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SELF-ESTEEM AMONG ETHNIC MINORITY YOUTH IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT. Low global self-esteem among minority youth living in Western countries has been considered a truism for a long time. Empirical research, however, tells another story. A review of recent studies using well-established scales is presented, showing no systematic indications of lower global self-esteem. Four possible methodological/technical explanations for this finding are discussed: superficial measuring, defensiveness, measure equivalence, and respons patterns. It is concluded that there are no systematic and decisive methodological/technical explanations for the empirical find. In the present study attention is focusses on socio-psychological explanations. Three different assumptions underlying the argument for presumed lower self-esteem among minority youth were empirically studied among Turkish youth living in the Netherlands. The results show that these assumptions are not invariably true which explains why, in general, minority youth do not have lower global self-esteem. It is argued that these assumptions can also be used to predict under what conditions minority status will be associated with lower self-esteem.

INTRODUCTION

The idea that youth who are members of a disadvantaged minority group have lower self-regard, self-confidence, feel insecure about themselves, or in general have a more negative view towards themselves, is often considered to be a truism. The reasons are obvious. Minority youth belong to groups which are relatively disadvantaged in terms of socio-economical and educational opportunities and outcomes. They are also more often the victims of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. In addition, for many minority groups around the world, and especially for children of migrants, there is the question of how to deal with conflicting cultural norms, values and demands of the majority and minority culture. Their dual group identity as members of the larger society and as minority group members can pose conflicting demands. In general it has been pointed out that minority groups are confronted with a variety of unfavorable conditions which have been extensively described and documented. In this respect, most disadvantaged minority groups around the world are comparable.

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The way these real-life and threatening conditions are thought to lead to a negative effect on global feelings of self-worth is by mechanisms such as reflected appraisal and social comparison (see Rosenberg, 1979; Crocker and Major, 1989). For instance Gordon (1969, p. 39) writes, 'Whatever the substantive focus, the asserted relation is the same: a member of a disparaged and discriminated against social category is likely to iternalise the meanings appended to the culture's stereotypes and to the social realities of the way he is treated, and thus come to conceive himself in cognitive and evaluative terms very similar to the descrediting accorded his group by the society's majority', and Kramer says, 'The way in which one is identified in the larger society (as well as where one is located in the social structure) affects the way in which one identified oneself. Therefore it seems logical that minority and/or low status groups are likely to judge themselves — as a group — less positively than members of majority or high status groups' (in Jacques and Chason, 1977, p. 399). The core idea is that youth who belong to a minority group will come to internalize society's negative view about their group, which has consequences for how they view themselves.

A global feeling of self-esteem is widely recognized as a central aspect of psychological functioning and well-being (Jahoda, 1958; Wylie, 1979; Wells and Marwell, 1986), and is strongly related to many other variables (Kaplan, 1982; Rosenberg, 1985), including general satisfaction with one's life (Veenhoven, 1984). In addition, global self-esteem seems to be a relatively stable characteristic which does not change very easily (O'Malley and Bachman, 1983). The importance of self-esteem implies that it can be expected that unfavorable living conditions will have implications for feelings of self-worth.

In the present study this assumption about lower global self-esteem among minority youth is investigated. First, a review will be presented of existing empirical research conducted in several Western countries. Since this review shows that there are no systematic indications of lower global self-esteem among minority youth, several possible methodological/technical explanations for this counterintuitive finding are discussed. Second, we will concentrate on more theoretical explanations, and results of an empirical study among Turkish youth living in the Netherlands will be presented. This study is concerned with the

question of the validity of several assumptions underlying the argument for a lower self-esteem among minority youth.

EXISTING EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The idea of a more negative self-concept among ethnic minorities seems obvious and understandable. It was one of the principal assumptions in the American literature before 1970: Blacks[1] would have lower self-esteem than Whites. However, empirical studies were scarce and often suffered from serious methodological inadequacies, such as small, unrepresentative samples, unreliable measures, and lack of adequate controls. The assumption was questioned both on theoretical (McCarthey and Yancey, 1971) and empirical grounds. More and more research during the last two decades has provided contrary evidence from an empirical point of view. There are several reviews of the studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, Wylie (1979) reviewed 53 publications dealing with the relationship between racial and ethnic status and self-esteem. She concluded that there is little empirical evidence for the view that the derogated, disadvantaged social position of Blacks in the US has resulted in lower self-esteem. Other reviews come to the same conclusion. For instance, Porter and Washington (1979, p. 62) write: 'the bulk of studies do not report lower personal self-esteem among blacks' (see also Burns, 1982; Epps, 1975).

These reviews concern the period up to the end of the 1970s and are mainly restricted to the US context. In Table I we present an update (from 1978 on) of the major studies conducted in the US and, in addition, a review of studies conducted in Western Europe, mainly Great Britain and the Netherlands. There were three restrictions made. First, only those studies which have used self-reported data on global self-esteem were considered. Second, self-esteem had to be measured with a well-established scale of which reliability and validity data are know. Third, adequate control groups had to be used.

