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Elif Çelebi[a], Maykel Verkuyten[b] and Natasa Smyrnioti[b]

[a]Department of Psychology, İstanbul Şehir University, İstanbul, Turkey; [b]European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT
The question of Kurdish language rights has been a central issue in the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. The current study examined endorsement of Kurdish language rights in relation to intergroup factors (i.e. group identifications, cross-group friendships, perceived discrimination, and perceived out-group beliefs about state unity) among self-identified Turkish and Kurdish participants. The results indicate that Turks were much less in favour of these rights than the Kurds. In addition, for the Turks, higher national and ethnic identification were associated with lower support for Kurdish language rights, while cross-group friendship, perceived discrimination of Kurds and the belief that Kurds endorse national unity were associated with more support for rights. For the Kurdish participants, stronger national identification seems to undermine the mobilizing meaning that Kurdish group identification has for language rights support. Furthermore, friendship with Turks can undermine the support for rights because it strengthens national identification and reduces ethnic identification.

The social and political importance of minority rights in general and of linguistic rights in particular (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1995) is widely acknowledged. For example, the 1992 United Nations 'Declaration on Minority Rights' emphasizes minority rights protection for all groups (Thornberry 1991), and the continuing importance of these rights has been emphasized in the UN's Human Development Report (2004) and the Council of Europe's report (2014). The issue of minority and linguistic rights has been studied from different perspectives, such as international law, human rights, history, political science, and sociology. Not much attention has been paid, however, to

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people's attitudes towards minority rights and the social psychological inter-group factors explaining these attitudes (e.g. Evans and Need 2002; Verkuyten and Yildiz 2006). In addition, existing studies tend to examine the dominant majority group's view on minority rights (e.g. Dixon and Ergin 2010) while ignoring the perspective of minority groups.

We focused on the context of Turkey and examined the support for Kurdish linguistic rights among self-identified Turks and Kurds.[1] Language is at the heart of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict and is an important defining attribute that 'proves' one's separate and authentic group identity and provides access to one's culture (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1995). We investigated to what extent the attitude towards Kurdish linguistic rights is related to ethnic and national identification, cross-group friendships, perceived discrimination, and perceived endorsement of state unity by the out-group. Our main aim was to investigate whether the role of these intergroup factors in explaining the endorsement of Kurdish language rights differs between self-identified Turks and Kurds. Empirical support for this expectation would indicate that both groups do not only differ in their level of support of Kurdish rights but also in the social psychological processes behind it.

Some recent studies investigated the Kurdish conflict but they used relatively small samples and did not concentrate on minority rights (e.g. Bilali 2014; Çelik and Blum 2007; but see Dixon and Ergin 2010). Furthermore, investigating minority rights in Turkey is timely and appropriate because of the peace process that began with the cease-fire agreement between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in 2013.

Linguistic minority rights

The language rights issue is more than about 'just language' and has to do with power, inequality, and discrimination in society. Minority–majority language hierarchies are politically and socially defined (May 2006, 2011) and in different countries and contexts, linguistic rights take different forms. Yet, in most cases it is the dominant group that ultimately formulates these rights (see Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1995).

There are various examples of language playing an identity defining role in ethnic and political conflicts, such as the Basque language marking Basque identity in Spain (Echeverria 2003), and the marginalization of Uyghur as the language of instruction in schools in the Uyghur autonomous area in China (Minority Rights Group International 2008). Another example is the Kurdish language in Turkey. Kurds are the largest ethnic minority group in Turkey and compose around 18% of the population (Konda 2011).

The Turkish state historically adopted an ideology of centralized power, and a single nation with a single language that resulted in the denial of the existence of Kurdish language and identity. As in most other nationalisms,

language was at the heart of the nation-building project. Turkish became a defining attribute of the modern Turkish national identity. The Turkish state's assimilationist practices resulted in a ban of the Kurdish language, replacing Kurdish names of places and children with Turkish ones, in an attempt of 'Turkification' of the national identity on the basis of Turkish language and culture (Zeydanlıoğlu 2012). The insurgent organization, the PKK, initiated an armed attack against the Turkish army in 1984. Since then, it is estimated that about 40,000 people have been killed in either attacks by the PKK or as a result of the Turkish army's military campaigns against the PKK (Çelik and Kantowitz 2009).

In accordance with the European Union requirements, the Turkish state initiated some legal reforms to give Kurdish citizens cultural rights. In 2003, the law on *Different languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives* allowed to teach Kurdish in private courses. A public television channel in Kurdish and the establishment of an *Institute of Living Languages* to provide post graduate education in Kurdish, are examples of the changes introduced by the government, since the 'Kurdish opening' was initiated in 2009 (Kirişçi 2011).

In March 2013, PKK declared cease-fire and the end of the armed struggle era. In September 2013, new measures were launched by the government as part of the peace process. This democratization package allows the use of original Kurdish names of places, and the possibility of Kurdish language education in private schools but not in public ones because of the provision in the Turkish constitution that 'Turkish is the sole official language in Turkey' (Uçarlar and Derince 2012).

