overrepresentation of **students who are from lower SES and ethnic minority**  
44 **backgrounds** in separate schools providing special education, research consistently indicated SES to be  
45 a predictor but is less consistent regarding ethnicity, partly because of its correlation with SES  
46 (Dierckx et al., 2015). Discrimination and unequal opportunities are also seen as possible explanations  
47 for the overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in these schools (Zhang et al., 2014).  
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53 Limited information is available on the use of school-internal student guidance, such as guidance  
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56 <sup>2</sup> This previous study about the use of extramural support services was also conducted in Flanders, but made use  
57 of a different sample than used in current study.  
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3 offered by school-internal counselors and, specifically for Flanders, Pupil Guidance Centers. Student  
4 guidance within schools is free and easy to access by every student. Gamble and Lambros (2014)  
5 found that school counselors were unable to provide demographic data on the students who used  
6 additional school-internal guidance. However, Gamble and Lambros (2014) warn that insufficient data  
7 collection by schools of this kind could lead to discriminatory services, as over- and underserved  
8 groups of students are often not identified and, thus, inequality remains. Moreover, other studies  
9 indicated that cultural misunderstanding often contributes to negative teacher-student interactions,  
10 resulting in inappropriate referrals for behavioral problems and ineffective interventions (Gibson,  
11 2002). Given this, it remains unclear whether schools sufficiently compensate for unequal access to  
12 extramural support services.  
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### 24 **1.1.2. Gender and grade retention**

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26 Other variables that may influence the process of student guidance are students' gender and whether  
27 they have already retaken a school year. Regarding gender, boys' school careers are often more  
28 problematic than girls': Boys' academic careers are more likely to be characterized by behavior  
29 difficulties, underperformance, an orientation to extramural support services or separate schools  
30 providing special education, and educational delay (Dierckx et al., 2015).  
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36 Regarding the latter, Belgium has a large number of students undertaking grade retention in  
37 comparison to other countries (Goos et al., 2012). For example, amongst 15-year-old students, 13.42%  
38 have retaken a school year. These students are disproportionately more referred to extramural support  
39 services (Authors et al., 2015b) and separate schools providing special education (Juchtmans et al.,  
40 2011) compared to students who are on track. **In addition, student's grade retention is a predictor for**  
41 **school dropout (Lamote et al., 2013).**  
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### 50 **1.1.3. Educational level and school climate**

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52 Many scholars suggested there is a relationship between educational level and school climate, on the  
53 one hand, and student guidance programs, on the other. Regarding educational level, Auhtors and  
54 colleagues (2012) found that primary schools in Flanders have a more integrated guidance policy than  
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3 secondary schools (Authors et al., 2012). This suggests that there are more school-internal student  
4 guidance programs in collaboration with different school professionals in primary education compared  
5 to secondary education. Moreover, other research in Flemish mainstream education showed that the  
6 use of extramural support services is greater for students in primary than in secondary education  
7 (Authors et al., 2015b).

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12 Student guidance processes can also be influenced by school climate, which is defined as “the  
13 relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their  
14 behavior, and is based on their collective perceptions of behavior in schools” (Hoy, 1990). In this  
15 study, we focused upon two independent dimensions of school climate, namely, one emphasizing a  
16 strong academic mission and the other emphasizing social cohesion. Within a 'performance-oriented  
17 school climate' there is a high effective learning time, an extensive and challenging curriculum, and  
18 high expectations regarding student performance (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Shouse, 1996).  
19 The objectives are clear and performance-oriented. Good performance is appreciated and rewarded  
20 (Goddard et al., 2000). On the other hand, within a 'community-oriented school climate' there is a  
21 sense of togetherness where students and teachers feel accepted, appreciated, and supported. Teacher-  
22 students relationships are warm and positive, and both participate on equal terms. There is consensus  
23 regarding the values that should be pursued and joint activities regularly take place (Shouse, 1996). A  
24 school with a community-oriented school climate, in other words, shares the same characteristics as a  
25 school with an integrated guidance policy (Authors et al., 2012) but, in addition, cohesion is  
26 emphasized.