Of the sixteen studies presented in Table I the majority — eight studies — found no difference between minority and majority youth. There are also four studies which found that adolescents from minority groups have a more positive self-esteem. Four studies found a somewhat lower level of self-esteem among minority groups. However, if a

TABLE I
Empirical studies on global self-esteem among minority youth in several western countries

Authors	*Sample*	*Groups*	*Scale*	*Results*
United States				
Gray-Little & Appelbaum (1979)	desegregated schools (7th en 10th)	291 Blacks 444 Whites 11–16 years	CSEI and TCSC (controling for IQ, achievement and social-economic status	Without control-variables: Whites higher than Blacks on the SEI but not on the TSCS. With control-variables: no differences between Whites and Blacks
Hines & Berg-Cross (1981)	Public school (7th grade) desegregated	87 Blacks 93 Whites average 12; 6 years Whites higher social classes	TSCS	No differences between Blacks and Whites.
Richman, Clark & Brown (1985)	3 public schools secondary education	195 subjects 75% Blacks around 16 years	RSE en PHSS (controling for social class)	Blacks higher score than Whites on both scales, White girls lowest score.
Phinney (1992)	High school and College	116 Whites 346 Blacks 505 Latino 49 Asian	RSE	Blacks higher than the other three groups which did not differ among themselves.
Rotheram-Borus (1990)	Secondary education (9th en 10th)	330 subjects; Whites (21%), Blacks (30%), Spanish (30%) Asian (19%).	Rosenberg & Simmons (1972) Self-esteem scale	Blacks higher score than the other groups.

Table I (Continued)

Authors	*Sample*	*Groups*	*Scale*	*Results*
Simmons, Brown, Bush & Blyth (1978)	18 schools (6th 7th)	211 Blacks 550 Whites	Rosenberg & Simmons Self-Esteem scale (controling for social class and achievement and IQ).	Blacks higher score than whites.
Great Britain				
Bagley, Mallick & Verma (1979)	39 schools 29 multi-racial	114 West Indish 137 Asian 14–16 years	Adaptation of the CSEI	West Indish boys lower score than British boys. No difference between West Indian and British girls. No differences between Asian and British subjects.
Driver (1983)	Multi-racial school in the Midlands	46 British 61 West Indish 14 years and older	CSEI	No differences between both groups.
Hoggs, Abrams & Patel (1987)	2 schools in the West Midlands	56 Indian 349 British 15–16 years	RSE	British subjects higher score.
Louden (1978)	4 schools in the Midlands	140 West Indish 127 Asian 108 British 14–16 jaar	Adaptation RSE (controling for language command and social class)	No differences between the groups. Girls form the West Indish have a higher score than Asian girls which have a higher score than British girls.
Stone (1981)	4 groups Multi-racial schools	264 West Indish	PHSS 'Ziller Self-esteem' 'Sentence Completion'	Comparison with PHSS-normens: WestIndish score average. They score above average on Ziller's measure and on the 'sentence completeion' test.

Table I (Continued)

Authors	*Sample*	*Groups*	*Scale*	*Results*
Netherlands				
Verkuyten (1986[a])	3 schools secondary Education segregated	104 Dutch 53 Turks 36 Surinamese 16 Moroccans 58 others (81% between 13–16 jaar)	Adapted version RSE	No differences between the different groups. Turkish boys lower score than the other boys.
Verkuyten (1988)	40 schools secondary education	2710 Dutch 237 Turks 128 Moroccans 135 Surinamese 222 others	Adapted version RSE (controling for social class, type of education gender, percentage minority pupils)	Turks lower score than Dutch (0.4% variance explained). Surinamese lower than Dutch (2% variance explained), and Others lower than Dutch (2% variance explained).
Verkuyten (1989)	5 primary schools segregated	48 Dutch 94 Turks 9–13 years	PHSS	No differences between both groups.
Germany				
Weber (1989)	Different institutions such as International centres	80 Turkish 40 Grecian 40 Germans 15–18 years	CSEI	Turkish boys lower than other boys. No differences between the girls of the three groups.

N.B. 1: The differences reported are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).
N.B. 2: CSEI = Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory
IAV = Bill's Junior high school index of adjustment and values
RSE = Rosenberg SElf-esteem scale
PHSS = Piers-Harris self-esteem scale
TSCS = Tennessee self-concept scale
N.B. 3: Content and psychometric information about these scales can be found in Crandall (1973) and Wylie (1974; 1989).

difference in self-esteem is found this does not say anything about the size of that difference. Tests of significance do not state whether an effect is important, but only whether it may be assumed with some certainty that a difference exists. If a sample is large enough, the tests provide that certainty in cases where differences are minimal. If we look at the magnitude of the difference in terms of variance explained, we see that the differences between minority and non-minority youth are very small. Studies which do give the variance explained report values around 3%. The differences within the different groups are in general much more substantial than between the groups. It can be concluded that there are no systematic indications for lower global self-esteem among minority youth. This finding generalizes across a variety of minority groups in different Western countries, and a variety of standard measures of global self-esteem.

