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Being tolerated and minority well-being: The role of group identifications

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, a norm of tolerating group differences has been promoted by laypeople and leaders as a way to manage cultural and religious diversity. But whether such a policy is beneficial for the targets' sense of group belonging and well-being is unknown. This research investigates how being tolerated differs from being discriminated against and being accepted in its associations with affective well-being and ethnic and national identification of ethnic minorities. We test whether being tolerated is related to well-being through its association with both group identifications. With a sample of ethnic minority group members in the Netherlands (N = 518) we found that being tolerated is related to higher well-being through increased national identification, but not as strongly as being accepted. Being tolerated is different from experiencing discrimination against and being accepted, and its relations to well-being and group belonging often fall between those of discrimination and acceptance. Toleration is associated with higher well-being, but only to the extent that its targets feel included in the overarching national category.

“Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible.”

- UNESCO, Declaration of Principles on Tolerance

“Go where you are celebrated, not where you are tolerated.”

- Slogan of a gay bar in Utrecht

Introduction

Toleration implies enduring and permitting what one finds objectionable. It is argued to be a critical principle and necessary condition for living with cultural diversity (Forst, 2013; Gibson, 2006; Verkuyten & Yogeeswaran, 2017). Tolerance is promulgated by international organizations (United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization, 1995, the European Union), religious and civic associations, schools and other educational institutions, community leaders, and across a left-right political field (see Brown, 2006). For example, the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (2013) stated that “tolerance has a vital role in enabling successful coexistence of diverse groups within a single national society” (p.1). However, this enthusiasm has not been matched by research into how minorities respond to being tolerated.¹ Do tolerated minorities feel included in the national group? How does being tolerated relate to their well-being? If

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¹ There is a large literature on the nature and correlates of political tolerance, which involves the granting of political rights to disliked groups (Gibson, 2006; Sullivan & Transue, 1999). In the present research we are concerned with social tolerance, which differs from political tolerance (Erisen & Kentmen-Cin, 2016) in centering on out-groups' social and cultural practices, and more importantly we focus on the experience of being tolerated which has not been studied in the political tolerance literature.

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intergroup tolerance is indeed the way forward, it is crucial to show that it is beneficial or at least not harmful to those being tolerated.

Being tolerated offers the space to live the life that one wants but might also be offensive and inescapably patronizing and therefore an inadequate substitute for genuine acceptance (Parekh, 2000; Taylor et al., 1994; Wemyss, 2006). Although many people consider it desirable to be tolerant, they often do not find it desirable to be ‘put up with’, and describing someone as tolerated or tolerable has negative connotations (Honohan, 2013). While there is a large literature on the psychological implications of being discriminated (e.g., Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014), there has been no exploration of what it means to be tolerated. This omission is unfortunate from a theoretical point of view and also limits our ability to create and evaluate appropriate policies of toleration that are widely promoted. The present research, conducted among ethnic minority members in the Netherlands, examines whether being tolerated is distinct from being discriminated against and from being accepted. Specifically we examine how being tolerated, accepted, and discriminated against relate to well-being and whether these relationships can be explained by identification with one’s ethnic group and the national community. The aim is to examine for the first time the meaning of being tolerated for ethnic minority members.

Being tolerated, discriminated against, and accepted

Toleration is theorized to contain elements of both discrimination and acceptance, without being reducible to either (Verkuyten, Yogeewaran, & Adelman, 2019). Toleration shares with discrimination the element of dislike and disapproval of minority beliefs and practices, though it does not lead to attempts at interference. On the other hand, toleration is similar to acceptance because both entail giving others the opportunity and freedom to express themselves. Thus, tolerance can be defined as being “intermediate [emphasis added] between wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition” (Scanlon, 2003, p. 187). However, these suppositions have not yet been empirically tested from the target’s perspective. Below we outline some similarities and differences between being tolerated, discriminated against, and accepted and argue that toleration is distinct from discrimination and acceptance.

Being tolerated and being discriminated against

Tolerance safeguards overt suppression and provides minorities with the conditions for a livable life. Although it is not necessarily a form of welcoming, toleration leaves open the possibility that a person or group can be part of a shared community with the tolerators, whereas discrimination is a clear signal that one is not equal and not wanted. As long as those in a position to be tolerant are able to overcome their objections, minorities enjoy some freedom from interference and repression. In this sense, toleration can be seen as a barrier to discrimination and as making difference possible (Vogt, 1997; Walzer, 1997).

Notwithstanding these differences, being discriminated against and being tolerated are both characterized by negativity. Whereas discrimination is theorized to result from antipathy towards an entire group, toleration typically results from the disapproval of specific beliefs and practices (Verkuyten et al., 2019). However, the targets of toleration may consider the objections to their practices as objections to the group as a whole (Horton, 1996; Klein, Spears, & Reicher, 2007). Thus, the disapproval inherent in toleration may feel similar to facing outright rejection. Additionally, the tolerated may feel threatened by the conditional nature of toleration – when the majority group’s boundaries are crossed, the heretofore tolerated group might find itself facing repression (Fletcher, 1996).

Being tolerated and being accepted

Tolerance is commonly conceived of as a virtue by both laypeople in liberal societies (Why is Amsterdam so tolerant, 2007) and by scholars (Walzer, 1997). Tolerance has positive connotations of refraining from judging others and respecting their freedom of expression and thus has much in common with acceptance. The latter can be conceptualized as approving of and valuing the target group’s identity as well as the beliefs and practices that undergird it. As such, acceptance is similar to out-group respect (Huo & Binning, 2008), multiculturalist recognition (Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006), and inclusion (Adams & Van De Vijver, 2017; Jansen, Otten, van der Zee, & Jans, 2014), which have been shown to have beneficial consequences for minority groups such as boosted self-esteem (Verkuyten, 2009) and work satisfaction (Jansen, Vos, Otten, Podsiadlowski, & van der Zee, 2016). Due to this overlap between acceptance and toleration, minority groups may perceive being tolerated in the same positive light as being accepted.

