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*Published in:*  
Political Psychology

*DOI:*  
[10.1111/j.1467-9221.2006.00525.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2006.00525.x)

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*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*  
2006

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Verkuyten, M., & Yildiz, A. A. (2006). The Endorsement of Minority Rights: The Role of Group Position, National Context, and Ideological Beliefs. *Political Psychology*, 27(4), 527. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2006.00525.x>

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## **The Endorsement of Minority Rights: The Role of Group Position, National Context, and Ideological Beliefs**

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*The present research was conducted in the Netherlands and used an experimental design to examine the endorsement of minority rights among Turkish and Kurdish participants in two framed, national contexts: the Netherlands and Turkey. In the Dutch context, each group is a minority, whereas in the Turkish context the Kurds are an oppressed national minority and the Turks are the national majority. The results showed that the Turks were less in favor of minority rights in the Turkish context than in the Dutch context, whereas the Kurds were more in favor of minority rights in the Turkish than in the Dutch context. In addition, the endorsement of minority rights was related to beliefs about majority rule, state unity, and ingroup identification, as well as to cultural diversity and perceived pervasive discrimination. The associations with the former three measures differed between the two groups and the two national contexts, whereas the latter two measures had main effects on the endorsement of minority rights.*

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**KEY WORDS:** minority rights, identification, ideological beliefs

‘Nothing, I venture to say, is more likely to disturb the peace of the world than the treatment which might, in certain circumstances, be met by minorities.’—Woodrow Wilson

This statement of President Woodrow Wilson underlines the social and political importance of minority rights. Although Wilson made the statement in 1919, the issue of minority rights is of central importance today due to several decades

of increased migration and the growing acknowledgment of religious, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Diversity is the rule in most of the current nation states, but it does not necessarily imply minority rights. The “Minorities at Risk” data set reveals that in the 1990s minorities were subject to one or several kinds of discrimination: direct discrimination, economic disadvantage, political exclusion, and cultural restrictions with respect to language use, religious practice, cultural traditions, and the formation of cultural organizations (Gurr, 2003).

Although the protection of minorities has a long history, for example, in the context of bilateral treaties signed between countries, the issue of minorities’ rights entered the international agenda after the First World War with the emergence of the new states of Central and Eastern Europe. The ethnic dominance of titular nationals implied the danger of oppression for the new minority groups. Therefore, the League of Nations decided to complement its commitment to the principle of self-determination with a commitment to minority protection internationally (Kovács, 2003). After the Second World War, minority rights were again of central concern. A concern which took its current form in 1992 with the United Nations’ Declaration of Minority Rights (Thornberry, 1991). Recently, the continuing importance of minority rights and cultural diversity has been emphasized in the UN’s Human Development Report (2004).

The issue of minority rights has been studied from different perspectives, such as international law (e.g., Thornberry, 1991), human rights (e.g., Kamenka & Tay, 1978), history (e.g., Chaliand, 1989; Hepburn, 1978), political science (e.g., Barry, 2001; Kymlicka, 1995), and sociology (e.g., Gurr, 2003). Not much attention has been paid, however, to people’s attitudes towards minority rights and the social psychological factors explaining these attitudes (but see, for example, Evans & Need, 2002; McIntosh, MacIver, Abel, & Nolle, 1995; Scheepers, Gijssberts, & Coenders, 2002). In addition, existing studies tend to examine the majority group’s views on minority rights while ignoring the perspectives of minority groups. However, to understand interethnic relations and their political implications, the views of minority groups need to be examined also. Ethnic and cultural identity have become important political tools for minority groups in their claims for rights and protection in areas such as participation in social and political life, the media, and education (e.g., Karlsson, 2003; Morin & Saladin d’Anglure, 1997). Furthermore, support for cultural diversity ideologies and policies has been found to vary between majority and minority group members (e.g., Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer, & Krauss, 1995; Verkuyten, 2005a).

It is not easy, however, to draw general conclusions about the influence of the numerical or status position of groups on attitudes towards minority rights on the basis of research comparing a majority and a minority group. Apart from size and status, there are always many other group characteristics (e.g., cultural and historical) that may explain the differences found. To avoid such problems, a whole array of groups and nations should be studied (Evans & Need, 2002; Scheepers

et al., 2002). Alternatively, an experimental approach can be taken, and in social psychology many experiments have examined the importance of group size and group status for intergroup relations (see Ellemers & Barreto, 2001; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992; Simon, Aufderheide, & Kampmeier, 2001, for reviews). These studies are mainly concerned, however, with minimal or very remote groups and not with socially and culturally meaningful ethnic and national groups. This is understandable because using such real-world groups in an experimental design poses the problem of how to manipulate the majority-minority distinction. A possible solution is to use context framing (Levin, 2004) to make two different national situations salient in which one group is an ethnic minority in one situation and a national majority in the other. However, such framing implies that the majority-minority manipulation is confounded with national context. Therefore, the perceptions of these group members should be compared with those of another group that, for example, is in a minority position in both national contexts. We used such a design because it allowed us to examine, in a more controlled way, the role of majority and minority positions in the endorsement of minority rights among real groups in different national contexts.