When considering the generally unfavorable living conditions of minority youth, the question arises how this lack of systematic differences can be explained. First, there can be methodological reasons, and second, more theoretical ones.

METHODOLOGICAL/TECHNICAL BIASES?

It has been argued that existing social arrears and subordination must have negative consequences for self-esteem. Shortcomings in the different empirical studies would obscure this effect (Adam, 1978). Four points of criticism will be discussed: superficial measuring; defensiveness; equivalence; and response patterns.

Superficial Measures?

All of the empirical studies presented in Table I used questionnaires. A main point of criticism which is raised with regard to this technique concerns the fact that questionnaires do not probe to deeper levels of psychological functioning. There are empirical studies which find few differences between minority and majority youth using questionnaires, while a more penetrating techniques (e.g. projective tests) shows more indications of emotional problems with the self among minority youth

(Hauser, 1971; Goldman and Mercer, 1976; Smith *et al.*, 1978). According to the critics, questionnaires would give a much too superficial, and consequently meaningless picture.

The main reason why this conclusion is too undifferentiated is that most of the questionnaires which were used in the studies presented in Table I are well constructed and validated. For instance, the well-known and frequently used Rosenberg-Self-Esteem-Scale has been shown in many studies to correlate with criterion measures such as depressiveness, psychophysiological and psychological indicators of anxiety, problem solving, and also with behavior indicators such as participation among friends and leadership (Rosenberg, 1965). It could be argued that many scales may have been validated but not especially for minority groups. However, in some studies this has been done (e.g. Rosenberg and Simmons, 1972), and there are also many studies which report data on factorial validity among minority and majority groups (Louden, 1981; Hoelter, 1983; Bagley *et al.*, 1983; Verkuyten, 1988). In other words, the existing results on scale validity indicate that the use of questionnaires to measure global self-esteem among minority youth has substantial meaning.

Difference in Defensiveness?

Associated with the previous point is the question of the status of self-report measures. Questionnaires for measuring global self-esteem are of the self-report type. This report is correlated with the way people evaluate themselves but is often not identical with this evaluation (Combs *et al.*, 1963). In the literature a distinction is made between 'true' and reported self-esteem. A high level of self-esteem can not only be the result of a really existing positive evaluation but may also reflect 'defensive' positive self-esteem. This type of self-esteem is based on insecurity, lack of confidence and a strong need for social approval (Franks and Marolla, 1976; Wells and Marwell, 1976). The problem with questionnaire studies is that they are not suited to distinguish whether a high score reflects genuine positive self-esteem or not (although additional measures can be helpful). If we are concerned with individual diagnostic research then of course this is a more than serious problem. However, in case of comparing (minority and majority)

groups this problem of defensive positive self-esteem among specific individuals is less urgent. Unless, of course, there are reasons to assume that one of the groups which is being compared contains relatively many of these individuals.

A related objection concerned with minority groups is formulated by Adam (1978). He argues that existing social arrears as well as prejudice and discrimination can lead either to internalisation and low self-esteem, or to militancy and excessive high self-esteem. Since most researchers only concentrate on mean scores they would be unable to see this effect. The variation in the scores can provide a possible answer. Studies which report variability of the scores, in general, do not show a higher variation among minority groups (Jacques and Chason, 1977; Hines and Berg-Cross, 1981; Verkuyten, 1986, 1988, 1992). In other words there are no systematic indications for excessive or defensive high self-esteem among minority youth.

Differences in Meaning?

It could be argued that it is often unclear whether a specific self-esteem scale measures the same construct among minority and majority groups.[2] This is especially of relevance when we are dealing with different cultural groups. If there is cultural variation in the meaning of the questions posed then of course a comparison is highly questionable, and there is also a greater chance of finding cross-cultural differences (Malpass and Poortinga, 1986).

What should be shown is that the concepts which are being used have the same meaning for different groups, and also that metric equivalence exists (Berry and Dasen, 1974). The first aspect most often comes down to an adequate translation of the questions. There are more or less standardized techniques to guarantee such a translation (Brislin, 1970). Moreover, this aspect is not always relevant in comparing minority and majority groups since many minority groups often speak the dominant language, at least as their second language. This applies to most of the studies in Table I.

Metric equivalence means that psychometrically there is similarity between the data of two or more cultural groups. Often this is checked by conducting exploratory factor analysis on the data of the separate

groups, and comparing the factor scores by measuring an index of structural similarity. Several empirical studies on self-esteem among minority and majority youth, as well as cross-cultural studies, have used this exploratory technique. Most of them find a sufficient similarity between factor structures to make meaningful comparisons in the level of self-esteem (Louden, 1981; Hofman *et al.*, 1982; Hoelter, 1983; Bagley *et al.*, 1983; Verkuyten, 1988, 1992; Watkins *et al.*, 1991).