However, toleration and acceptance differ in important ways. Toleration normally takes place in the context of unequal power relations and marks out tolerated minorities as deviant or inferior by dominant standards (Brown, 2006; Taylor, 1992). Toleration that takes the form of mere non-interference can veil a refusal to address structural inequalities and leaves the tolerated minority vulnerable to dominance (Galeotti, 2015; Honohan, 2013). However, these societal implication may be difficult to discern in everyday instances of toleration, and the targets of toleration may not make the distinction between being accepted and merely being tolerated. In sum, the foregoing discussions lead to the expectation that perceived toleration is an empirically distinct construct from perceived discrimination and acceptance (H1).

Toleration, group identification and well-being

Similar to being the target of discrimination, being tolerated might have implications for group identifications and well-being (Jetten et al., 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Schmitt et al., 2014). Being tolerated is likely to result in mixed feelings. Minorities may feel contentment or relief about being given the opportunity to express their identity, or feel disappointed or angry about merely being

tolerated. We suggest that these feelings are at least partly explained by the ways in which toleration affects identification with one's minority group and with the overarching or national group.

Minority group identification

According to the rejection-identification model (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999), being rejected by the majority group stimulates attachment to the minority in-group as a way to cope with discrimination. This model has received support across many groups including African-Americans (Branscombe et al., 1999), Latinx students in the United States (Cronin, Levin, Branscombe, van Laar, & Tropp, 2012), and ethnic minorities in Europe (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Solheim, 2009), and has been tested longitudinally (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Mahonen, & Ketokivi, 2012; Stronge et al., 2016) and experimentally (Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001).

As argued above, being tolerated has similarities to being discriminated against due to the implication that one's group-defining beliefs and practices are disapproved of. Toleration also comes from a position of power and may reinforce a sense of subordination in the tolerated group (Brown, 2006; Wemyss, 2006). Thus to the extent that being tolerated functions similarly to being discriminated against, it could encourage minorities to turn inward to their communities and increase their in-group identification. Another reason why being tolerated may increase ethnic identification is because it allows targets to engage ingroup-defining behaviors, which can bolster a sense of group belonging (Klein et al., 2007). For example, seeing a Muslim woman wearing her hijab in public may stimulate a sense of pride among other Muslims and encourage them to also take part in Muslim cultural practices.

National identification

Being tolerated can also be associated with how minorities relate to the national community. One may expect that minorities can easily identify with nations that profess to be tolerant, such as the Netherlands (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). In a series of laboratory studies, Prislin and her colleagues (Prislin & Filson, 2009; Shaffer & Prislin, 2011) found that participants displayed more group loyalty after successfully advocating for tolerance for differing viewpoints. Thus, being tolerated can make that minorities identify more strongly with the national community. However and similarly to perceived discrimination, if minorities interpret being tolerated as an indication of their inferior and vulnerable position, they are likely to distance themselves from the national group. This is suggested in the rejection-disidentification model (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009), which posits that rejection by the majority decreases national identification among immigrants in Finland. Similar results were found in France (Badea, Jetten, Iyer, & Er-rafiy, 2011) and the Netherlands (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). In summary, the majority's treatment shapes whether identifying with the national group is a viable option for minorities: discrimination tips the balance toward alignment with the minority group, while acceptance stimulates alignment with the overarching group. How toleration is interpreted by targets can therefore determine its relation to national identification.

Toleration contains elements of acceptance and discrimination, which manifest as inclusion and exclusion respectively. From our theoretical analysis regarding the similarities and differences between toleration, discrimination and acceptance and their possible relations with group identifications and well-being, we reason that being tolerated is intermediate between being discriminated against and being accepted. More specifically, we expect that discrimination and acceptance have opposite associations with group identifications and well-being, and that toleration falls between the two in terms of the valence and magnitude of coefficients (H2). Moreover, because studies on the relation between discrimination and well-being have found that this relation is mediated by group identification (e.g. Branscombe et al., 1999), we expect that toleration relates to well-being through its associations with ethnic identification and with national identification (H3).

The current study

The aim of the current research is to test for the first time whether the perception of being a target of toleration relates to well-being, and whether such a relationship can be explained by identification with one's ethnic and national group. Our measures of well-being concern participants' general level of positive and negative affect. We measured these separately because positive and negative affect are often weakly correlated and make independent contributions to subjective well-being (Diener & Emmons, 1984; Diener, 1994). We opted for affective rather than more cognitive measures (e.g., life satisfaction) because of the former's greater immediacy and stronger relation to intergroup attitudes (e.g., Smith & Ortiz, 2002).

We focused on participants' perceptions of group-based toleration, discrimination, and acceptance, rather than their personal experiences. This is because we are concerned with the social relations between groups, and also because this is more in line with the societal debate about toleration of ethnic minority groups (Verkuyten, 2013). Additionally, group-based perceptions of discrimination have been shown to affect well-being over and above perceptions of personal discrimination (Stevens & Thijs, 2018).

Further, we measured perceived toleration, acceptance, and discrimination both continuously and categorically. Our continuous measures were single items rated on Likert-type scales. The use of rather simple and straightforward questions reduces the problem of meaning and interpretation inherent in more complex measures and has been shown to have adequate validity and reliability in measuring perceived discrimination (Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999; Stronge et al., 2016), and also in measuring constructs such as group identification (Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2013), personal self-esteem (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001), happiness (Abdel-Khalek, 2006), and generalized trust (Lundmark, Gilljan, & Dahlberg, 2016). Our categorical measure was a forced choice item, which was intended to encourage respondents to think comparatively about how their in-group is treated. Our

reasoning was that the differences between being tolerated and being accepted or discriminated against might be more salient when explicitly compared. We expect perceived toleration to be empirically different from, but either positively or negatively related to perceived discrimination and perceived acceptance (H1). Further, we expect perceived toleration to be intermediate between acceptance and discrimination in its relations to group identifications and well-being in terms of the valence and magnitude of coefficients (H2), and that the relation between toleration and well-being is mediated by group identifications (H3). We also expect to replicate prior research on the rejection-identification and rejection-disidentification models in relation to perceived discrimination.