In our study conducted in the Netherlands, we focused on the endorsement of minority rights among two groups, Turks and Kurds, and in two national conditions, the Netherlands and Turkey. Using an experimental, between-subjects design these two conditions were presented to Turkish and Kurdish people who emigrated from Turkey and live in the Netherlands. These immigrant groups typically have a strong transnational orientation in which they maintain continuing material, social, political, and sentimental links with Turkey (Verkuyten, 2005b). In the Dutch national context, both groups are ethnic minorities whereas in Turkey, the Turks are the majority group and the Kurds the numerically largest minority group. We examined whether the endorsement of minority rights differed between the two conditions and for the two groups. In addition, we also examined to what extent the attitude towards minority rights is related to ingroup identification, as well as to the importance attached to majority rule, state unity, cultural diversity, and perceived pervasive discrimination.

The design used offers the possibility to examine these issues in relation to group position as well as (framed) national context. That is to say, we are able to examine differences between minority (Turks and Kurds in the Dutch context, and Kurds in the Turkish context) and majority (Turks in the Turkish context) groups, but also whether there are differences between minority groups in both national contexts. For example, in the Netherlands the Turks and the Kurds are an immigrant minority group whereas in Turkey the Kurds are considered a national minority. This difference might affect people's views on minority rights. For example, Kymlicka (1995) has argued that national minorities can legitimately claim minority rights whereas this is more problematic for immigrant groups. However, the United Nations declaration on minority rights does not make a distinction between national and immigrant minorities but emphasizes minority

rights protection for all groups. In addition, research has shown that the endorsement of minority rights does not differ much between various minority groups (e.g., Evans & Need, 2002).

There are other country differences that can be relevant for the present research. In the Netherlands, issues stemming from immigration, migrant minorities, and cultural diversity are relatively novel. It was in the 1980s that a policy of multiculturalism was adopted in response to the increased influx of foreign persons caused by the recruitment of migrant laborers from Turkey and Morocco in the 1960s (Baubock, Heller, & Zolberg, 1996). The multiculturalist approach aims at promoting respect for cultural differences combined with egalitarian goals. Despite this approach, intolerance, prejudice, and discrimination of native Dutch toward migrants is a serious problem (e.g., Jackson, Brown, & Kirby, 1998; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Immigrants from Turkey (Turks and Kurds), together with those from Morocco, are the least accepted minority group in the Netherlands, face the most discrimination and are seen as the most threatening to Dutch culture and identity (see Hagendoorn, 1995; Verkuyten & Zaremba, 2005).

In Turkey, national minority groups have been suppressed for decades, and even centuries (Pettifer, 1998). Particularly the Kurds have been the target of a longstanding assimilation policy that aims to create a nation state based on Turkish ethno-cultural identity (Celik, 2000). In this policy, the integrity of the Turkish state is central, and the recognition of minority groups is considered a threat to the power of the majority and the unity of the country. Turkey has a strong nationalist tradition and a history of violent intergroup conflicts. For example, the armed conflict (1984 to 1999) between the separatist Kurdish Guerrilla Organization (PKK) and the Turkish army has posed a serious challenge and threat to the Turkish state and identity (Celik, 2000). Issues of minority rights have more direct political implications in Turkey than in the Netherlands.

These national context differences allow us to examine not only whether, for example, beliefs about majority rule, state unity, and discrimination differ between both contexts, but also whether the relationships of these beliefs with the endorsement of minority rights differ.

### *Minority Rights*

Berry and Kalin (1995) argued that groups are more in favor of cultural diversity and group rights when they see advantages for themselves. Several theories have emphasized the role of group interests in the dynamics of intergroup relations (e.g., Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1999). For example, because the status hierarchy is differentially beneficial for members of low- and high-status groups, social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) has proposed the ideological asymmetry hypothesis. This hypothesis implies that hierarchy-attenuating ideologies and practices will appeal more to minority or low status groups than to the majority group or high status groups. Hierarchy-attenuating

ideologies and practices support the interests of low-status groups and challenge the interests of high-status groups. For minority groups, minority rights offer the possibility of maintaining their own distinctive culture and identity and obtaining more equal social status in society. Majority group members, on the other hand, may oppose minority rights because these are seen as a threat to one's privileges and power (Scheepers et al., 2002). In their study of attitudes towards minority rights in 13 East European countries, Evans and Need (2002) found that minority groups were much more in favor of minority rights than majority groups.

Hence, we expected that minority group members would support minority rights more strongly than majority group members. This means that the Turkish participants in the Turkish context were expected to be less in favor of minority rights than the Turks in the Dutch context and also less in favor than the Kurdish participants in both national contexts. The latter three groups of participants were not expected to differ in their attitude towards minority rights.

### *Ingroup Identification*

Minority rights are about groups and group identities. There is considerable empirical evidence that, in an intergroup situation, those with high ingroup identification are more likely to show a variety of group-level responses relative to the responses of low identifiers (see Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). This is especially the case when group interests are at stake and the value of the group identity is threatened.

The more minority group people identify with their ethnic ingroup, the more likely they are to consider it important to preserve their own culture and to participate as group members in social and political life. The endorsement of minority rights can be seen as a collective strategy for dealing with a negative group identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and for challenging group-based hierarchy and domination. For example, using samples from the United States and Israel, Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, and Federico (1998) found a positive correlation between ingroup identification and ideologies that challenge the legitimacy of the status hierarchy for minority groups, whereas for majority groups a negative association was found (see also Sinclair, Sidanius, & Levin, 1998).