However, showing metric equivalence is not very easy and not conclusive either (Poortinga, 1989). First, a lack of metric equivalence does not have to imply that the questionnaire measures a different construct among different groups. It can also reflect real existing differences in level of self-esteem (Kline, 1988). Second, computing a statistical measure of similarity can yield high coefficients due to chance (Bijnen *et al.*, 1986). This is one of the reasons why a plea recently has been made for the technique of confirmatory factor analysis. Several studies which have used this technique also show similarity in the structure of self-esteem scales among different cultural groups (Watkins, 1989; Watkins *et al.*, 1991). An example of a study among children which has used confirmatory factor analysis, is the one by Pallas *et al.* (1990, see Table I). They conducted a three-year panel study with three measures among Black and White children using five components of self-esteem: personal character, personal responsibility, academic, athletic and appearance (i.e. body-image). For both groups of children the same structure of self-esteem was found in all three years. For both groups the factor scores of the items were similar and this was also the case for the variance and covariance of the five factors. The authors concluded that: 'Our work helps to verify conclusions about racial and social class differences in the structure of self-esteem that heretofore had been highly tentative. We now can be more confident that models like the one we have examined here apply equally well to children from different social groups' (p. 314).

Different Response Patterns?

A comparison between minority and majority youth would be questionable if important differences in patterns of responding would exist. Among self-concept studies this is a controversial issue because specific

response patterns can not only be seen as biases, but also as expressions of underlying characteristics (e.g. insecurity, need for social approval) of the self.

Long (1969) refers to the tendency among 'disadvantaged subjects' to give extreme answers to Likert-type items, while Greenberg (1972) finds no such difference. The question of extremity is explicitly addressed by Bachman and O'Malley (1984a, 1984b). They show that Blacks are more inclined than Whites to use extreme response categories, especially the positive end of agree-disagree scales. This difference in responding would be of influence on the results. Using several national surveys in the US they show that Blacks score significantly higher than Whites when the full-scale range is used in computing self-esteem scores. This difference disappears when a truncated scoring method is employed which controls for the use of extreme response categories. In a study in the Netherlands there were no indications found of minority youth using more extreme response categories. (Verkuyten, 1988). In this study there were also no indications for the response style of yea-saying, or the tendency to agree with items regardless of content.

Another response pattern which might be of relevance is the tendency to give socially desirable answers. There are very few studies which have looked into the question of a possible difference in this tendency between majority and minority youth. One of the few examples is a study by Simmons *et al.* (1978). They found that Blacks as well as girls are more inclined to give socially desirable answers. Controlling for social desirability by means of partial correlations, however, hardly changed the results: Blacks still had a higher level of self-esteem. In the Netherlands there are two studies which found a similar results. Both Junger (1990) and Verkuyten (1992) found that especially Turkish and Moroccan youth showed a greater tendency to give socially desirable answers. These results may be meaningful in themselves since they might indicate a greater desire for social approval, or, more specifically, the desire to deflect negative evaluations (Nederhof, 1985). Apart from this, the greater tendency among minority groups to give social desirable responses did not affect the lack of difference in self-esteem between minority and majority youth in the Netherlands.

The conclusion is that there are no systematic and decisive methodological/technical explanations for the empirical finding that in general

youth from minority groups do not show lower self-esteem than majority youth. The lack of a systematic difference in favor of majority groups seems to be valid and needs a more theoretical explanation.

THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

There are several explanations put forward for the finding that minority youth do not have lower global self-esteem. For example, there are (sub)cultural explanations which stress the development of one's own values which allow a favorable interpretation of self (McCarthy and Yancey, 1971). Within a (sub)culture, divergent criteria for success and failure can be effectively defined, and also specific styles of coping can be developed. There are also more sociological explanations which stress the importance of social networks in providing emotional and practical support in the face of negative group evaluations. Especially micro-social relations with family and community would insulate self-esteem from systems of inequality and derogation (Hughes and Demo, 1989). In addition, there are more socio-psychological explanations, on which we will focus in the present study.

It has been pointed out that the assumption of a lower self-esteem among minority youth — given their usually lower status, relative social disadvantage, and confrontation with prejudice and discrimination — disregards the perspective of minorities themselves. The question how minorities themselves experience and interpret their situation is often neglected. Rosenberg (1981, p. 606) writes: 'Researchers have tended to overlook the psychological world — the phenomenal field — of the minority group member and, in doing so, have frequently reached erroneous conclusions', and Coopersmith (1967, p. 20) says: 'It is from the person's actions and relative position within (his) frame of reference that he becomes to believe that he is a success or a failure'.

There are several studies which address the different socio-psychological mechanisms which can protect the self-esteem of members of minority groups. For instance, Rosenberg (1981) discusses three principles of self-esteem formation — reflected appraisal, social comparison, and self-attribution — on which the assumption of low self-esteem among minority groups rests. However, as Rosenberg shows these principles can also be used to explain the lack of difference in self-

esteem between minority and majority groups. For instance, social comparison can restrict itself to one's own supportive community, and a system-blame interpretation is a self-protective attribution (see Taylor and Walsh, 1979).