Cross-national research has shown that countries differ in the level of tolerance and this is likely to affect the experiences of those that are being tolerated (e.g., Van der Noll, Rohmann, & Saoglou, 2018; Weldon, 2006). We studied individual experiences in the Netherlands which is an interesting context to examine what it means to be tolerated because the country has a long history of tolerance dating from the Reformation. Non-discrimination and tolerance are also considered a key aspect of the national identity (Lechner, 2008; Van de Vijver, Breugelmans, & Scalk-Soekar, 2008). More recently, immigration and the presence of Muslim minorities has sparked strong debates about the limits of tolerance in an increasingly diverse and secular society (e.g., Verkuyten, 2013). The Netherlands' score on the Multicultural Policy Index has shown a marked drop between 2000 and 2010, indicating a retreat from multiculturalism in favor of less ambitious strategies of managing diversity (Banting & Kymlicka, 2013).

We sampled from the four largest ethnic minority groups – of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean backgrounds — who together constitute about 1.3 million people, or 7.6% of the population (Statistics Netherlands, 2018). Turks and Moroccans are mainly Muslim and have a history of labor migration. The Surinamese are Christians or Hindus and come from the former Dutch colony of Suriname, and Antilleans are from the Caribbean Islands. These four groups are visibly different from the majority in terms of religion, cultural practices and/or skin color, which mark them as potential subjects of tolerance. In terms of education, employment and housing, their position is worse than that of the ethnic Dutch, with the Turks and Moroccans being the worst off and being the least accepted and most discriminated against (Huijnk & Andriessen, 2016; Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2014).

Although the groups differ in various ways we did not systematically investigate ethnic group differences for two main reasons. First, our focus is on general processes underlying responses to being tolerated rather than differences between groups. Although there can be mean group differences in, for example, the perception of group discrimination and toleration, this does not have to imply that the associations between the constructs differ. Second, the sample size with the related statistical power does not allow for a systematic ethnic group comparison, and non-representative samples make it difficult to interpret possible group differences. However, we explored whether the mediation model is similar for the Muslim groups that have a history of labor migration (Turks and Moroccans) compared to the other two ex-colonial groups (Surinamese and Antilleans).

Method

Participants and procedure

A total of 518 ethnic minority participants in the Netherlands took part. Of these, 111 had a Turkish background, 65 Moroccan, 240 Surinamese, and 102 Antillean. Only data from participants belonging to one of these four groups was used. There were 258 first-generation immigrants and 260 second-generation immigrants. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 86 years old ($M = 44.7$, $SD = 14.3$). Women formed 63.7% of the sample, and 46.7% held a bachelor's degree or higher.

Respondents were reached with the help of a survey company in March 2018. They received a personalized link to the study via e-mail and were sent two reminders during the study period. The response rate was 39.4% which is similar to other research in the Netherlands (Stoop, 2005). The survey was in Dutch. Participants were debriefed about the study aims and hypotheses upon completion.²

Measures

Participants answered demographic questions about their ethnic background, age, gender, and education. In the remainder of the survey, the wording of items was matched to the participant's ethnicity: Turkish participants were asked about their Turkish identity, and so on. Unless stated otherwise, all responses were given on 7-point Likert-type scales [1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree].

Perceived toleration, acceptance, and discrimination

Continuous measures. First, following previous research that used straightforward and single items to measure perceived discrimination (Noh et al., 1999; Stronge et al., 2016), participants were asked "To what extent do you think that [Turks/Moroccans/Surinamese/Antilleans] are [discriminated against/accepted/tolerated] in the Netherlands?". Similar to discrimination and acceptance, toleration can mean different things and direct questions allow participants to respond in terms of their own understandings

² Participants were randomly assigned to one of five versions of the questionnaire, which contained different sets of questions related to the present study and several unrelated ones. Four of the versions of the questionnaire were originally intended to form an experimental study within the present research, measuring the same outcomes as the survey. However, the experimental manipulation failed and those participants' responses were combined with the survey responses. Controlling for condition did not change the pattern of results presented here.

Table 1
Means and Frequencies of Continuous and Forced Choice Measures of Toleration, Discrimination, and Acceptance.

Option	Percentage chosen by respondents	Perceived toleration	Perceived discrimination	Perceived acceptance
Toleration	39.8%	4.07 ^a	3.29 ^b	3.60 ^c
Discrimination	24.7%	3.47 ^a	4.05 ^b	3.20 ^c
Acceptance	35.5%	4.35 ^a	2.42 ^b	4.61 ^c

Note: Different superscripts across rows indicate significant differences ($p < .05$) obtained in repeated-measures analyses.

and experiences. Responses to each item were given on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all, 6 = very much).

Forced choice measure. Next, as an ipsative measure we used a forced choice format (Baron, 1996) in which participants were asked “In your opinion, which of the following best describes how [Turks/Moroccans/Surinamese/Antilleans] are treated in the Netherlands?”. The three options were: “[Turks/Moroccans/Surinamese/Antilleans] are discriminated against: they are often treated negatively and do not have the same opportunities as others”; “[Turks/Moroccans/Surinamese/Antilleans] are tolerated: they are not appreciated, but they do get the same opportunities as others”; and “[Turks/Moroccans/Surinamese/Antilleans] are accepted: they are respected and get the same opportunities as others”. In formulating the item for perceived toleration, we sought to emphasize the contrast with both acceptance (in that tolerated subjects are not appreciated) and discrimination (in that they nevertheless are treated fairly), basing our definitions on conceptualizations by Brown (2006) and Verkuyten and Yogeeswaran (2017).