Hence, for ethnic minority groups, we expected a positive association between ingroup identification and the endorsement of minority rights. That is to say, this association was expected for the Kurdish participants in both national contexts as well as for the Turkish participants in the Dutch context. In contrast, for the Turks in the Turkish context a negative association seems most likely. They are the majority group in this context, and the more majority group members identify with their ingroup the more they can be expected to try to protect their group interests and status position (Verkuyten & Brug, 2004). Hence, for the Turks in the context of Turkey, we expected a negative association between ingroup identification and

the endorsement of minority rights, whereas for the other three groups, we expected a positive association.

### *Arguments For or Against Minority Rights*

Political scientists and (moral) philosophers have put forward various intellectual and practical arguments for defending or challenging minority rights and multicultural theories and policies (e.g., Barry, 2001; Kelly, 2002; Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2000; Taylor, 1992). Vermeulen and Slijper (2003) argue that there are three core arguments underlying the debates on minority rights and multiculturalism: the value of cultural diversity per se, social equality and equal opportunities, and, third, social cohesion and state unity. In addition, minority rights are typically discussed in relation to the democratic principle of majority rule. We will examine these four issues here as individual-difference variables that may affect people's endorsement of minority rights.

First, there are different versions of multicultural ideologies and related practices, but, in general, they all reject the idea of cultural assimilation. To the contrary, they all stress the importance of recognizing cultural diversity within the same political framework (Fowers & Richardson, 1996). Cultural communities are seen as providing the central context within which identities are shaped and cultural diversity is considered valuable and productive. Therefore, cultural differences should be accepted and respected and taking legitimate cultural differences into account often involves differential treatment and special rights (Parekh, 2000). These arguments are not only put forward by scholars and intellectuals but also in everyday situations. In a study conducted in the Netherlands, Verkuyten (2004) found that participants used these arguments to explain why they were in favor of multiculturalism. This means we can expect that a positive attitude towards cultural diversity will be associated with a stronger endorsement of minority rights. This association can be expected for both ethnic groups and in both national contexts. Thus, a main effect for the attitude towards cultural diversity was predicted. In addition, because the value of cultural diversity is an argument in favor of minority rights, we expected that the majority group (Turks in Turkish context) will have a less positive attitude towards cultural diversity than the Turks in the Dutch context and than the Kurds in the Turkish and Dutch contexts.

Second, the notion of equal opportunity is central to debates on multiculturalism and minority rights. Ethnic groups should not only be able to maintain their culture but also to participate equally in society. Multiculturalism is, typically, closely linked to the notion of equality and is seen as an important ideology and policy approach for addressing inequality and structural discrimination. Political philosophers have argued that ethnic group rights can be necessary for ensuring that all citizens are treated equally (Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2000, but see Barry, 2001). In addition, equality and the prevention of discrimination and racism are

central arguments in favor of multiculturalism in everyday ways of thinking (Verkuyten, 2004). Given this, we expected to find that the perception of pervasive discrimination in society would influence the endorsement of minority rights. That is to say, people who perceive more pervasive discrimination towards ethnic minorities are probably more in favor of minority rights. This association can be expected in both national contexts and for the majority group (Turks in the context of Turkey) and minority groups. In addition, however, it can be expected that the majority group will perceive less pervasive discrimination than the other three groups.

Third, minority rights are often contested on the basis of concerns for the unity and stability of the country. According to this view, cultural diversity and group rights lead to new problems, increase the possibility of conflict, and weaken social cohesion and the unity of the state (see Barry, 2001; Kymlicka, 1995). In their critical studies of “neo-racism” in Europe, Balibar (1991) and Taguieff (1993) argue that cultural differences are typically perceived as a threat to the cohesion and unity of the society. Fear for the unity and stability of the country is also a common and central argument used in everyday life to oppose multiculturalism (Verkuyten, 2004). The importance attached to state unity may differ, however, between countries and is, for example, stronger in Turkey than the Netherlands. In general, Turkey is a socially and politically less stable country and, as indicated earlier, the integrity of the Turkish state has priority over both minority and individual human rights. In the Turkish Constitution, article 13 clearly states that “Fundamental rights and freedoms may be restricted by law, in conformity with the letter and spirit of the Constitution, with the aim of safeguarding the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation.” Hence, we can expect that the importance attached to state unity is negatively related to the endorsement of minority rights, and particularly so in the context of Turkey. Furthermore, it is expected that the majority group (Turks in the Turkish context) will attach greater importance to state unity than the three other groups.

Fourth, minority rights are sometimes considered difficult to reconcile with democracy. Majority rule does not have to protect claims for minority rights. The numerical majority and indigenous group can be considered as having the democratic and primary right to decide about policies and rules. Although he is in favor of minority rights, Kymlicka (1995), for example, refuses special rights to groups that have immigrated voluntarily: these groups should adapt to the culture of the majority group. Furthermore, because majority rule is a core value of democracy, it can be seen as justified for the majority group to govern. This argument is also heard in everyday life, but its use seems related to the level of nationalism in any given context (Verkuyten, 2004). Strong nationalism involves the idea that the political and the ethno-cultural unit should be congruent (Eriksen, 1993; Gellner, 1983). The nation-state, it is assumed, should be dominated by the majority group, “whose markers of identity (such as language and religion) are frequently embedded in its official symbolism and legislation” (Eriksen, 1993, p. 99). Compared to



the Netherlands, nationalism is much more accepted and much stronger in Turkey (Pettifer, 1998). Hence, we can expect that, particularly in the context of Turkey, the importance attached to majority rule will be negatively related to the endorsement of minority rights. In addition, the majority group (Turkish participants in the Turkish national context) is expected to attach higher importance to majority rule than the Turkish participants in the Dutch context and the two groups of Kurdish participants.