Similary, Crocker and Major (1989) discuss three mechanisms by which stigmatized people may protect their self-esteem. First, negative feedback can be attributed to prejudice against their group. Second, outcomes can be selectively compared with those of members of one's own group. Third, those attributes on which one's own group typically fares poorly can be selectively devaluated, and at the same time those attributes on which one's group excels can be stressed and valued.

The present study is especially concerned with the implicit assumptions underlying the argument for presumed lower self-esteem among minority youth. These assumptions regard the judgements of the majority as determining a person's sense of worth and overlook the minority's vitally important point of view. Rosenebrg (1979) discusses four assumptions, and three will be empirically explored among minority youth living in the Netherlands.

First is the assumption that members of minorities know the social status of their minority group and how society in general judges the group they belong to (*awareness*). This assumption seems self-evident but what should not be forgotten is that one always lives in a limited segment of the total society. This is certainly also true for youth. So there need not always be an accurate awareness of how the broader society feels about one's own group. Much depends on the degree of contact and the type of media to which youth are exposed, and how they interpret what they see and hear.

Second, it is assumed that minorities *agree* with the judgements made about their ethnic group. This may not be the case either. One may know how the indigenous majority sees their group without accepting that view. For instance, research has shown that people are more inclined to accept positive judgments of themselves than negative ones (Swann and Read, 1981).

Third, it remains to be determined whether individuals think that group stereotypes are *applicable* to themselves or have personal relevance. It is possible to be aware of the negative judgements of society in general without feeling characterized personally by them.

Fourth, it remains to be seen whether people from minority groups *attach value* to the judgement of the society when their general worth is involved. It seems important to determine which persons are considered to be significant others. In a previous study, we found that adolescents from ethnic minorities living in the Netherlands focus more on the perceived judgements of family members than on those of non-family members (Verkuyten, 1988). This was not true for Dutch adolescents. Their global self-esteem was correlated highest with the perceived judgements of friends and teachers. So the fourth assumption which was studied among Turkish youth, did not seem valid (see also Verkuyten, 1993). In the present study we decided to continue our research by concentrating on the first three assumptions. Again we used Turkish subjects, and for reasons of comparisons Dutch as well as Moroccan youth.

METHOD

Subjects

The study was carried out in four secondary schools in Rotterdam. All four schools provide lower levels of education (skilled workers), and all four have a relatively high percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities (above 40%). The questionnaires were administered in the classroom under supervision. There were 378 respondents, 160 Dutch (52% girls), 122 Turkish (47% girls) and 96 Moroccan (46% girls). Age ranged between 12 and 15 years. There were hardly any differences in socio-economic background since all respondents belonged to the lower strata.

Instruments

The Perceived Competence-Scale-for-Children (PCSC, Harter, 1982) was used to measure self-esteem. One of the subscales of the PCSC measures global self-esteem directly. This scale consists of six items but after principal component analysis with varimax rotation five items were retained which loaded (> 0.35) on the first factor. This factor

explained 40% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha was 0.65 for the Dutch, 0.66 for the Turkish, and 0.58 for the Moroccan subjects.

The main reason to use this scale was the fact that Harter claims that she constructed this scale especially in order to be less sensitive, than most other scales, to social desirability responses. In the present study this proved to be true. All respondents completed a shortened version of Crown and Marlow's social desirability scale which was validated for the Netherlands by Nederhof (1981), and in addition the Moroccan subjects completed the Rosenberg-Self-esteem-Scale (RSS, Rosenberg, 1965). Among the Dutch, Turkish and Moroccan subjects the social desirability scale did not correlate significantly with the PCSC (all three $p > 0.10$), whereas among the Moroccans the social desirability scale correlated significantly with the RSS ($0.26, p < 0.01$).

Principal components analysis was carried out for the Dutch, Turkish and Moroccan subjects separately in order to compare the factor structure of the PCSC. So the factorial invariance of the scale was used as evidence of its comparative theoretical validity with respect to the groups being examined. The pattern of factor loadings of the five items were compared between the three groups and Tucker's coefficient, a measure of factorial invariance (TenBerge, 1977) was computed. All values were above 0.95 which indicates a nearly identical structure in all groups.

The *assumption of awareness* was measured by asking which ethnic groups, including the Dutch, live in the Netherlands under the best (most favorable), and also the second best socio-economic conditions. There were five response categories: Dutch, Turkish, Moroccans, Chinese, and Surinamese people. In addition, it was asked which group of people is most — and also second most — discriminated against in the Netherlands. The same five response categories were used. It was also asked how frequently the respondents thought that Turkish people are discriminated against in the Netherlands. There were five response categories (very frequently to never).

A possible restriction of these questions is that they concern judgements about general social stratification issues. It could be argued that these issues are quite abstract for 12 to 15 year-olds, who might not have a clear and accurate view of the larger society. To address this

point, five questions were asked about how the subjects thought that contemporaries in their direct social environment evaluate the group of Turkish people. It was asked if "most children at school" think that Turkish people, in comparison to the Dutch, work harder, behave more properly, are more honest, are smarter, and are more friendly (three-point scale).