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42 Research consistently showed a positive link between a performance-oriented school climate and a  
43 school's SES; schools with mainly high SES students were usually more performance-oriented (e.g.,  
44 Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990). However, not all researchers found that schools with a lower SES student  
45 population were more community-oriented (De Fraine, 2003; Shouse, 1996). Additionally, many  
46 studies found a strong positive link between a school's performance-oriented school climate and the  
47 performance level of the students (Goddard et al., 2000; Shouse, 1996). There is no consensus  
48 regarding the relationship between performance-oriented school climate and students' well-being. In  
49 contrast, research consistently indicated that a community-oriented school climate was beneficial to  
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3 the well-being, self-image, motivation, and behavior of students (Griffith, 2002). Many assume that a  
4 community-oriented school climate is also indirectly beneficial for students' school achievements,  
5 although there is no consensus on this issue.  
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9 Literature (e.g., De Fraine, 2003; Griffith, 2002) is also inconsistent regarding a possible  
10 interaction between school climate and a school's SES, which suggests that the effect of school  
11 climate varies according to the average SES of the students at school. Some scholars believed it is  
12 important for schools with a lower SES student population to adopt a community-oriented school  
13 climate (Griffith, 2002) and argued that the school could compensate for any aspects the student who  
14 has a lower SES background misses out in their informal networks. However, other research  
15 contradicted this view (De Fraine, 2003; Shouse, 1996). In addition, literature (e.g., De Fraine, 2003;  
16 Shouse, 1996) is inconsistent regarding a possible interaction between a performance-oriented and  
17 community-oriented school climate. In a study of Shouse (1996), a community-oriented school climate  
18 was only beneficial for students' achievement when these schools also had a high performance  
19 orientation. However, other studies were unable to replicate this interaction (De Fraine, 2003).  
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## 32 2. Current study

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36 The current study investigated predictors for various pathways towards student guidance in  
37 mainstream primary and secondary education, with a focus on student guidance for students with  
38 lower SES and ethnic minority backgrounds. In addition, the predictive effect of other child and  
39 school variables, such as gender, grade retention, educational level, and school climate was  
40 investigated. More specifically, the following research questions were addressed:  
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- 46 • Does the initiation of a student guidance program and reasons not to do so differ according to  
47 family's SES and ethnicity, child's gender and grade retention, and school's educational level  
48 and school climate (i.e., community-oriented and performance-oriented school climate)?
- 49 • Does the use of various student guidance programs (school-internal student guidance,  
50 extramural support services, change to another school within mainstream or change to separate  
51 schools providing special education) differ according to these child, family, and school  
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variables?

- Is the referral process different according to these child, family, and school variables?

First, students with a lower SES background, students with an ethnic minority background, male students, and students with grade retention, on average, showed an increased risk for difficulties during their school career, but less was known about the initiation of a guidance process by these student groups. Therefore, we could not formulate hypotheses concerning how these child and family factors relate to the initiation of a guidance process. Concerning the school variables educational level and school climate, previous research suggested that student guidance processes would be initiated more frequently in primary compared to secondary education (Authors et al., 2012) and in more community-oriented school climates (Shouse, 1996). In addition, the reasons not to initiate a guidance process when students experienced problems were investigated.

Second, this study investigated whether the used student guidance program varies according to the above mentioned child, family, and school characteristics. With regard to school-internal guidance trajectories, research suggested that this was more common in schools with a community-oriented school climate (Shouse, 1996) and in primary education (Authors et al., 2012). No information was available on whether school-internal student guidance programs were used differently according to child and family variables. Another unique contribution of this study was the focus on (the combination of) different types of student guidance (i.e., school-internal, extramural student guidance, changing to another mainstream education school, or changing to a special education school). Concerning extramural support services, previous research suggested that these were used more by students with a high SES background, student who belong to ethnic majority groups, male students, students who have retaken a school year, and students in primary education (Authors et al., 2017).

Third, the referral process to student guidance was investigated, focusing on who was involved in early problem signaling, and in the ongoing referral process. Through extrapolating from previous research into the referral process for extramural support services and school climate, it was hypothesized that more individuals would be involved in the guidance trajectories of students with high SES and ethnic majority backgrounds, compared to their counterparts (Authors et al., 2017), and as the school climate was more community-oriented (Shouse, 1996). In addition, previous research on

integrated guidance suggested that school personnel were more involved in primary compared to secondary education (Authors et al., 2012).

### 3. Method

A survey was used to gather information from a large representative sample of parents. Relationships between the use of and referral to student guidance on the one hand and child, family, and school characteristics on the other, were studied using logistic regression analyses.

#### 3.1. Participants

A total of 2267 parents of children in 105 primary schools ( $M = 9.10\%$ ,  $SD = 8.72$ ) and 1738 parents of children in 60 secondary schools ( $M = 8.14\%$ ,  $SD = 8.99$ ), completed the survey. The sample of participating schools and parents was quasi-representative for respectively the population of schools in Flanders ( $\chi^2_{PrimaryEducation}(2) = 3.61$ ,  $p = .16$ ;  $\chi^2_{SecondaryEducation}(2) = 4.40$ ,  $p = .11$ ) and the population of parents in these participating schools ( $\chi^2_{PrimaryEducation}(1) = 0.57$ ,  $p = .45$ ;  $\chi^2_{SecondaryEducation}(1) = 6.42$ ,  $p < .05$ ), according to SES, measured by families receiving a school allowance (Authors et al., 2016).