To summarize, the following expectations derived from our discussion will be examined. First, Turkish participants are expected to be less in favor of minority rights in the Turkish context (majority group) compared to the Dutch context (minority group). The Kurdish participants are expected to endorse minority rights equally strongly in both national contexts. Second, for the three minority groups (Turks in the Dutch context and the Kurds in both national contexts), ingroup identification is expected to be positively associated with the endorsement of minority rights, whereas for the majority group (Turks in the Turkish context) a negative association is expected. Third, cultural diversity and perceived discrimination will be positively related to the endorsement of minority rights, whereas the importance attached to state unity and majority rule will be negatively related to the endorsement of minority rights, particularly in the Turkish context. Fourth, compared to the three minority groups, the majority group is expected to value cultural diversity less, perceive less pervasive discrimination of minority groups, and attach more importance to state unity and majority rule.

## Method

### *Participants*

The study was conducted in the Netherlands among 204 participants living in this country. Fifty percent of the participants had ethnically Turkish parents and described themselves as Turkish. The other 50% had Kurdish parents who had emigrated from Turkey and described themselves as Kurdish. In the Netherlands, both ethnic groups have a similar, relatively low socioeconomic position. The average age of the participants was 30.6 years and ages ranged between 15 and 74 years. The two groups did not differ for age,  $\chi^2(4,204) = 1.45, p > .05$ . In total 65% of the participants were male and 35% were female. The two groups did not differ for gender,  $\chi^2(1,204) = .46, p > .05$ . All participants or their parents had a history of labor migration and, for the study, no asylum seekers or refugees were approached.

### *Design and Measures*

Two versions of a questionnaire were divided randomly among the participants. One version was tailored to the Dutch situation and the other to the situation

in Turkey. The former questionnaire was labeled “The Netherlands and Dutch society,” and the introduction explained that participation was requested for research on people’s views and attitudes towards Dutch society. The first page with questions was designed to emphasize the Dutch context. The participants were asked how long they had been living in the Netherlands, in which Dutch city they lived, whether they had relatives living in the Netherlands, and whether they felt at home and liked living in the Netherlands.

The questionnaire designed for the Turkish situation was labeled “Turkey and Turkish society.” The exact same explanation for the study was given, but this time with a focus on Turkey. In addition, the first few questions were about whether the participants had lived in Turkey, visited Turkey, had family living in Turkey, and whether they (would) feel at home in Turkey and (would) like living there.

Apart from the labeling, introduction, and introductory questions, the two questionnaires were made up of exactly the same measures. For assessing the attitude towards *minority rights*, we used items that are relevant in both national contexts. This means that some issues were not addressed. For example, while immigrant groups in the Netherlands have the right to give traditional names to their children, minorities in Turkey gained this right only in the summer of 2003 and still face bureaucratic difficulties if they wish to use traditional names. Fifteen questions were asked and principal components analysis revealed that 12 items loaded high ( $>.54$ ) on the first main factor that accounted for 33.7% of the variance. One of these 12 items (for the measures, see the appendix) was taken from an East European study (Evans & Need, 2002). The other 11 items were derived from United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities (Capotorti, 1991), and the Constitution of the European Union. Items were measured on scales ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly), and the 12-item scale was internally consistent with Cronbach’s alpha which was .86. A higher score indicates a stronger endorsement of minority rights.

Ingroup identification was assessed by asking the participants to respond to 12 items using 7-point scales. For the Turkish participants the questions focused on their Turkish identity and for the Kurds on their Kurdish identity. These items were taken from previous studies, including studies in the Netherlands (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Phinney, 1992; Verkuyten, 2005b). Alpha was .88, and a higher score indicates a stronger ingroup identification.

The acknowledgment and acceptance of cultural diversity was measured with three items using 7-point scales. Alpha for the three items was .61, and a higher score indicates a more positive attitude towards cultural diversity.

To measure the importance attached to the cohesion and unity of the state, four items (scored on 7-point scales) were used. Cronbach’s alpha for the four items was .69, and a higher score indicates a stronger concern about the cohesion and unity of the state.

The perception of pervasive discrimination was measured with four items. These items focused on discrimination of minority groups on the level of the society. Items were measured on scales ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly), and the four-item scale was internally consistent with an alpha of .78. A higher score is indicative of a stronger perception of structural discrimination.

Six questions (7-point scales) were used to measure participants' endorsement of the importance of majority rule. The items were devised in order to measure the degree to which participants think that the indigenous majority group has the democratic right to make decisions for the country and minorities. The six-item scale was internally consistent with an alpha of .81, a higher score being indicative of a stronger endorsement of majority rule.