The *assumption of agreement* was measured by asking whether the respondents themselves thought that the group of Turkish people, compared to the Dutch, work harder, behave more properly, are more honest, are smarter, and are more friendly (five questions, three point scale).

Personal relevance was measured by asking if the respondents thought they themselves were: hard working, properly behaved, honest, smart and friendly (five questions, four point scale).

RESULTS

There was no significant difference in global self-esteem between the Dutch, Moroccan and Turkish subjects ($F = 0.24$, $p > 0.10$). There was no significant difference either in the variation of the scores (F-test, $p > 0.05$).

Results for the awareness assumption are presented in Table II. This Table shows that the three groups of respondents recognize the dominant socio-economic position of the Dutch in the Netherlands. At the same time, however, around a quarter of the Turkish and Moroccan youth considered their own group as living under the most favorable conditions. In addition, also the question as to which group lived under the second best conditions showed a pattern of in-group favoritism. For example, 41% of the Turkish subjects who mentioned the Dutch as the group having the best conditions mentioned the Turks as second best. So in total 56% of the Turkish subjects said that the Turks as a group lived under the best or second best conditions. Among the Moroccan respondents 52% thought that this was the case for the Moroccan people. The questions as to which group has the worst living conditions showed a similar pattern. The Turkish subjects hardly mentioned their own ethnic group, but they especially mentioned the Moroccans. The

TABLE II
Judgements about socio-economic position and group discrimination in the Netherlands among three ethnic groups

	Dutch ($N = 146$)	Turks ($N = 115$)	Moroccans ($N = 89$)
Best Position			
Dutch	77%	69%	58%
Surinamese	7%	4%	4%
Turks	9%	21%	4%
Moroccans	2%	2%	27%
Chinese	5%	4%	8%
Chi square = 66.15, $p < 0.001$			
Worst position			
Dutch	5%	5%	4%
Surinamese	14%	20%	12%
Turks	38%	9%	49%
Moroccans	24%	38%	12%
Chinese	19%	28%	24%
Chi square = 45.08, $p < 0.001$			
Most discriminated			
Dutch	5%	9%	6%
Surinamese	30%	19%	11%
Turks	55%	42%	56%
Moroccans	6%	19%	23%
Chinese	5%	10%	5%
Chi square = 27.05, $p < 0.001$			

Moroccan subjects also hardly mentioned their own group, mentioning the Turks instead.

On the questions concerning most and second most discriminated against, a somewhat different pattern appeared (Table I). All groups of respondents were of the opinion that the Turks are the group which was most discriminated against the Netherlands. So not only the Dutch and Moroccan subjects thought that the Turks are most discriminated against but this view was shared by the Turkish respondents themselves. We checked whether this awareness of discrimination in society was related to global self-esteem. The group of Turkish subjects was divided into those who said that the Turks are most (or second most) discriminated against (N = 67), and Turkish subjects who did not agree with

this view (N = 43). There was no significant difference between the two groups for global self-esteem ($F = 2.3$, $p > 0.10$). In addition, among the Turkish subjects there was no correlation (0.04) between global self-esteem and assumed discrimination frequency of Turkish people in the Netherlands.

These results can be compared with the questions concerning what the subjects thought that 'most children at school think' about Turkish people. A substantial percentage of the Dutch subjects (on four of the five questions a percentage above 35) thought that most children at school evaluated Dutch people more positively than Turkish people. Around 60% evaluated both groups equally positively and only 5% assumed a more positive evaluation of the Turks. Among the Turkish subjects the great majority (between 71% and 78%) thought that most children at school evaluate Turkish and Dutch people equally. Around 10% thought that most children in school evaluate the Dutch more positively than the Turks. The Moroccan subjects scored in between the Dutch and Turkish subjects.

Between all these five questions there are significant intercorrelations ($p < 0.01$) and principal components analysis yielded one factor with 41% of variance explained, and with all factors loadings above 0.41. Hence a composite measure score was calculated based on the summation of all five items. A comparison between the three groups showed a highly significant difference for this measure ($F = 67.9$, $p < 0.001$). The difference is quite substantial since 20% of the variance was explained (Multiple Classification Analysis). Oneway analysis revealed that all three groups differed significantly between each other.

The subjects were asked if they themselves evaluate Turkish people more negatively than Dutch people. Principal components analysis yielded one factor with 39% of the variance explained and all factor loading above 0.62. A composite measure score of the five questions posed showed a highly significant difference between the Turkish and Dutch subjects ($F = 103.9$, $p < 0.001$). This difference was also a substantial one (27% of variance explained). Turkish subjects evaluated Turkish people equally to Dutch people ($X = 9.3$) where as Dutch subjects evaluated the Dutch more positively ($X = 11.6$). The results for the Moroccan respondents are again in between. The five questions as to what the subject themselves thought correlated significantly ($p <$

0.01) with the assumed view of most children in school. However, for the Turkish subjects this correlation was lower (0.32) compared to the Moroccans (0.45) and the Dutch (0.64). So the Turkish subjects made a more clear distinction between what they themselves thought and what most children in school presumely think, while this distinction was much less clear among the Dutch subjects.