Table 1 shows the distribution of participants across continuous independent variables. Concerning this distribution across categorical independent variables, 49.20 percent of the children whose parents filled in the survey were boys, 14.30 percent of these children had retaken a school year, and 56.60 percent of these children were in primary education.

#### 3.2. Method of data collection

A representative sample of schools in Flanders in terms of education net and educational level was invited to participate through contacting the schools' principals. Participating primary and secondary schools received respectively 200 and 400 invitation letters for the online survey. Instead of these invitation letters, it was possible for schools to request paper surveys. In the latter case, primary and secondary schools received respectively 100 and 200 paper surveys. Due to a limited budget, it was not possible to give all schools paper surveys. Also, secondary schools are larger than primary schools

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3 in Flanders. Not only school could ask for paper surveys, but also individual parents could do so.  
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5 Indeed, on the invitation letter for the online survey, instructions were given for parents to individually  
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7 request a paper survey if necessary. The school's contact person, mostly the school-internal counselor,  
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9 was asked to distribute the letters or surveys to entire classes with a maximal dispersion in grade  
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11 range, and, for secondary education, also graduation programs.  
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### 14 3.3. Measures

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16 The survey was partly based on a recently validated questionnaire on the use of extramural support  
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18 services (Authors et al., 2017). Also, new questions were formulated. The survey was pilot tested in a  
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20 sample of school counselors in mainstream education and was assessed by an expert panel.  
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23 The survey began with definitions of *the referral process to student guidance* (i.e., “the referral  
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25 process to student guidance begins from the moment a student, family or school declares the need for  
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27 additional guidance and continues until appropriate guidance is offered”) and *student guidance* (i.e.,  
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29 “student guidance includes all additional initiatives at school to support students’ academic and  
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31 socioemotional development”). Regarding the latter, four types of formal student guidance were  
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33 distinguished: (1) student guidance by a teacher or school-internal counselor of the current mainstream  
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35 school (with or without aide of the Pupil Guidance Center); (2) student guidance by an extramural  
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37 support service (e.g., speech therapist, psychiatrist, clinical psychologist); (3) change in school within  
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39 mainstream education (4) or to a separate school providing special education.

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41 Parents were asked whether they perceived a problem with their child in school and whether  
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43 student guidance was initiated during the current and previous two school years: 2012-2013, 2013-  
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45 2014, and 2014-2015. If the answer on the latter question was “yes”, they were asked “Which student  
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47 guidance program was initiated?”. For these and following questions, multiple answers from a list of  
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49 predefined answers were possible and each list ended with the open option of “other”. Student  
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51 guidance program options were divided into three categories: Student guidance provided within the  
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53 mainstream school (by school personnel, Pupil Guidance Center, i.e., school-internal student  
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55 guidance); Student guidance provided external to, and independent of, the mainstream school  
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57 (extramural support services); Change in schools within mainstream or to separate schools providing  
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3 special education. If parents indicated their child needed additional student guidance but received no  
4 student guidance, they were asked to indicate why not, for example, because persons involved did not  
5 reach consensus about which student guidance program was appropriate (i.e., “disagreement about the  
6 student guidance”).  
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10 The referral process was investigated by asking “Who signaled the need for additional student  
11 guidance?” and “Who was involved in the referral process to student guidance?” Answers were  
12 divided into two categories: member(s) of the family (the parents, the child, other family members)  
13 and relevant person(s) in the school (e.g., teacher, school counselor, principal, or Pupil Guidance  
14 Center professional).  
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20 Possible predictor variables were the child and family variables SES, ethnicity, gender, and grade  
21 retention, and the school variables education level and school climate. SES was measured by the  
22 combined education level of the student’s parents, ranging from both parent completed secondary  
23 education to both parents completed higher education, since parental education level was the most  
24 consistent SES predictor for using and referring to extramural support services (Authors et al., 2017).  
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Ethnicity was measured by birth country of the child’s grandparents, and more specifically the number  
of grandparents that were born in a non-Western country. School climate was measured by using two  
scales of De Fraine’s (2003) questionnaire, one addressing the school’s *community-orientedness* (eight  
items;  $\alpha = .89$ ; e.g., “At my child’s school teachers give attention to every student” and “At my child’s  
school children’s well-being is important”) and another addressing the school’s *performance-*  
*orientedness* (five items;  $\alpha = .82$ ; e.g., “At my child’s school students’ performance is a priority” and  
“At my child’s school especially learning and performing is important”), which could be answered on  
a scale of 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). While the latter were continuous predictors,  
categorical predictors were gender (male, female), grade retention (yes, no), and education level  
(primary, secondary education).