After data collection, we checked whether participants who had chosen toleration (or discrimination or acceptance) as the best description of their in-group’s treatment on the forced choice measure also had the highest score on the continuous measure of perceived toleration (or discrimination or acceptance). The means, frequencies, and results of planned contrasts are presented in Table 1. The results confirmed that the forced choice measure aligns with the continuous measure and additionally show that being tolerated is a relatively common perception in our sample.

Ethnic identification

We combined two commonly used items (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004) on ethnic identification (“I feel [Turkish/Moroccan/Surinamese/Antillean]” and “I identify with [Turks/Moroccans/Surinamese/Antilleans]”) with four items adapted from Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golleddge, and Scabini (2006) to measure the satisfaction of identity. Each item had the stem “My [Turkish/Moroccan/Surinamese/Antillean] background gives me...”. The endings were: “a feeling of pride” (self-esteem), “a feeling of being capable and competent” (efficacy), “a feeling that I belong somewhere” (belonging), and “a feeling of continuity with the past” (continuity). These six items were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis, which indicated that they loaded onto a single factor which explained 71.4% of the variance. The loadings ranged from 0.77 to .90. The scale had high internal consistency, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$. We combined these items into an index of ethnic identification.³

Next we tested the fit of the one-factor ethnic identification scale in a confirmatory factor analysis, wherein we took a non-significant chi-square, a CFI value above 0.95, an RMSEA value below 0.8, and a SRMR value below 0.8 as indicators of an acceptable fit to the data, in accordance with Kline (2016)’s recommendations.

We found that when the ethnic identification scale was included in a structural model the fit was inadequate (see Model 1 in top panel of Table 2). Modification indices suggested freeing the covariance between the first two items described above, which made theoretical sense (Model 2). This improved the fit, but it remained unacceptable. Modification indices further suggested freeing the covariance between the self-esteem and efficacy items, which also made theoretical sense. This resulted in an acceptable fit (Model 3) and this model was retained for the main structural analyses in which latent variables were used.

National identification

We combined four commonly used items (Ashmore et al., 2004) to measure national belonging and involvement in the national community (“I feel Dutch”, “I identify with the Dutch”, “I feel involved in Dutch society”, and “I feel at home in Dutch society”). Exploratory factor analysis indicated that all four items loaded onto a single factor which explained 66.2% of the variance. The loadings ranged from 0.79 to .83, and the scale had high internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$). We combined the four items into an index of national identification and tested its fit to the data using confirmatory factor analysis with the same fit criteria used for the ethnic identification scale (Kline, 2016). We found that the four-item national identification scale’s fit to the data was unacceptable (see Model 1 bottom panel of Table 2). Modification indices suggested freeing the covariance between the first two items described above (Model 2), which made theoretical sense. This resulted in an acceptable fit and we used this final measure in the main analyses.⁴

³ It can be argued that the items measuring identification and identity motive satisfaction should be treated separately (Vignoles et al., 2006). However, the two constructs were not separable in a factor analysis. Re-running the main analyses with the two commonly used ethnic identification items yielded similar results to those presented below, with the main difference being that the two-item scale was no longer associated with positive affect.

⁴ We also ran a CFA model which included the items for both the national and ethnic identity scales. The results indicated that these are indeed distinct constructs, with all items loading uniquely on their expected factors.

Table 2
Model Comparisons for Ethnic and National Identification Scales. (N = 518).

Construct	Model	Chi-square	CFI	RMSEA [90% CIs]	SRMR	Δ Chi-square
Ethnic Identification	1	418.74***	0.843	0.296 [0.273, 0.321]	0.085	308.88***
	2	109.86***	0.961	0.157 [0.132, 0.183]	0.033	84.70***
	3	25.16**	0.993	0.071 [0.042, 0.102]	0.015	–
National Identification	1	134.28***	0.849	0.357 [0.307, 0.410]	0.086	132.75***
	2	1.53	0.999	0.032 [0.000, 0.127]	0.005	–

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$. Model 1, top panel = ethnic identification scale with no free covariances; Model 2, top panel = ethnic identification scale with free covariance between first two items; Model 3, top panel = ethnic identification scale with free covariance between first two items and between self-esteem and efficacy items. Model 1, bottom panel = national identification scale with no free covariances; Model 2, bottom panel = national identification scale with free covariance between first two items. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CIs = confidence intervals; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

Affective well-being

Participants answered two items on a 5-point scale to indicate how often they generally experience positive emotions such as pleasure and satisfaction, and negative emotions such as sadness and fear. We used single items, as this method has given reliable and valid results in previous research on, for example, personal self-esteem and happiness (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Robins et al., 2001). The two items were moderately negatively correlated, $r = -.27$, $p < .001$, so we treated them as separate outcome variables.

Results

Distinguishing between being tolerated, discriminated against, and accepted

As expected (H1), the zero-order correlations (Table 3) indicate that perceived toleration, discrimination, and acceptance are distinct constructs, sharing about 23% of the variance. Perceived toleration had a weak negative correlation with perceived discrimination, and a moderate positive correlation with perceived acceptance. The pattern of correlations indicates that participants understood being toleration as more similar to being accepted than to being discriminated against. Furthermore, we found that the prevalence of these perceptions differed (see Table 1). A one-way repeated-measures ANOVA showed significant differences between the average levels of perceived toleration, acceptance, and discrimination, $F(2, 1034) = 75.16$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .127$. Planned contrasts revealed that participants considered their ethnic groups to be significantly more tolerated than accepted, and more accepted than discriminated against.

Relations between ingroup treatment, group identifications, and well-being

Using maximum likelihood estimation in the lavaan package in R (version 3.5.2), we tested structural models of the hypothesized paths from perceived discrimination, toleration, and acceptance through group identifications (H2) to positive and negative affect (H3; see Figs. 1 and 2). We modelled direct paths from these social perceptions to the latent constructs of ethnic identification and national identification. Then we modelled direct paths from ethnic identification and national identification to well-being, and finally we modelled direct paths from perceived discrimination, toleration, and acceptance to well-being. Thus, we tested both the direct paths from social perceptions to well-being, as well as two indirect pathways, through ethnic and national identification. We also bootstrapped with 2000 resamples at 90% bias-corrected adjusted confidence intervals to test for mediation.