One of the prominent features of the Kurdish political movement is a claim to ethnic and linguistic identity recognition. With this claim the unifying narrative of the single Turkish national identity is challenged (Keyman 2012). Education in Kurdish language has become a political issue and received the Kurdish community's widespread support (Öpengin 2012). It was argued that education in Kurdish is a human rights issue and that the state is responsible for providing the conditions for this. Furthermore, Turkish-only education policy in public schools was criticized for resulting in academic failure and language loss for Kurdish speaking students (Uçarlar and Derince 2012). It was recommended that a mother-tongue-based multilingual education should be provided, especially in Kurdish-populated areas (Çelik and Blum 2007; Derince 2012).

Group interests

For minority groups, minority rights offer the possibility of maintaining their own distinctive culture and identity, and obtaining more equal social status in society. Majority group members, on the other hand, might oppose

minority rights because these are seen as a threat to the privileges and power of one's group and the unity of society. In their study of attitudes towards minority rights in thirteen East European countries, Evans and Need (2002) found that minority groups were much more in favour of minority rights than majority groups. Furthermore, in a study in the Netherlands it was found that Kurdish immigrants supported Kurdish minority rights in Turkey more than Turkish immigrants (Verkuyten and Yildiz 2006). Hence, we expected that in the context of Turkey, self-identified Kurds support Kurdish minority rights more strongly than self-identified Turks. More importantly, however, our aim was to investigate whether the role of several social psychological factors explaining the endorsement of Kurdish language rights differs between Turks and Kurds.

Ethnic identification

Minority rights are about groups and group identities and therefore strongly implicate group identification processes. Research has demonstrated that those individuals with high in-group identification are more worried about the status and position of their in-group than lower identifiers (see Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1999). This is particularly the case when the value of the group identity is threatened and group interests are at risk.

In conflict situations group identification fosters in-group solidarity and activism on behalf of one's group, and high identifiers tend to be more concerned about the continuity and rights of their group (Van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears 2008). Minority members who identify with their ethnic in-group will consider it important to participate in social and political life as group members while maintaining their own language and culture. Therefore, supporting minority rights can be considered to be a collective strategy for coping with a negative group identity and for challenging group-based hierarchy and the status quo. For example, research shows that for minority groups in the USA and Israel, a positive correlation exist between in-group identification and ideologies that challenge the legitimacy of the status hierarchy, whereas for majority groups a negative association was found (Levin et al. 1998). Therefore, while we predict a positive association between ethnic group identification and the endorsement of minority rights for the Kurdish participants, we expect a negative association for the Turks. Because Turks are the national majority group, the more they identify with their in-group, the more they can be expected to try to protect their group interests and status position that is threatened by Kurdish minority rights. Thus, for the Turkish participants higher ethnic identification was expected to be associated with lower endorsement of Kurdish linguistic rights.

National identification

Whereas ethnic identification can be expected to be differently associated with the endorsement of Kurdish minority rights, national identification is likely to show a similar association among both groups of participants. Turkish citizenship is based on the majority group's language and culture and there is a long history of *Turkification* policies for minority groups with the aim of creating an overarching national identity. In societies with an assimilationist history, such as Turkey, a shared national identity tends to imply that social cohesion is achieved by fostering the values of the majority group and by undermining the identities of minority groups. Bilali (2014) shows that among Turks and Kurds national identification is associated with a similar understandings of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict, in line with the official state narrative of unity and intergroup harmony. For both groups higher national identification was related, for example, to lower endorsement of a minority rights understanding of the conflict. Therefore, for both the Turkish and Kurdish participants, we expected that higher national identification will be associated with lower support of Kurdish language rights.

Dual identity

For many Turks, national and ethnic identity are highly important, very closely related and quite similar in meaning (Bilali 2014). The Turkish constitution defines a Turkish citizen as a 'Turk', and this term is used interchangeably to refer to the ethnicity and nationality of ethnic Turkish persons. For the Kurds, however, there tends to be a distinction between ethnic and national identity making it possible to examine the role of dual identity in the endorsement of Kurdish language rights.

In their social psychological analysis of collective action, Simon and Klandermans (2001) argue that a politicized collective identity is typically a dual identity, because of the combination of perceptions of injustice derived from identification with the ethnic minority group with feelings of entitlement derived from identification with society. This means that dual identity should stimulate the endorsement of minority rights and minority collective actions, and there is supporting empirical evidence for this among immigrant groups (e.g. Fischer-Neumann 2014; Simon and Grabow 2010). The theoretical reasoning about politicized dual identity leads to the prediction that self-identified Kurds with a stronger dual identity will endorse Kurdish minority rights more strongly (*dual identity model*).