50 The parent survey was drafted in easy to understand language and was available both online and in  
51 paper form in three languages. In that way, non-vernacular speaking parents and parents without  
52 Internet facilities at home could also fill out the survey.  
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### 3.4. Analyses

Using multinomial logistic regression analyses, the predictive effect of the independent variables was examined in relation to the use of different student guidance programs and the referral process. Binary logistic regression analyses were used to examine whether a process of student guidance was initiated and why it was not initiated when a problem was apparent. All independent variables were included in the model as main effects. Additionally, the interaction between the two types of school climate, and the interactions between each type of school climate and SES were included in the model. All independent variables were centered (Kraemer & Blasey, 2004). Results that are not reported, were not significant.

## 4. Results

Of the participating parents, 31% indicated that they had perceived a problem with their child in school during the current or previous two school years. For 83% of these students, parents indicated that student guidance was initiated in that period. This means that student guidance was initiated for 25% of the total sample. In this paragraph, the possible predictive effect of the child, family, and school variables are described for initiating a process of student guidance, reasons not to do so, the use of student guidance programs, individuals involved in problem signaling, and the referral process.

### 4.1. Initiating a process of student guidance

Table 2 shows that the odds of initiating a process of student guidance when experiencing a problem, compared to not initiating such a process when experiencing a problem, decreased as more grandparents were born in a non-western country, and increased as student's parents were more highly educated and as the school climate was more community-oriented. In other words, a process of student guidance was more likely to be initiated for students with no prominent migration background, students with more highly educated parents, and in more community-oriented schools.

### 4.2. Reasons not to initiate a process of student guidance when experiencing a problem

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3 Table 3 shows that, as the school climate was less community-oriented, the following reasons not to  
4 initiate a process of student guidance were more likely to be given: The school did not want to initiate  
5 a process of student guidance; There was disagreement about the extra student guidance; There was  
6 insufficient supply of student guidance. In primary education, more often than in secondary education,  
7 the reason for not initiating a process of student guidance was disagreement about the extra student  
8 guidance. However, in secondary education, the reason “at least one family member, usually the  
9 student himself/herself, did not want extra student guidance” was more likely to be given. Migration  
10 background was a predictor for the reason “there was insufficient supply of student guidance”: As  
11 more grandparents were born in a non-western country, respondents were more likely to state that  
12 extra student guidance for their problem did not exist or was not accessible.  
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#### 24 **4.3. Student guidance programs**

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26 Meaningful (combinations of) student guidance programs for this analysis were: school-internal  
27 student guidance only ( $N = 393$ ; 40.68%), extramural support services only ( $N = 157$ ; 16.25%),  
28 combination of school-internal and extramural student guidance ( $N = 313$ ; 32.40%), combination of  
29 changing schools within mainstream education and school-internal and/or extramural guidance ( $N =$   
30 84; 8.70%), and has changed or will change school within mainstream or to separate schools providing  
31 special education ( $N = 19$ ; 1.97%). Table 4 shows the significant predictors regarding the usage of  
32 these student guidance programs.  
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40 As the school climate was more community-oriented, using every type of guidance program  
41 became more plausible (compared to using no student guidance when experiencing a problem). In  
42 addition, the odds of using extramural support services only, compared to using no student guidance  
43 when experiencing a problem, was 2.34 times larger in primary compared to secondary education, and  
44 increased as parents were more highly educated. In other words, using extramural support services was  
45 more likely in primary than in secondary education, and for students with more highly educated  
46 parents.  
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54 The odds of using both school-internal and extramural student guidance, compared to using no  
55 student guidance when experiencing a problem, were 2.27 times larger in primary than in secondary  
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3 education. These odds increased as fewer grandparents were born in a non-western country and as the  
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5 parents were more highly educated. In other words, students in primary education, students with a no  
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7 prominent migration background, and students with more highly educated parents were more likely to  
8  
9 use this combination of student guidance programs. In addition, the positive effect of parental  
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11 education level on using both school-internal and extramural student guidance when experiencing a  
12  
13 problem, is amplified as the school climate becomes more community-oriented. In other words, in  
14  
15 more community-oriented school climates, students with more highly educated parents, are more  
16  
17 likely to use the combination of school-internal and extramural student guidance.

18  
19 The odds of changing schools within mainstream education after receiving school-internal or  
20  
21 extramural guidance, was 57% larger when the child has retaken a school year (compared to when the  
22  
23 child is on track). The odds of changing schools within mainstream or to separate schools providing  
24  
25 special education, without any prior school-internal or extramural guidance, was 84% larger when the  
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27 child has retaken a school year compared to when the child is on track. In other words, changing  
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29 school within mainstream or to separate schools providing special education, with or without prior  
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31 school-internal or extramural student guidance, seems to be predicted primarily by whether the student  
32  
33 has retaken a school year.