Group identifications

Continuous measures. The extent of perceived tolerance was not significantly related to ethnic identification in the structural model, although the zero-order correlation indicated a trend towards weaker ethnic identification. By contrast, perceiving one's group to be tolerated was associated with stronger national identification ($\beta = 0.185$, $SE = 0.050$, $p = .003$). The path from perceived acceptance to national identification was significantly positive ($\beta = 0.199$, $SE = 0.056$, $p = .005$). We compared the size of the coefficients using Fisher's r -to- z transformation and found a significant difference between the coefficients for toleration and discrimination ($z = 4.2$, $p < .001$). The difference between the coefficients for toleration and acceptance was not significant ($z = -0.19$, $p = .849$). Thus we found partial support for Hypothesis 2.

Forced choice. We created dummy codes for toleration, discrimination, and acceptance and made toleration the reference group. Compared to toleration, choosing discrimination as the best description of the in-group's treatment was associated with greater ethnic identification ($\beta = 0.106$, $SE = 0.133$, $p = .028$). This suggests that toleration gives less impetus to use one's ethnic group as a resource for improving one's well-being, compared to being overtly discriminated against. By contrast, toleration rather than acceptance was associated with stronger identification with the ethnic group. In this sense, being tolerated was indeed intermediate between discrimination and acceptance in terms of ethnic identification (H2). Discrimination rather than toleration was associated with weaker national identification ($\beta = -0.192$, $SE = 0.120$, $p = .001$), while acceptance was associated with stronger national

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations between Perceived Treatment of Ingroup, Group Identifications, and Affective Well-Being (N = 518).

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived Discrimination	3.17	1.21						
2. Perceived Acceptance	3.86	1.14	-0.46***					
3. Perceived Toleration	4.02	1.14	-0.11*	0.48***				
4. Ethnic Identification	4.38	1.52	0.26***	-0.13**	-0.08†			
5. National Identification	5.54	1.14	-0.25***	0.35***	0.30***	-0.13**		
6. Positive Affect	3.90	0.81	-0.01	0.24***	0.21***	0.09*	0.38***	
7. Negative Affect	2.64	0.86	0.19***	-0.17***	-0.06	0.01	0.15**	-0.27***

Note: The means and standard deviations for ethnic and national identification were derived from the averaged (i.e. not latent) scales.

† p < .1; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

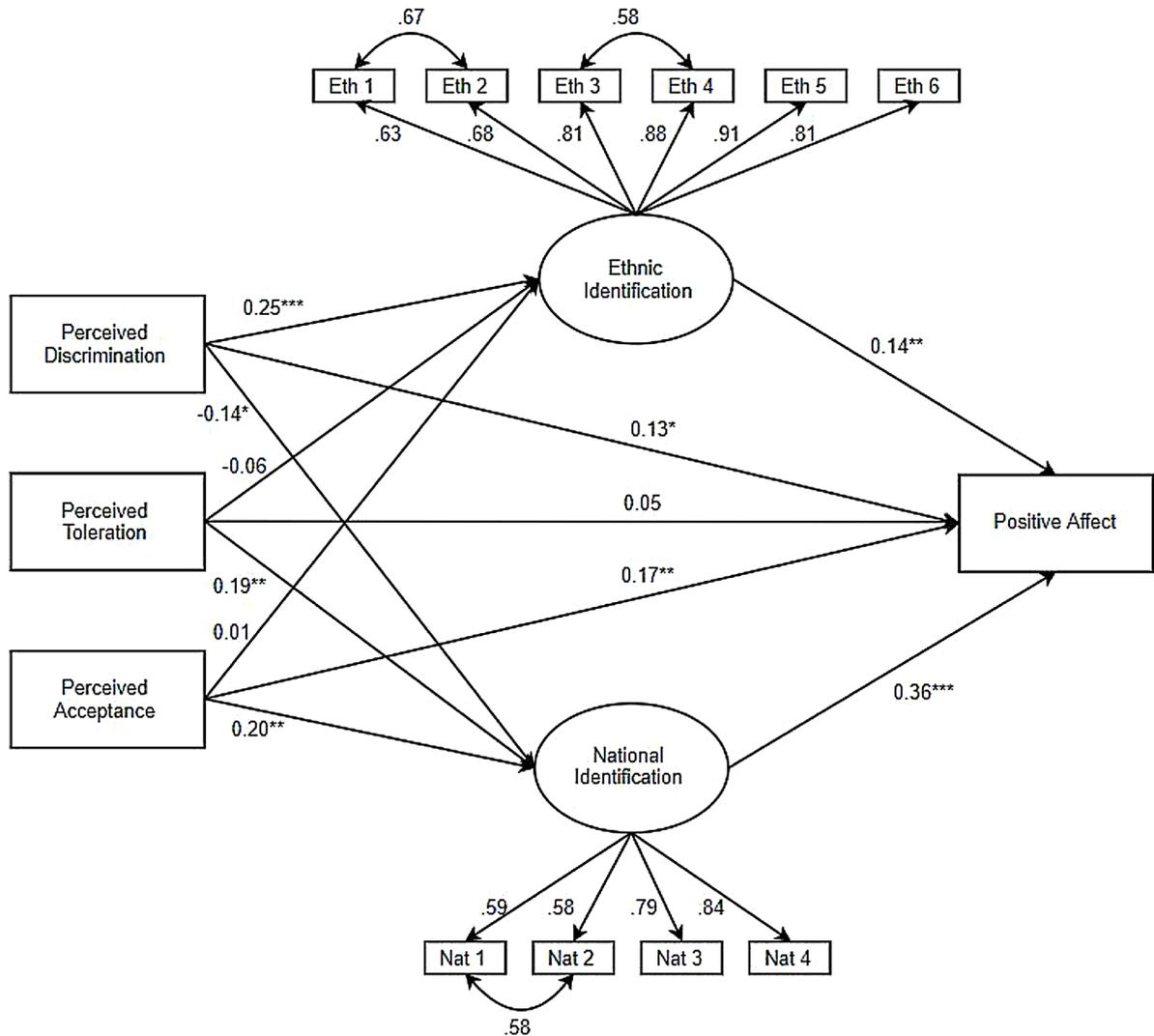


Fig. 1. Structural equation model regressing positive affect on the continuous measures of perceived discrimination, toleration, and acceptance. Note: ** p < .01; * p < .05. Eth = ethnic identification; Nat = national identification.