## Results

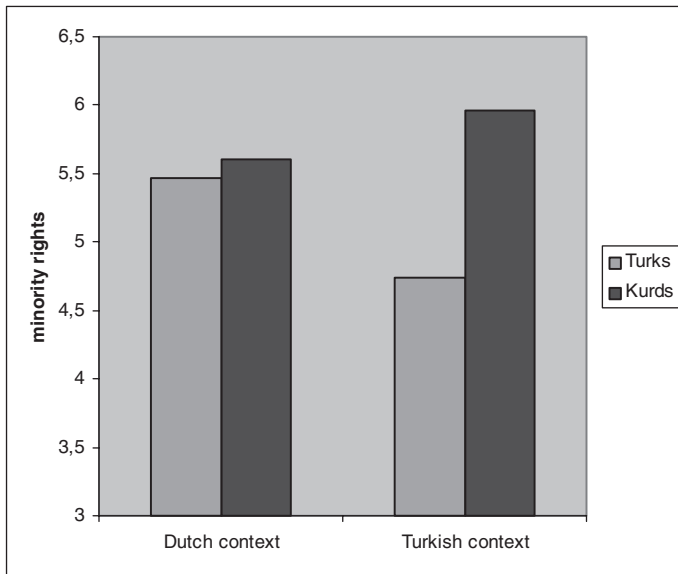
The results are divided into three sections: (1) group differences in mean scores, (2) ethnic identification and minority rights, and (3) ideological beliefs and minority rights.

### *Minority Rights and Group Differences*

The different measures were examined as multiple dependent variables in MANOVA. Ethnic group and national condition were entered as between-subjects variables. There was a multivariate effect for the interaction between ethnic group and national condition,  $F(5,204) = 11.34, p < .001$ . Univariate analyses revealed a significant difference for the endorsement of minority rights and the result is shown in Figure 1.

Separate analyses of the Dutch condition indicated no significant difference between the Turks and the Kurds. Hence, in the context of the Netherlands the Turkish and Kurdish participants equally endorsed minority rights. However, there was a clear group difference in the Turkish condition where the Turks are the majority and the Kurds a minority. As expected the Kurds were more in favor of minority rights than the Turks,  $t(70.24) = 5.49, p < .001$ . We can also examine context differences for each ethnic group. As expected, the Turks were less in favor of minority rights in Turkey than they were in the Netherlands,  $t(84.87) = 2.77, p < .01$ . In contrast, the Kurds were significantly more in favor of minority rights in Turkey than in the Netherlands,  $t(102) = 2.09, p < .05$ . Hence, compared to the Netherlands, in the context of Turkey, the Turks were significantly less in favor of minority rights whereas the Kurds were more in favor of these rights.

Univariate analyses also revealed significant differences for three other measures: majority rule, state unity, and perceived discrimination. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the two ethnic groups by national condition for these measures. Separate analyses of the Dutch condition indicated no significant



**Figure 1.** The Endorsement of Minority Rights by the Two Participant Groups and the Two National Contexts.

**Table 1.** Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for the Different Measures, and for the Two Participant Groups in the Two National Contexts.

	DUTCH CONTEXT		TURKISH CONTEXT	
	Turks	Kurds	Turks	Kurds
Ethnic identification	5.26 (1.32)	5.26 (1.26)	5.66 (1.12)	5.94 (.92)
Majority rule	2.40 (.95)	2.30 (1.11)	4.24 (1.54)	1.96 (.79)
State unity	3.19 (1.54)	3.78 (1.29)	3.96 (1.34)	2.36 (1.30)
Cultural diversity	5.84 (.94)	6.16 (.85)	4.86 (1.01)	6.15 (.83)
Discrimination	5.11 (1.16)	5.39 (1.14)	3.67 (1.53)	4.73 (1.17)

differences ( $p > .05$ ) between the Turks and Kurds on any of the three measures. Hence, in the context of the Netherlands the Turkish and Kurdish participants attached equal importance to majority rule and state unity, and they perceived equal levels of discrimination.

However, for all three measures there were clear ethnic group differences in the Turkish condition where the Turks are the majority group and the Kurds a

minority. As expected, the Turks endorsed the importance of majority rule and state unity more than the Kurds,  $t(73.44) = 9.53$ ,  $p < .001$ , and  $t(102) = 6.34$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively. In contrast, the Kurds were more positive about cultural diversity,  $t(72.95) = 5.02$ ,  $p < .001$ , and perceived more discrimination of minority groups,  $t(93.74) = 3.83$ ,  $p < .001$ .

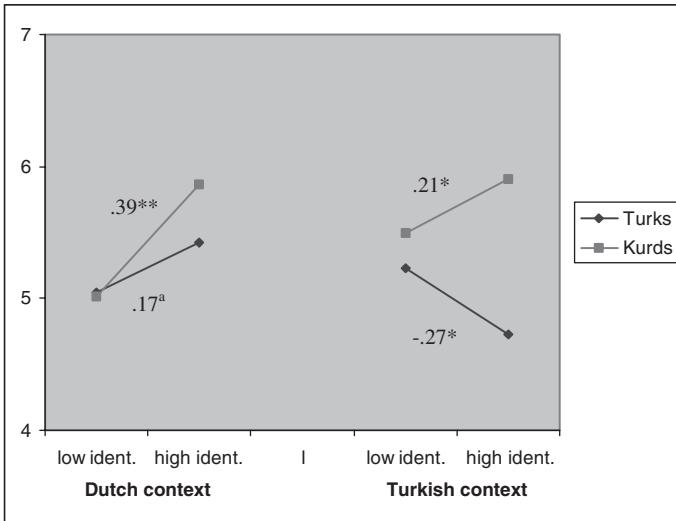
Again, we can also examine context differences for each ethnic group. The Turks endorsed the importance of majority rule and state unity significantly more strongly in the Turkish context than in the Dutch one,  $t(82.59) = 7.15$ ,  $p < .001$ , and  $t(102) = 2.38$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively. In addition, they were more positive about cultural diversity in the Dutch context  $t(102) = 26.6$ ,  $p < .001$ , and they perceived less discrimination against minorities in Turkey than in the Netherlands,  $t(93.39) = 5.18$ ,  $p < .001$ .