#### 34 35 36 **4.4. Signaling the need for extra student guidance**

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38 Table 5 shows that signaling the need for extra student guidance by the family only, rather than  
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40 problem signaling by both the family and school, was more likely for girls than for boys, in secondary  
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42 compared to primary education, and as the school climate was less community-oriented and  
43  
44 performance-oriented. When the school climate was more community-oriented, parents' educational  
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46 level also had predictive value, such that as parents' educational level increased, the odds decreased  
47  
48 that only the family, rather than both the family and the school, would signal a need for extra  
49  
50 guidance.

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52 Signaling the need for extra student guidance by the school only rather than by both the family and  
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54 the school, was more likely in primary education (compared to secondary education), as more  
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56 grandparents were born in a non-western country, as parents were less educated, and as the school



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3 climate was more performance-oriented. Moreover, this impact of a performance-oriented school  
4 climate on problem signaling by the school only, compared to problem signaling by school and  
5 parents, was stronger in more community-oriented schools.  
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8  
9 In other words, both dimensions of school climate predicted the involvement of school personnel  
10 in the early signaling of problems, in addition to the involvement of parents therein. In primary  
11 education, the role of school personnel (solely or in combination with the family) in signaling  
12 problems was larger when compared to their role in secondary education. For boys, both the school  
13 and the family were more likely to signal a problem, rather than only the family. Problem signaling by  
14 the school only was more common among students with less educated parents and students with a  
15 more prominent migration background, and as the school climate was more performance-oriented. In  
16 contrast, problem signaling by school and family, rather than by the school only, was more likely as  
17 the parents were more highly educated.  
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#### 28 **4.5. Involvement in the referral process to student guidance**

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30 According to Table 6, the odds that only the family was involved in the referral process to student  
31 guidance, rather than both the family and the school, was 37% smaller for boys (compared to girls),  
32 and decreased as the parents were more highly educated and as the school climate was more  
33 community-oriented. In other words, only familial involvement in the referral process, compared to  
34 both familial and school involvement, was more common for female students, students with less  
35 educated parents and as the school climate was less community-oriented. In addition, the impact of  
36 parental educational level, on only familial involvement in the referral process, compared to both  
37 familial and school involvement, was strengthened as the school climate was more community-  
38 oriented.  
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## 50 **5. Discussion**

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54 The current study investigated different pathways towards student guidance in mainstream primary  
55 and secondary education, according to student's SES, ethnicity, gender, grade retention, and school's  
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3 educational level and school climate. More specifically, the initiation of a guidance process, reasons  
4 not to do so, the type of student guidance program, and the referral process was investigated. This  
5 study made unique contributions to the literature by incorporating multiple and combined types of  
6 student guidance, including school-internal guidance services. In this section, most prominent results  
7 are discussed, followed by implications, strengths, and limitations of the study, and suggestions for  
8 further research.  
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## 16 **5.1. SES and ethnicity**

### 17 **5.1.1. Initiating and referral to student guidance programs**

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19 The current results point to inequality in student guidance processes according to both student's SES  
20 and ethnicity: in deciding whether to initiate a process of student guidance, the type of student  
21 guidance program that is used, and problem signaling by and the involvement of different persons  
22 during the referral process to student guidance. For **students who are from lower SES and ethnic**  
23 **minority backgrounds**, initiating a process of student guidance is less likely. Also, not only do **students**  
24 **with a lower SES and ethnic minority background** use fewer extramural support services, which  
25 replicates previous research findings (Authors et al., 2017), they are also less likely to use a  
26 combination of school-internal and extramural student guidance. Moreover, another remarkable  
27 finding is that in predicting the use of both school-internal and extramural student guidance, parental  
28 education level and migration background have an even stronger impact than they do in predicting the  
29 use of extramural support services only. In addition, although school-internal student guidance is free  
30 of charge and accessible for every student, school-internal student guidance is not used by  
31 disadvantaged students any more than it is used by those without such disadvantages. In other words,  
32 the school does not compensate for unequal access to extramural support services for these student  
33 groups. The predictive effect of SES and ethnicity for the consideration of a school career in separate  
34 schools providing special education could not be replicated in the current study, presumably because  
35 current data were gathered in mainstream education.  
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54 For these disadvantaged students, problem signaling is carried out most often by the school only. It  
55 is not clear whether the school compensates for the minor reporting of problems by these students and  
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3 their families, or whether the school experiences the interaction with these students as relatively more  
4 problematic. Literature indicates that these disadvantaged groups are indeed more likely to encounter  
5 difficulties **in and outside the school**, and report these problems less (Dierckx et al., 2015; Oravec,  
6 Koblinsky, & Randolph, 2008), whilst it is also found that school personnel hold negative prejudices  
7 towards disadvantaged populations **and adopt a deficit view towards these populations** (Clycq,  
8 Nouwen, & Vandenbroucke, 2014).