identification than toleration ($\beta = 0.151$, $SE = 0.101$, $p = .004$). In other words, toleration was intermediate between discrimination and acceptance in terms of identification with the national group, in support of Hypothesis 2.

Affective wellbeing

Continuous measures. Perceived toleration had a positive total effect on positive affect ($\beta = 0.209$, $SE = 0.039$, $p < .001$).

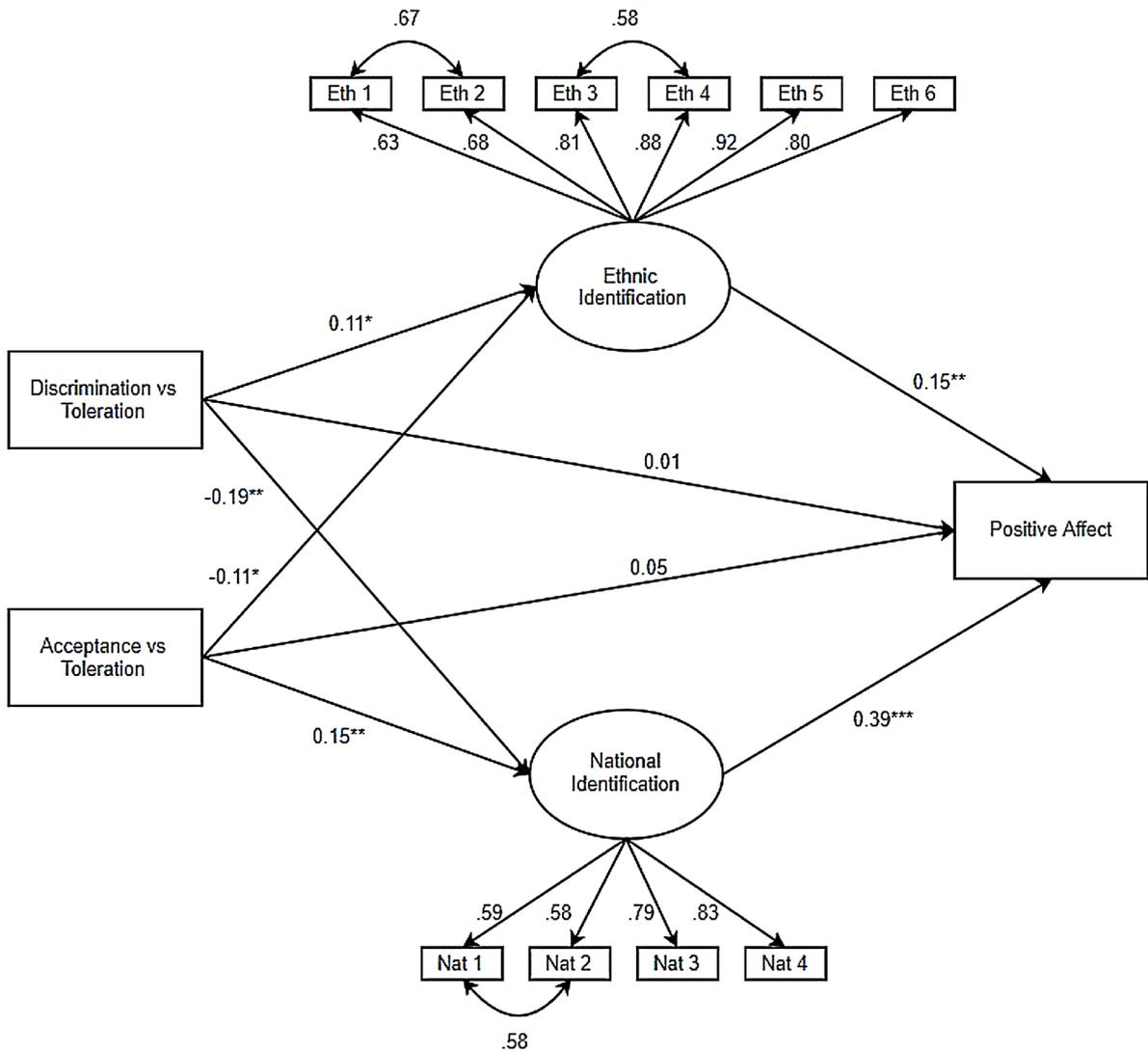


Fig. 2. Structural equation model regressing positive affect on the forced choice measure of perceived discrimination, toleration, and acceptance. Note: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. Eth = ethnic identification; Nat = national identification.

However, this path was rendered non-significant once the path through national identification was included in the model ($\beta = 0.047$, $SE = 0.038$, $p = .378$). The indirect path was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.047$, $SE = 0.015$, $p = .002$, 90% CIs [0.047, 0.066]). We therefore found support for Hypothesis 3: toleration was related to positive affect through national identification. This pattern was also found for perceived acceptance, ($\beta = 0.051$, $SE = 0.021$, $p = .013$, 90% CIs [0.018, 0.097]). The pattern for perceived discrimination was consistent with the rejection-identification and rejection-disidentification models. Discrimination had a positive association with ethnic identification and a negative association with national identification, both of which had a positive association with affective well-being. The indirect path through national identification was significantly negative ($\beta = -0.034$, $SE = 0.017$, $p = .047$, 90% CIs [-0.068, -0.004]). Additionally, the direct and indirect paths from perceived discrimination to positive affect (through ethnic identification) were positive (direct effect: $\beta = 0.125$, $SE = 0.036$, $p = .019$; indirect effect: $\beta = 0.023$, $SE = 0.010$, $p = .023$, 90% CIs [0.007, 0.047]), but this may be because our model also includes perceived acceptance, whose negative relation to discrimination may suppress the otherwise negative relation between discrimination and positive affect. Negative affect was unrelated to perceived toleration, but perceived discrimination and acceptance had positive and negative associations with negative affect, respectively.