With the exception of perceived discrimination, the context differences for the Kurds were the opposite of those for the Turks. The Kurds did not differ in their attitude towards cultural diversity, and they endorsed majority rule and state unity more strongly in the Dutch context than in the Turkish context,  $t(90.06) = 2.15$ ,  $p < .05$ , and  $t(102) = 5.75$ ,  $p < .001$ .

The univariate analyses for ethnic identification revealed no significant interaction effect between ethnic group and national context. However, there was a significant main effect for national context,  $F(1,204) = 13.56$ ,  $p < .001$ . Ingroup identification was higher for both the Turks and Kurds in the Turkish context than in the Dutch context. The ethnic groups did not differ significantly in their level of identification,  $F(1,204) = 0.24$ ,  $p > .10$ .

### *Ethnic Identification and Minority Rights*

Ethnic identification was not significantly ( $p > .05$ ) related to majority rule, state unity, cultural diversity, and perceived discrimination. We performed an analysis of variance (MANOVA) with ethnic group and national context as between-subjects factors and ethnic identification as a continuous measure. The attitude towards minority rights served as the dependent variable. As expected, the results revealed a significant three-way interaction effect between ethnic group, national context, and identification,  $F(1,204) = 4.64$ ,  $p < .05$ . Simple slope analyses indicated that ethnic identification tended to be positively related to the endorsement of minority rights for the Turks in the Dutch context, the Kurds in the Dutch context, and the Kurds in the Kurdish context. However, for the Turks in the Turkish context there was a negative association between identification and minority rights. These results are shown in Figure 2. Hence, in minority situations a stronger group identification predicted a more positive attitude towards minority rights, whereas in a majority situation (Turks in Turkey) stronger group identification was related to a less favorable attitude towards minority rights.



**Figure 2.** The Endorsement of Minority Rights by the Two Participant Groups, the Two National Contexts and for Low and High Group Identifiers (median split). Unstandardized B's. <sup>a</sup> $p < .08$ , \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Majority Rule, State Unity, Cultural Diversity, and Perceived Discrimination*

Perceived discrimination was not related to state unity. However, majority rule and state unity were positively associated (.40,  $p < .001$ ), and both were negatively related to the attitude towards cultural diversity (-.44,  $p < .001$ , and -.25,  $p < .01$ , respectively). In addition, perceived discrimination had a negative association with the importance attached to majority rule (-.23,  $p < .01$ ) and a positive association with cultural diversity (.20,  $p < .01$ ). Discrimination was not related to state unity.

We performed an analysis of variance (MANOVA) with ethnic group and national context as between-subjects factors and majority rule, state unity, cultural diversity, and perceived discrimination as continuous measures. The attitude towards minority rights served, again, as the dependent measure. The analysis revealed that the combined effect of the factors and measures accounted for no less than 39% of the variance in the attitude towards minority rights.

The main effect for *majority rule* was significant,  $F(1,204) = 6.26, p < .01$ . Stronger endorsement of the importance of majority rule was associated with a less positive attitude towards minority rights. This was found for both ethnic groups because there were no significant higher-order interaction effects between ethnic group and majority rule. However, there was a significant interaction effect between majority rule and national context,  $F(1,204) = 7.90, p < .001$ . As expected, simple slope analysis revealed that the endorsement of minority rights

was negatively associated with majority rule in the Turkish context ( $B = -.33$ ,  $t = 4.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but not significantly in the Dutch context ( $B = -.05$ ,  $t = .61$ ,  $p > .10$ ).

*State unity* had no significant main effect,  $F(1,204) = .04$ ,  $p > .10$ . However, there was a significant three-way interaction effect between ethnic group, national context, and state unity,  $F(1,204) = 9.65$ ,  $p < .001$ . Simple slope analysis revealed that state unity was negatively associated with minority rights for the Kurds in the Turkish context ( $B = -.20$ ,  $t = 2.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Hence, Kurds who stressed the importance of Turkish unity were less in favor of minority rights in Turkey. The effect of state unity on minority rights was not significant for the Kurds in the Dutch context and also not for the Turks in both national contexts.

As expected, the main effect for the attitude towards *cultural diversity* was significant,  $F(1,204) = 6.10$ ,  $p < .001$ . A more positive view on the recognition and value of cultural differences was positively associated with a stronger endorsement of minority rights. There were no significant two-way and three-way interaction effects with cultural diversity. Hence, the positive effect of cultural diversity on minority rights was similar for both ethnic groups and in both national contexts.

For *perceived discrimination* the results also revealed a significant main effect,  $F(1,204) = 13.67$ ,  $p < .001$ . As expected, the perception of discrimination was positively associated with minority rights attitude. The higher-order interactions with ethnic group and national context were not significant. Thus, the effect of perceived discrimination on minority rights was similar for both groups and in both contexts.

## Discussion

Recognizing and accommodating diverse ethnicities, religions, languages, and values is “an inescapable feature of the landscape of politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Human Development Report, 2004, p. 1). Questions of minority rights and cultural diversity give rise to lively and important debates in many countries and in many spheres of life. Diversity and minority rights are considered desirable and necessary, but they are also challenged for being undemocratic, inequitable, and a threat to state unity.