9  
10 Surprisingly, this does not mean that the school is more involved in the referral process to student  
11 guidance of disadvantaged groups, in fact the contrary is more likely. Results show that the school is  
12 more involved as the parents are more highly educated. Research, however, has shown that **families**  
13 **with a lower SES and ethnic minority background** usually face increased thresholds for independently  
14 initiating extramural support services, such as less information about these extramural programs  
15 (Authors et al., 2017). School personnel are not always aware of these challenges, as most of them  
16 belong to the dominant societal group (Gamble & Lambros, 2014). However, school-parent  
17 collaboration has several positive effects (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2010), which can nullify some of  
18 these difficulties. The current results thus seem to indicate a Matthew effect, whereby advantaged  
19 groups accumulate advantages that disadvantaged groups do not profit from (Merton, 1988).

### 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60

#### 5.1.2. Possible explanations for different pathways

Consequently, it is important to consider why student guidance is less likely to be initiated and why  
school personnel is less likely to be involved in referral processes to student guidance in the case of  
**students who are from lower SES and ethnic minority backgrounds**. Are school personnel aware of  
such inequalities in the use of student guidance and the thresholds that minority groups experience in  
(referral) processes to student guidance? Possibly, deficit thinking amongst school personnel leads to  
discrimination concerning the initiation of and further involvement in student guidance trajectories.  
First, indeed, school personnel generally explain the difficult school careers of minority groups by  
referring to deficits within these groups themselves, while simultaneously reducing their own  
responsibility for those school careers (Valencia, 2010). Second, deficit thinking can lead to  
stereotyped thinking (Dierckx et al., 2015), which can work as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton,

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3 1948). Therefore, school personnel might argue that initiating a process of student guidance would not  
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5 be worthwhile for these students.

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7 Also, previous research found that school-parent collaboration, and positive collaboration in  
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9 particular, is not always present, especially in relation to disadvantaged families (Gamble & Lambros,  
10  
11 2014). Again, negative beliefs amongst school personnel regarding disadvantaged parents might  
12  
13 hinder any will to collaborate.

### 14 15 16 17 **5.1.3. Reasons not to initiate a student guidance program**

18 Although students who are from lower SES and ethnic minority backgrounds use significantly fewer  
19  
20 student guidance programs, surprisingly, migration background is a significant predictor for only one  
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22 reason not to initiate student guidance, namely the reason “there was insufficient supply of student  
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24 guidance”. More concrete, as student’s migration background was more prominent, respondents were  
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26 more likely to indicate that appropriate student guidance does not exist or was not accessible. Possibly,  
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28 the minor initiation of a process of student guidance for disadvantaged students is indeed the result of  
29  
30 a perceived lack of supply of student guidance programs among these disadvantaged groups (Authors  
31  
32 et al., 2017). Therefore, it is reasonable to question whether families who belong to ethnic minority  
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34 groups are aware of possible student guidance programs, given earlier findings suggesting they have  
35  
36 less information on extramural guidance programs (Authors et al., 2017; Gamble & Lambros, 2014).

## 37 38 39 40 **5.2. School climate and other predictors**

41  
42 The most consistent predictor for a process of student guidance was a community-oriented school  
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44 climate. Such a climate benefits the process of student guidance as it increases the plausibility of every  
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46 type of student guidance program, and problem signaling and further involvement in the process of  
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48 student guidance are more often a joint activity carried out by both the school and the family, which is  
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50 consistent with the operationalization of the community-oriented school climate (Shouse, 1996). The  
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52 performance-orientedness of the school climate, on the other hand, has only a minor impact on the  
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54 schools’ actions regarding the process of student guidance. Educational level, gender, and grade  
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56 retention are only limitedly predictive for a student guidance process.

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3 Concerning the school climate scales, one can remark that these so called school variables are  
4 formed by parental perceptions and experiences in student guidance trajectories, and therefore contain  
5 variance at the individual level. Moreover, educational level can also be seen as a child variable. In  
6 that way, one cannot make a strict distinction between child and family variables on the one hand and  
7 school variables on the other.  
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## 14 **6. Implications**