For the Turkish subjects, principal components analysis with the five questions on the personal evaluations yielded one factor with 39% of the variance explained, and all factor loadings above 0.51. The summation of the five items correlated 0.20 ($p < 0.05$) with the assumed view of most children in school, and 0.25 ($p < 0.01$) with one's own evaluation of Turkish people. These low correlations show that self-evaluation, along the same evaluative dimensions, should be distinguished from the assumed minority group evaluation by others, and one's own evaluation of the Turks as a group.

The distinction between self-evaluation and native group evaluation can also be shown by comparing the different groups of subjects. If Turkish youth saw themselves in agreement with negative group stereotypes then they should evaluate themselves more negatively in comparison with the Dutch subjects. However, analysis of the summed score on the five self-evaluating questions showed that Turkish, and also Moroccan subjects, scored significantly higher than the Dutch ($F = 10.0$, $p < 0.01$, controlling for social desirability). In addition, global self-esteem was not associated significantly with the composite measure for the assumed minority group evaluation by most children at school (0.06, $p > 0.10$), neither with one's own evaluation of Turkish people as a group (0.08, $p > 0.10$).

CONCLUSIONS

Minority groups around the world differ in many respects which have to do with their specific features and (legal) status in the countries where they live, and also with the characteristics of those countries. For instance, the position of Turkish people as a minority group in the Netherlands is not fully comparable with that of other minority groups in other countries and especially not with Blacks in the United States. One important difference is the high level of social security in the

Netherlands, which ensures that the unemployed do not experience severe poverty. Furthermore, the Turkish are migrant laborers who have come to the Netherlands since 1970 whereas Blacks have lived in the US for centuries. Despite these and many other differences between the situation of minority groups, there are also important similarities. For instance, Turkish people in the Netherlands can be characterized as having very low social status, a relative social disadvantage in many areas, and they are confronted with prejudice and discrimination. In this respect, they are comparable not only with Blacks in the US but with most other minority groups around the world. These unfavorable living conditions for minority groups are well documented. For many years it was assumed that these conditions have repercussions for the way minority youth feel about themselves. A member of a disparaged and discriminated against minority group was assumed, in the long run, to internalize society's negative attitude towards his or her group. However, in addition to existing reviews, our review also shows that the facts tell a different story. Sixteen studies mainly conducted in the US, UK and the Netherlands were reviewed. These studies have used different well-established self-esteem measures, a variety of minority groups, and adequate control groups, and they show that there is no systematic indication for lower global self-esteem among minority youth in comparison with majority contemporaries.

It could be argued that the counterintuitive result is not valid since there are methodological/technical biases responsible for it. Four important possible biases were discussed: superficial measure; defensive positive self-esteem; non-equivalence of meaning; different response patterns. It was concluded that there are no systematic and decisive methodological/technical explanations for the empirical finding that minority youth do not show lower global self-esteem. So the empirical finding seems sound and more substantial explanations are needed.

It is critical in this respect to study the perspective of minority groups themselves. Empirically the present study focused on three implicit assumptions underlying the argument that people who belong to a minority group will come to internalize society's negative view about themselves. The three assumptions were studied among Turkish youth living in the Netherlands using Dutch and Moroccan contemporaries as comparison groups.

First, there is the assumption that minority youth know the socio-economic situation of their group and are aware of how society in general judges the group they belong to. Our results show that this is not as self-evident as it may seem. The Dutch were seen as living under the best social-economic conditions but they were closely followed by one's own minority group. So the dominant social-economic position of the Dutch was recognized but at the same time there was a clear tendency to see the position of one's own group (Turks or Moroccans) as much more favorably than that of other minority groups. In addition, questions concerning how the respondents thought that most children at school evaluate Turkish people compared with the Dutch, showed that most Turkish subjects presumed that Turkish people were evaluated equally positively. These results question the validity of the first assumption and stress the need to study the minority's point of view.

However, it could be argued that these results do not reflect an actual awareness of how society is stratified and what others think about one's own minority group, but an unwillingness to accept or admit the threatening truth which is actually known. Rosenberg (1979) shows that this argument is an oversimplification. For one thing, this is because minority youth attending desegregated schools are more likely than those in segregated schools to believe their group is ranked low in society (Rosenberg, 1979; Verkuyten, 1988). Also there is evidence that minority youth, as they grow older, become increasingly accurate in their perceptions of society's views. So our results probably do not reflect an unwillingness to confront the truth, but are a reflection of the situation of young adolescents who visit schools with a relatively high percentage of minority pupils. The results on the questions concerning which ethnic group is most discriminated against in the Netherlands, substantiates this interpretation. All three groups of respondents, including the Turks, agreed that Turkish people are most discriminated against. So among the Turkish subjects there was an awareness of how society in general treats their ethnic group. However, this awareness was not associated with global self-esteem.