We found partial support for Hypothesis 2 when we compared the sizes of the coefficients for perceived tolerance, acceptance, and discrimination. The total effect from toleration to positive affect was significantly different from discrimination ($z = 2.87$, $p = .004$) but not from acceptance ($z = -0.42$, $p = .675$). The indirect paths through national identification did not differ significantly from each other (all z 's < 1.09 , all p 's $> .276$).

Forced choice. Acceptance was associated with marginally higher positive affect compared to toleration. Compared to being discriminated against, being tolerated was indirectly associated with more positive affect, through national identification ($\beta = -0.142$,

SE = 0.044, $p = .001$, 90% CIs [-0.232, -0.064]). Conversely, being tolerated was indirectly associated with less positive affect, through national identification, compared to being accepted ($\beta = 0.100$, SE = 0.036, $p = .005$, 90% CIs [0.039, 0.181]). We also found that being accepted was associated with less negative affect than being tolerated ($\beta = -0.155$, SE = 0.086, $p = .001$). With these results, we found support for Hypotheses 2 and 3: the relation between being tolerated and well-being was mediated by national identification, and was intermediate between acceptance and discrimination.

Robustness checks

We conducted several robustness checks on the main results. First, we tested alternative mediational models where perceived group treatments mediated between group identifications and affective well-being. If these models fit better than our hypothesized models, it would indicate that perceptions of group treatment depend on how strongly one identifies with a group rather than vice versa.⁵ In each case, the overall fit of the alternative models was worse than the models we constructed based on theory, and in most cases the fit of the alternative model was unsatisfactory (all $\chi^2 > 271.59$, all $ps < .001$, all CFIs $< .945$, all RMSEAs > 0.086 , all SRMRs > 0.070).

Second, for each of the structural regression analyses we ran multi-group models comparing Turks and Moroccans (Muslim minorities) to Surinamese and Antilleans (ex-colonial minorities).⁶ In each case, the fit of the constrained model was not significantly worse than the unconstrained model (all $\Delta\chi^2s < 10.93$, all $ps > .356$). This indicates that the associations between perceived group treatments, group identifications and well-being were similar for the two categories of ethnic minority participants.

Third, given the overrepresentation of highly educated participants, women, and participants from former Dutch colonies (Surinamese and Antilleans), we ran separate structural regression analyses where we controlled for education (continuously), gender and ethnicity (categorically) on all paths in the models. We also controlled for age (as a continuous measure) and generational status (first- or second-generation). Including these control variables did not change the main pattern of results.

Fourth, considering the negative correlation between ethnic and national identification it might be the case that there is a suppression effect whereby the associations between the two variables and well-being are artificially lowered. Therefore, we fixed the covariance between ethnic and national identification to 0 and this did not change the pattern of results for either of the two outcomes.

Fifth, because several of the constructs were measured with single items, we applied a correction for possible measurement error by making these variables latent and estimating their errors based on the reliabilities of similar multi-item scales in the literature (see supplemental file for the details of this procedure). The use of these corrections yielded the same findings as reported which indicates that the findings were not the result of measurement error.

Discussion

Despite the widespread promotion of tolerance as a way of negotiating intergroup differences, the nature and consequences of being tolerated for minority targets is not well understood. This is important to clarify because tolerance can potentially include or exclude minorities and thus help or harm their well-being. Therefore we set out to examine for the first time whether members of ethnic minority groups perceive being tolerated as distinct from being discriminated against and being accepted, and whether being tolerated is associated with minorities' sense of group belonging and well-being. We sought to answer these questions with structural equation modelling using a sample of ethnic minority participants in the Netherlands, a context in which the desirability of tolerance of ethnic minorities is increasingly debated (Verkuyten, 2013).

We found evidence that members of minority groups perceive toleration as distinct from discrimination and acceptance and that one's in-group members being tolerated is a rather common perception. Participants saw being tolerated as different from discrimination against, but saw acceptance and toleration as more similar. Being tolerated was also related to national identification and well-being in a similar way to being accepted. This is in line with theorizing about tolerance which claims that toleration offers minorities the possibility to live the life that they want (Walzer, 1997). Thus, ethnic minority individuals appear to make a meaningful distinction between being tolerated on the one hand and being discriminated against and being accepted on the other, and they perceive being tolerated more in a positive light, similar to being accepted.

Being tolerated was related to stronger national identification. This replicates experimental research showing that when in a particular situation minorities successfully advocate for greater tolerance, they identify more strongly with the superordinate group (Prislin & Filson, 2009; Shaffer & Prislin, 2011). We extended these findings by focusing on more general perceptions of group-based toleration among members of real-world groups. Furthermore, we found that perceived toleration was associated with higher well-being, and as predicted, this relationship was mediated by increased national identification. Thus, toleration seems to provide an opportunity for ethnic minorities to feel included in the host society and thereby seems to function similarly to perceived acceptance. However, when respondents explicitly compared tolerance to acceptance, differences emerged in the relations to group identifications and well-being. Respondents who indicated that acceptance, and not toleration, best described their in-group's treatment reported significantly stronger national identification, more positive affect, and less negative affect. Future experimental research is

⁵ These results should be interpreted with caution, because the direction of causality cannot be determined using correlational data (Thoemmes, 2015).