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18 To conclude, the argument that the school is a democratic system that acts as a gateway for helping  
19 students who are from lower SES and ethnic minority backgrounds (Farmer et al., 2003; Lapan et al.,  
20 2001; Valencia, 2010) cannot be confirmed by the results. Indeed, both student guidance measures  
21 within and outside the mainstream school are not used more by these disadvantaged group. Although  
22 school personnel signal problems more in the case of low SES and ethnic minority students, school  
23 personnel are not more involved in the referral process to student guidance.  
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31 Several implications can therefore be identified. It has been established that present and previous  
32 negative experiences amongst students with a lower SES and ethnic minority background regarding  
33 different aspects of school can hamper initiation and collaboration in student guidance trajectories.  
34 Specific attention should therefore be given to the way in which the school informs students and  
35 parents about possible guidance trajectories, which should be formulated as a means of helping their  
36 child and not proposed as a consequence of any perceived deficiency in their family. The parents'  
37 mistrust must be replaced by a belief that the school wants to help their children.  
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45 Given the shortage in supply of both school-internal and extramural types of student guidance  
46 (Harris, 2013), a greater supply of student guidance programs might help lower the barrier for  
47 initiating this guidance for all students, particularly students with lower SES and ethnic minority  
48 backgrounds. Especially school-internal counselors need to be available, since their guidance is easy to  
49 reach by every student, they ought to inform students and parents about student guidance options, and  
50 they are bridging figures for collaboration with extramural support services.  
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57 Moreover, school-internal and extramural professionals need to be informed about the difficulties  
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3 disadvantaged families encounter on a daily basis and in enabling student guidance programs in  
4 particular. In that way, they may make their guidance more accessible for disadvantaged students.  
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6 School-internal counselors should guard that the use of school-internal student guidance by various  
7 student groups is representative for the school population. Also, school personnel, and in particular  
8 school-internal counselors, need to be convinced of their impact in the school career of every student.  
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12 Also, the results indicate that a community-oriented school climate is beneficial for the process of  
13 student guidance. Indeed, a community-oriented school climate increases the plausibility of using  
14 every type of student guidance program, and problem signaling and further involvement in the process  
15 of student guidance are more often a joint activity carried out by both the school and the family. We  
16 therefore recommend that schools pursue a community-oriented school climate in which cohesion,  
17 appreciation, equivalence, and openness are paramount.  
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## 26 **7. Strengths, limitations, and suggestions for further research**

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30 Some general observations can be made for this study. First, a strength of this study was that a  
31 significant number of parents participated, including parents who belong to lower SES and ethnic  
32 minority groups. Not only were different forms of student guidance questioned in one survey, also the  
33 referral process was questioned. Conducting an interview with parents who are from lower SES and  
34 ethnic minority backgrounds would purvey additional in-depth information on reasons for not  
35 initiating a process of student guidance when experiencing a problem. Including parents from students  
36 in separate schools providing special education would provide additional information regarding the  
37 referral process to these schools. Further research could also investigate whether limited information  
38 about student guidance programs among families who belong to lower SES and ethnic minority groups  
39 is a valid explanation for their lower use thereof.  
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50 Informal social support was not assessed in this study. Given that students who are from lower  
51 SES and ethnic minority backgrounds experience various barriers in initiating formal student  
52 guidance, one can reason that these students may use more informal social support such as help by  
53 family members or friends. Also, the obtained response rate was relatively low. However, since the  
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3 survey was anonymous for the researchers, it was not possible to send individual reminders.  
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5 Finally, the question arises as to whether all student guidance programs are beneficial for every  
6 student. In this study, we assessed the type of used student guidance program, without knowing the  
7 effect on the student's subsequent school career. This is a key outcome that could usefully be explored  
8 in future research.  
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For Peer Review Only

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Table 1

**Participant** information: continuous predictors

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Std deviation
Number of grandparents born in a non-Western country	0	4	.40	.00	1.14
Diploma of both parents	2	4	3.00	3.00	.84
Community-oriented school climate	1	5	3.84	3.88	.65
Performance-oriented school climate	1	5	3.33	3.40	.76

Table 2

*Predictors for initiating a process of student guidance*

	B	SE	p	OR	95% CI
Number of grandparents born in a non-Western country	-.19	.09	.04	.83	.69-.99
Diploma of both parents	.28	.13	.03	1.33	1.03-1.70
Community-oriented school climate	.65	.13	.00	1.91	1.48-2.48

Note. Reference category: No initiation of a process of student guidance when experiencing a problem.  
 $R^2 = .05$  (Cox and snell), .08 (Nagelkerke).  $\chi^2(10) = 44.92, p < .00$ .

Table 3

*Predictors for the reasons not to initiate a process of student guidance when experiencing a problem*

		B	SE	p	OR	95% CI
The school did not want to initiate a process of student guidance <sup>b</sup>	Community-oriented school climate	-.67	.28	.02	.51	.30-.89
There was disagreement about the extra student guidance <sup>c</sup>	Education level (secondary vs primary education) <sup>a</sup>	2.02	.84	.02	7.57	1.47-39.09
	Community-oriented school climate	-1.05	.51	.04	.35	.13-.95
There was insufficient supply of student guidance <sup>d</sup>	Number of grandparents born in a non-Western country	.44	.21	.04	1.55	1.03-2.33
	Community-oriented school climate	-.95	.40	.02	.39	.18-.84
At least one family member did not want extra student guidance <sup>e</sup>	Education level (secondary vs primary education)	-1.39	.56	.01	.25	.08-.74

Note. <sup>a</sup>The reference category is always listed first.