The important point is that minority youth do not necessarily see their own group as living under the worst social conditions. They can also have quite a favorable view about how contemporaries in their social environment see the minority group they belong to. Also if they

are more aware of society's negative views, this does not automatically lead to self-derogation.

The second assumption is that members of minority groups are not only aware of how society thinks of their group, but that they also agree with this judgement. Our results show that this is not self-evident either. Turkish youth not only evaluated their own group more positively than Dutch subjects evaluated Turkish people, but Turkish youth, compared to the Dutch, also made a clearer distinction between how they think that most children in school evaluate their minority group and how they evaluate their group themselves. So our study offers little support for the assumption that minority youth agree with the presumed evaluations of people in their social environment. What others are presumed to think appears to be quite independent of one's own views about the group one belongs to. In fact this is not so surprising since from birth on the individual's intimate contact is with members of his or her group. So Turkish youth know from early experience that stereotypes such as Turkish people being unfriendly, dishonest and lazy, are not true. They learn to value Turkish people and Turkish culture from early on and develop an intimate knowledge of the way Turkish people are.

Third, it is assumed that negative group stereotypes are considered to have personal relevance. Minority youth are not only assumed to be aware of the negative attitudes of society, and to agree with this attitude but also to consider the negative stereotypes characteristic of the self. This third assumption appeared not to be self-evident either. Using the same five dimensions, self-evaluation was quite independent of the presumed evaluations of others and of one's own evaluation of the group one belongs to. In addition there were no significant correlations between global self-esteem on the one hand and presumed evaluation by others and one's own evaluation of the Turkish group on the other hand.

In conclusion, our results show that the three assumptions underlying the idea that social arrears and derogation lead to negative self-esteem are not invariably true. In another study we showed that this also holds for the fourth assumption of significance (Verkuyten, 1988). This assumption concerns the question which persons are considered to be significant others since it is their opinion about oneself that matters greatly. In this previous study it was shown that Turkish youth

predominantly focus on the perceived judgements of family members whereas this was not the case for Dutch contemporaries.

The fact that the four assumptions are not invariably true do not only explain why, in general, minority youth does not have lower global self-esteem. These assumptions can also be used to predict under what conditions minority status will have a negative impact on feelings of self-worth. If subjects are clearly aware of society's negative view about their minority group, and if they agree with this view, accept the personal relevance of it, and are also concerned with the people holding this view then self-esteem should be affected. To our knowledge there is no empirical research which has studied this prediction, and the present study does not have enough respondents to test it adequately. However, a study by Stager *et al.* (1983) which addressed two of the four assumptions mentioned, among so-called labeled (mentally retarded) adolescents, found empirical evidence for this prediction.

If indeed these conditions lead to lower self-esteem among minority youth then it might follow that integration in the dominant culture has certain risks for the individual. Especially an assimilative orientation where individuals from minorities identify with the dominant group and adopt the standards of this group, may involve a greater vulnerability for an actually diminishing social rejection. There is empirical evidence that among minority youth such an orientation indeed affects global self-esteem negatively (Verkuyten, 1992b).

Finally, we should stress the limits of the present study. The focus has been on global self-esteem, which is widely recognized as a central aspect of psychological functioning and well being. However, the fact that social disadvantages do not effect global self-esteem does not mean, for instance, that prejudice and discrimination do not have any substantial socio-psychological consequences for minority groups. Although we have focused on an important consequence of membership in a minority group there are many other possible consequences — e.g. ethnic and racial identity, self-efficacy — which have not been addressed and which should be studied more fully. For instance, there are several studies which have found that minority status has an effect on happiness (see Veenhoven, 1984). This was also found among minority youth living in the Netherlands. Compared to Dutch contem-

poraries, they had lower levels of life-satisfaction as well as hedonic affect, but at the same time they showed hardly any lower global self-esteem (Verkuyten, 1986b; 1989b). This suggests that minority status has a differentiated effect on different aspects of psychological well-being: not all aspects are affected in uniform manner. This of course poses the question why certain aspects are affected and others are not, and it seems important to pursue this question systematically in empirical research. In doing so, the approach presented here might be of use. It seems promising to study different assumptions underlying arguments about the effects of minority status. We have tried to show that in this way, our understanding can be extended and improved of why minority status does not inevitably has a negative effect on global feelings of self-worth, but also under what conditions such an effect can appear.

NOTES

[1] We will use the term Blacks because this is the common term in the studies we will consider. Nowadays a more appropriate term is African-Americans.

[2] Another point of criticism concerns the fact that standard measures are very Western oriented and do not address those aspects of the self which might be very important for minority group members: the aspects which are addressed in the existing scales might be relatively irrelevant for minority youth (Cress and O'Donnell, 1975; McCreary-Juhasz, 1985). This criticism is especially relevant if different components of the self are studied, such as academic and social self. For measuring global self-esteem this criticism is less relevant because most scales measure global self-esteem directly rather than through a summation of the scores on different components. This last technique is not considered very accurate for measuring global self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979; Harter, 1985).

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