The present research, conducted in the Netherlands, used an experimental framing design for examining the endorsement of minority rights among Turkish and Kurdish participants in two national contexts, the Netherlands and Turkey. In the Dutch context both groups are an ethnic minority, but in the Turkish context the Kurds are an oppressed national minority whereas the Turks are the majority group. The results showed that the Turks were less in favor of minority rights in the Turkish context than in the Dutch context, whereas the Kurds were more in favor of minority rights in Turkey than in the Netherlands. In the Dutch context both groups equally endorsed minority rights but in the Turkish context the Kurds were

much more strongly in favor of minority rights than the Turks. These results indicate that the group position as well as the national context affects people's views on minority rights.

Cultural diversity and minority rights are typically seen as having more to offer to minority groups (Turks in the Netherlands and the Kurds in both countries) than to majority groups (Turks in Turkey). For the former, they present the possibility for maintaining their own culture and a greater likelihood of parity in terms of social equality. For the latter, cultural diversity and minority rights are often seen as threats to the dominant position and higher social status (e.g., Levin et al., 1998; Verkuyten & Brug, 2004). This difference in attitude towards minority rights can lead to problematic relational outcomes (Zagefka & Brown, 2002). A lack of reciprocal attitudes and views may hamper the realization of a positively diverse and equal society.

The importance of the majority or minority group position is also indicated by the different relationships between ingroup identification and the endorsement of minority rights. As predicted, a three-way interaction effect was found, indicating that for the three minority group conditions, ingroup identification was positively associated with the endorsement of minority rights, whereas a negative association was found for the majority group (Turks in Turkey). For the former groups, high ingroup identifiers were more likely to favor minority rights. For them, the possibility of minority rights seemed to be important in itself, which could be due to an emphasis on these rights also representing a collective response to a negative group identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In contrast, the more participants of the latter group identified with their ingroup, the more they seemed to focus on the negative and threatening aspects of minority rights. These results for ingroup identification are in agreement with other studies that have found that high identifiers, in particular, show a variety of group level responses, including, for majority group members, a negative view of multiculturalism (e.g., Ellemers et al., 1999; Levin et al., 1998; Sinclair et al., 1998; Verkuyten & Brug, 2004). The results also indicate some of the problems and dilemmas surrounding a diverse society in which group identities are emphasized and affirmed (Judd et al., 1995). For ethnic minorities, a strong group identity is consistent with multicultural ideals, but for majority group members there seems to be a contradiction. For them, an emphasis on national identity corresponds more to ideas about assimilation rather than cultural diversity, which is typically seen as threatening the majority culture and society. Future studies, however, should examine this relationship in other countries. For example, countries such as Canada, the United States, and Australia are largely composed of immigrants and (in part) cultural diversity is a defining characteristic of the nation (Vermeulen & Slijper, 2003). This could mean, for example, that the negative association, found for majority group participants, between ingroup identification and minority rights might be more positive in these countries.

The results for the Kurds indicate that not only the group position but also the national context is important for understanding people's attitude towards minority



rights. Nations differ in many historical, political, and cultural ways, and so do the minorities present. In the Netherlands there is a long history of an established majority group and issues stemming from immigration, migrant minorities, and cultural diversity are relatively novel. In contrast, in Turkey there are various national minorities that have been suppressed for centuries (Pettifer, 1998). For example, in trying to create a nation state based on Turkish identity, the Kurds have been the target of a longstanding assimilation policy. It was not until 2003 that the Kurdish people officially got the right to use Kurdish names, broadcast in their mother tongue, establish private language courses, and so forth. Hence, it is understandable that the Kurdish participants endorsed minority rights more strongly in Turkey than in the Netherlands. Added to which, they endorsed the importance of state unity and majority rule less strongly in the former compared to the latter national context. In contrast, the Turks endorsed the importance of state unity and majority rule more strongly in Turkey than in the Netherlands, and they were also less positive about cultural diversity in the Turkish context. Furthermore, in the Turkish context, the Turks perceived less pervasive discrimination of minority groups than the Kurds.

The importance of the national context is further suggested by the finding that it was only in the Turkish context that majority rule and state unity were significantly and negatively associated with the endorsement of minority rights. In contrast to the relatively stable democratic and pillarized tradition in the Netherlands (Lijphart, 1968), there is, in Turkey, more fear that recognition of minorities is a threat to the power of the majority and the unity of the state (Pettifer, 1998). The strong nationalism in Turkey involves the idea that the political and ethnocultural unit should be congruent and that the majority decides. Our results indicate that in the context of Turkey, and for both Turkish and Kurdish participants, an emphasis on the importance of majority rule was a predictor of a less favorable attitude towards minority rights. In addition but only for the Kurds, the importance of the unity of the Turkish state was negatively related to minority rights. It is unclear why this latter association was not found for the Turkish participants. A possible statistical explanation is that the measures for majority rule and state unity were more strongly related among the Turks (.47) than among the Kurds (.24). Hence, for the Turks part of the variance in "state unity" may be accounted for by "majority rule."

A final result indicating the importance of the national context relates to ingroup identification. The Turkish and Kurdish participants did not differ in their mean level of group identification, and both showed higher identification in the Turkish context compared to in the Dutch one. This context difference is probably related to the nationalist tradition in Turkey and the problematic interethnic relations. For example, the armed conflict between the separatist PKK and the Turkish army has posed a serious challenge to the Turkish state and identity (Celik, 2000). For both the Turks and the Kurds, issues of group identification and group loyalty are more salient and consequential in Turkey than in the Netherlands. In addition,

Turkey's forthcoming negotiations about European Union membership have increased the level of debate in the country on national identity and minority issues.