⁶ Due to sample size limitations, we could not run separate models for each of the four ethnic groups.

needed to clarify whether noting the differences between toleration and full acceptance results in lower well-being. For the time being, our findings suggest that one should exercise caution in recommending tolerance at the expense of full acceptance, because being tolerated might be a poor substitute for the many benefits of being accepted. Toleration implies disapproval of what one believes and practices and is considered inescapably patronizing and therefore might be an inadequate substitute for the appreciation and respect that minority members need and deserve (Parekh, 2000; Taylor, 1992). For instance, the Netherlands' and Quebec's tolerance of religion in the private sphere coupled with bans on wearing headscarves in public may discourage Muslim minorities from feeling included within the nation.

Our results support the notion that tolerance is intermediate between discrimination and acceptance (Scanlon, 2003). The participants made a clear distinction between being discriminated against and being tolerated, which was also reflected in the associations with group identification and well-being. While discrimination was related to higher ethnic and lower national identification, the pattern for tolerance was reversed. We also found evidence that being tolerated is “a welcome improvement on being the object of intolerance” (Horton, 1996, p. 35): compared to discrimination, perceived toleration was associated with more positive affect. However, toleration does not seem to encourage drawing on one's minority group membership as a coping resource, whereas discrimination does. Tolerating minority practices is argued to stimulate the expression of one's minority identity (Verkuyten et al., 2019), but our results suggest that this is not necessarily the case. Discovering when and why being tolerated affects minority identity expression and also identity-based collective action for social change (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) is an important goal for future research.

We only found significant associations concerning being tolerated, group identification, and well-being when considering positive, but not negative affect. This demonstrates that positive and negative emotions are not merely inverses of each other (Diener, 1994) which is also indicated by their low intercorrelation. Previous research has also found that ethnic identification is more strongly related to positive well-being outcomes than negative ones (Smith & Silva, 2011). It may be that one cannot help but feel negative emotions when perceiving one's in-group to be discriminated against. Ethnic group identification may restore positive feelings of self-esteem and connection (Jetten et al., 2001), but this compensation does not necessarily mean that the rejection hurts any less. Other factors, such as one's individual resilience, may come into play in protecting against negative emotions in a way that associating with social groups may not.

Limitations and future directions

Several limitations of our study offer suggestions for future research. First, we relied on cross-sectional data, which limits the conclusions we can make about the directions of influence. Future experimental and longitudinal work should investigate whether toleration causes changes in-group belonging and well-being.

Second, many of our instruments were single-item measures. Single items are attractive options in long surveys and have been used effectively to measure perceived discrimination (Noh et al., 1999; Stronge et al., 2016), self-esteem (Robins et al., 2001), happiness (Abdel-Khalek, 2006), group identification (Postmes et al., 2013), and generalized trust (Lundmark et al., 2016); Further, our findings for perceived discrimination replicated what has been found with multiple-item measures in testing the rejection-identification and rejection-disidentification models. However, the use of single items is less detailed and reliable than multiple-item measures. Developing a more extensive measure of perceived tolerance would be useful, particularly in terms of how minorities themselves understand and interpret the experience of being tolerated.

Third, it is useful and interesting to focus not only on perceptions of one's minority group being tolerated but also consider experiences of personal toleration. It might be a more negative experience to be merely tolerated personally than at the level of the in-group as a whole. Meta-analyses have found differential consequences of personal and group perceptions between contexts and for specific groups (Schmitt et al., 2014).

Future research should also investigate whether being tolerated functions similarly in places other than the Netherlands with its specific history with toleration and current retreat from multiculturalism (Banting & Kymlicka, 2013). Western European citizens' tolerance of ethnic minorities has been found to be lower in societies where the dominant culture is more institutionalized in laws and policies (Weldon, 2006), whereas acceptance of wearing visible minority religious symbols is higher in European societies with higher societal religiosity (Helbling, 2014; Van der Noll et al., 2018). These findings demonstrate that cross-national differences matter for the degree of tolerance in a society and it is likely that these differences are also relevant for the degree and meaning of being tolerated. The institutionalization and public endorsement of civil liberties and democratic values, the degree of religiosity or secularism, citizenship criteria (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014), and existing migration and integration policies (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997), might all be relevant for the experience of being tolerated.

Furthermore, future research could examine whether being tolerated has similar meanings for other minority groups, such as refugees and LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual, etc.) groups. Lastly, a large proportion of our participants were relatively highly educated and were able to answer the survey in Dutch. This may indicate that they are more integrated into Dutch society and might experience more toleration or understand it differently from a less integrated sample. Future studies should test this possibility.

Conclusions

This study focused on the important question of what it means to be tolerated, a question that rarely receives attention despite the prominent place of tolerance in contemporary political and policy discourse (Brown, 2006). It has been argued that toleration is

intermediate between discrimination and acceptance (Scanlon, 2003) and the current research is the first one that has empirically corroborated this proposition from a targets' perspective. Although much is known about the social psychological implications of being discriminated (Schmitt et al., 2014) and there are some studies on feeling accepted (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010), there is hardly any research on the implications of being tolerated. This is unfortunate because toleration is increasingly promoted as a viable approach to diversity, but its relations to inclusion and exclusion have not been adequately investigated.

This study highlights both the promise of toleration as well as its possible pitfalls. Toleration has the potential to improve targets' well-being, but only to the extent that it allows space for the tolerated group to be part of the overarching category and participate in public life. For its targets, toleration is certainly an improvement compared to facing discrimination, but full acceptance seems better still. A pressing question is whether toleration can be a stepping stone or an obstacle to full acceptance and respect for minority practices and beliefs. In this study, those who felt tolerated felt more included in the national group, but it remains to be seen whether this inclusion is genuine. Due to its generally positive connotations and similar functioning to acceptance, toleration can be cast as an act of good will which can inadvertently cause minority's demands for full acceptance and inclusion to seem unreasonable. It is important to find out when and why toleration is the way forward or rather a diversion from equality.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary material related to this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.10.010>.

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