<sup>b</sup> $R^2 = .118$  (Cox and snell), .176 (Nagelkerke).  $\chi^2(10) = 19.22, p = .04$ .

<sup>c</sup> $R^2 = .08$  (Cox and snell), .21 (Nagelkerke).  $\chi^2(10) = 13.20, p = .21$ .

<sup>d</sup> $R^2 = .10$  (Cox and snell), .19 (Nagelkerke).  $\chi^2(10) = 15.42, p = .12$ .

<sup>e</sup> $R^2 = .08$  (Cox and snell), .13 (Nagelkerke).  $\chi^2(10) = 12.07, p = .28$ .

Table 4

*Predictors for using certain student guidance programs*

		B	SE	p	OR	95% CI
School-internal student guidance only	Intercept	.84	.28	.00		
	Community-oriented school climate	.64	.15	.00	1.90	1.42-2.55
Extramural support services only	Intercept	-.74	.36	.04		
	Education level (secondary vs primary education) <sup>a</sup>	.85	.26	.00	2.34	1.40-3.90
	Diploma of both parents	.34	.17	.05	1.40	1.01-1.95
	Community-oriented school climate	.43	.19	.02	1.54	1.07-2.21
Combination of school-internal and extramural student guidance	Intercept	.50	.29	.09		
	Education level (secondary vs primary education)	.82	.22	.00	2.27	1.47-3.49
	Number of grandparents born in a non-Western country	-.43	.14	.00	.65	.49-.86
	Diploma both parents	.40	.14	.01	1.50	1.13-1.99
	Community-oriented school climate	.68	.16	.00	1.97	1.44-2.70
	Community-oriented school climate * Diploma both parents	.43	.18	.02	1.53	1.07-2.20
Combination of changing school within mainstream education and school-internal and/or extramural guidance	Intercept	.14	.36	.69		
	Grade retention (yes vs no)	-.84	.35	.02	.43	.22-.86
	Community-oriented school climate	1.16	.24	.00	3.18	2.00-5.07
Has changed or will change school within mainstream or to a separate school providing special education	Intercept	-1.31	.59	.03		
	Grade retention (yes vs no)	-1.84	.60	.00	.16	.05-.51
	Community-oriented school climate	1.16	.45	.01	3.20	1.32-7.79

Note. Reference category: No initiation of a process of student guidance when experiencing a problem.

<sup>a</sup>The reference category is always listed first.

$R^2 = .15$  (Cox and snell),  $.16$  (Nagelkerke),  $.05$  (McFadden).  $\chi^2(50) = 159.51, p < .00$ .

Table 5

*Predictors for signaling the need for extra student guidance by the family and school*

		B	SE	p	OR	95% CI
Only someone of the family	Intercept	-.23	.23	.30		
	Sex (girl vs boy) <sup>a</sup>	-.63	.17	.00	.53	.38-.75
	Education level (secondary vs primary education)	-.40	.17	.02	.67	.48-.94
	Community-oriented school climate	-.47	.14	.00	.62	.47-.82
	Performance-oriented school climate	-.33	.12	.01	.72	.57-.92
	Community-oriented school climate * Diploma both parents	-.36	.16	.03	.70	.51-.97
Only someone of the school	Intercept	-1.24	.27	.00		
	Education level (secondary vs primary education)	.48	.21	.02	1.61	1.08-2.41
	Number of grandparents born in a non-Western country	.22	.11	.06	1.24	1.00-1.55
	Diploma both parents	-.34	.12	.01	.71	.56-.91
	Performance-oriented school climate	.24	.13	.08	1.27	.98-1.64
	Community-oriented school climate *	.31	.18	.08	1.37	.96-1.93
	Performance-oriented school climate					

*Note.* Reference category: Both the family and the school signaled the need for extra student guidance.

<sup>a</sup>The reference category is always listed first.

$R^2 = .12$  (Cox and snell),  $.14$  (Nagelkerke).  $\chi^2(30) = 105,73, p < .00$ .

Table 6

*Predictors for the involvement in the referral process to student guidance by the family and school*

		B	SE	p	OR	95% CI
Only someone of the family	Intercept	-1.02	.24	.00		
	Sex (girl vs boy)	-.47	.19	.01	.63	.44-.90
	Diploma both parents	-.28	.12	.03	.76	.60-.97
	Community-oriented school climate	-.65	.15	.00	.52	.39-.70
	Community-oriented school climate *	-.47	.17	.01	.63	.45-.88
	Diploma both parents					

*Note.* Reference category: Both the family and the school were involved in the referral process of student guidance.

<sup>a</sup>The reference category is always listed first.

$R^2 = .08$  (Cox and snell),  $.10$  (Nagelkerke).  $\chi^2(30) = 69.09, p < .00$ .