In addition to differences between the two groups of participants and the two national contexts, there were also main effects on the endorsement of minority rights. As expected, the importance attached to cultural diversity and perceived discrimination of minority groups were positively related to minority rights. Participants who valued cultural diversity and who perceived pervasive inequalities were more in favor of minority rights. This suggests that the recognition of cultural differences and inequalities represents more general arguments for accepting and endorsing minority rights (see also Verkuyten, 2004). Both arguments are central to debates on multiculturalism and minority rights, and they seem to affect people's views in similar ways, independent of group position and national context.

The present findings indicate that in order to understand the endorsement of minority rights it is important to pay attention to different groups, contexts, and beliefs. We have examined the endorsement of minority rights among two comparable minority groups living in the Netherlands and by focusing on two national contexts. The combination of these groups and contexts allowed us to examine, in a novel way, the role of majority and minority position among meaningful real-world groups. In addition, we examined how key arguments in relation to minority rights as well as social psychological variables relate to people's attitudes. The results show that the endorsement of minority rights differs between majority and minority groups and between national contexts and is related to beliefs about majority rule, state unity, and cultural diversity, as well as group identification and perceived discrimination.

The findings suggest that attitudes towards minority rights are related to more general factors and processes, such as perceived discrimination and valuing cultural diversity, which work similarly among majority and minority groups and in different national contexts. In addition, there are important differences between majority and minority group positions in the endorsement of minority rights and the factors that affect this endorsement, such as group identification. Furthermore, there are important differences between national contexts. For research it seems necessary to examine these different beliefs and conditions in order to keep in touch with the complexity and diversity of social and political realities. In doing so, future studies could focus on other groups in other national settings as well as on different minority groups in one particular setting. It is clear that the national context is important, and future studies should examine more closely which country differences matter and how exactly they affect the endorsement of minority rights. In addition, within a particular society minority groups typically enjoy varying degrees of social acceptability (Hagendoorn, 1995; Owen, Eiser, & McFaul, 1981). Claims and rights of some minority groups can be more easily accepted than those of other groups.

Questions of minority rights and cultural diversity are hotly debated in many countries and by different groups. Various arguments are presented to defend or challenge ideas, practices, and policies that try to promote cultural diversity and minority rights. Our results indicate that it is important to examine these arguments in relation to group positions and the particular national context. We hope that future studies will examine these issues further, for example, by using cross-national data or a comparable experimental design. However, the design could be improved by including, for example, groups in Turkey and asking them about the Turkish or the Dutch context. Although Turkish and Kurdish people living in the Netherlands have a strong transnational orientation, the fact that they do not actually live in Turkey could be important. It might also be possible to include a sample of Dutch people in the Netherlands and one in a country where the Dutch are a minority. Designs like this can further enhance our understanding of people's endorsement of minority rights. In addition, it seems important to analyze how people understand the nature and implications of minority rights, to examine types of minority rights that are relevant in different countries, and to investigate the boundaries or limits of minority rights.

## APPENDIX

### *Measures Used*

#### *Attitude towards minority rights*

- The Dutch/Turkish government does little to protect the cultural identity of minority groups (reversed).
- Minorities should have the right to express their identity in cultural life.
- The Dutch/Turkish government should support minorities to maintain their own identity.
- Minorities should be allowed to establish their own schools.
- In Dutch/Turkish schools, minorities should be able to learn about their own culture and history.
- Minorities should have the right to set up their own political organizations.
- The Dutch/Turkish TV should broadcast more programs by and for minorities.
- Every cultural group should have the right to express and propagate their beliefs.
- Minorities in the Netherlands/Turkey should have far more rights than they do now.
- Minorities have the right to protect and keep their own language.
- In general, rights of minorities are not recognized satisfactorily.
- Minorities in the Netherlands/Turkey should have far more rights than they have now.

*Cultural diversity*

- Minority groups are a cultural enrichment for Dutch/Turkish society.
- The Dutch/Turks should acknowledge that their country has groups with different cultures.
- Cultural diversity is an interesting and good thing.

*State cohesion and unity*

- A society that is composed of different groups is more prone to have problems.
- The unity of the Netherlands/Turkey is weakened by minorities who maintain their cultures and habits.
- A society that is composed of many different cultural groups has more problems with its national unity than a society with only one or two cultural groups.
- Minority organizations are not a threat to the unity of the country (reversed).

*Perceived discrimination*

- Discrimination against minorities has increased in recent times.
- Indigenous Dutch/Turkish people are increasingly intolerant towards minorities.
- In general, minorities are treated unequally in Dutch/Turkish society.
- In the Netherlands/Turkey, minorities are sometimes oppressed.

*Majority rule*

- Because there are more Dutch/Turkish people than minorities, it is fair that Dutch/Turkish people decide on cultural issues.
- The majority decides, and therefore Dutch/Turkish people can take measures related to minorities.
- If something is decided in a democratic way, minorities should not protest against it.
- A minority group should always accept the decisions of the majority.
- Since it is their country, Dutch/Turkish people have more rights than minority groups.
- Because it is their country, Dutch/Turkish rules and habits should have priority.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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