Yet, the situation of non-immigrant minority groups in historically assimilationist societies might be different. A shared national identity that emphasizes the majority groups' norms, values, and language for promoting unity and harmony deflects attention from intergroup inequalities and undermines

minority group's culture and demands for equal group rights (Bilali 2014; Saguy et al. 2009). In contrast to the politicized dual identity model this would mean that when national identification is relatively high, stronger ethnic minority group identification does not promotes activism on behalf of one's own minority group. This leads to the contrasting prediction that self-identified Kurds with a stronger dual identity will endorse Kurdish minority rights less strongly (*minority identity model*). In testing these two predictions we follow previous research and examined dual identity in terms of the combination of ethnic and national group identifications (e.g. Fleischmann, Phalet, and Swyngedouw 2013; Martinovic and Verkuyten 2014). Thus, ethnic and national identification were expected to interact in predicting support for Kurdish language rights

Perceived discrimination

The question of minority rights is closely linked to the value of equality and is appreciated as an essential approach for addressing inequalities and structural discrimination in the society. It is not sufficient that ethnic groups can maintain their culture, they should also be able to take part equally in the society. Research has shown that acknowledgment of discrimination of minority groups is positively related to the support for minority rights (Verkuyten and Yildiz 2006). Therefore, we predict that higher perception of discrimination of Kurds will be associated with stronger endorsement of minority rights. In other words, people who perceive more discrimination are expected to be more in favour of these rights and this association is expected for both groups of Turks and Kurds.

Cross-group friendships

The contact hypothesis, proposed by Allport (1954), posits that cross-group contact results in more positive attitudes towards the out-group. For majority group members a great number of studies provide supporting evidence for this proposition, also in relation to support for affirmative action and other policies to redress inequalities (see Pettigrew and Tropp 2011). Cross-group friendships in particular are effective in improving out-group attitudes. This means that it can be expected that for the self-identified Turkish participants a higher number of Kurdish close friends is associated with a stronger endorsement of Kurdish minority rights.

Cross-group friendship can have a different impact for Kurdish people. Positive contact generally improves intergroup attitudes. For minority members this may imply a lower perception of inequality and injustice, and less readiness to support regulations and initiatives to expose and redress inequalities and disadvantages and to demand for change (Reicher 2007). Contact can lead to

perceiving greater similarity between 'us' and 'them' and a more positive characterization of the advantaged majority group. Because of the positive contact, one comes to like and trust the advantaged, and it is difficult to rise up against friends. Research in Israel, India, South Africa, and the USA has demonstrated that positive contact is associated with more favourable attitudes towards the advantaged majority group and at the same time with reduced awareness of group inequality and decreased support for social change (e.g. Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux 2007; Saguy et al. 2009). This leads to the prediction that for self-identified Kurds a higher number of Turkish close friends is associated with lower support for Kurdish minority rights.

Meta-perception of national unity

Minority rights are often contested on the basis of concerns for the unity and stability of the country. According to this view, cultural diversity and group rights increase the possibility of conflict and weaken social cohesion and the unity of the state (see Barry 2001). Hence, the more important state unity is considered to be the less participants tend to endorse Kurdish minority rights (Verkuyten and Yildiz 2006).

   Here we do not focus on participants' own views but rather on so-called meta-perceptions: the perception of the importance attached to national unity by the out-group. Meta-perceptions, or what one thinks that the out-group thinks or wants, have been found to be important for prejudicial attitudes and trust of out-groups (Vorauer, Main, and O'Connell 1998; Shelton, Richeson, and Salvatore 2005). In Turkey meta-perceptions about national unity are relevant because ethnic Turks often think that the Kurdish claim for minority rights challenges or undermines the unity of the Turkish state (Kentel, Ahıska, and Genç 2007). This could mean that Turks accept Kurdish minority rights less when they think that Kurds do not support national unity. Phrased positively, this leads to the expectation that Turkish participants will be more supportive of Kurdish minority rights when they think that among the Kurds there is the belief that all citizens belong to the same nation state and should work together.

   In contrast when Kurdish participants believe that the majority group of Turks strongly endorses national unity and harmony they might be less in favour of Kurdish language rights. The reason is that when Kurds believe that Turks emphasize national unity they might be afraid that an emphasis on Kurdish rights creates a backlash in the form of strengthening of assimilation policies for creating a unified nation state based on Turkish ethno-cultural identity (Çelik 2000).

In summary

To summarize, we expected self-identified Kurds to support Kurdish language rights more than self-identified Turks, and that higher ethnic identification is

related to stronger support of these rights among the Kurds and to weaker support among the Turks. Furthermore and for both the Turks and Kurds, national identification was expected to be associated with lower support of Kurdish language rights. Additionally, we explored among the Kurdish participants whether a stronger dual identity was related to higher support of language rights (politicized dual identity) or rather lower support (politicized minority identity). A higher number of cross-group friendships was expected to be associated with weaker support of Kurdish language rights among the Kurds but to stronger rights support among the Turks. Higher perceived discrimination of the Kurds was expected to be associated with stronger support of Kurdish language rights among both groups of participants. Finally, for the Turkish participants the perception that Kurds endorse national unity and harmony was expected to be positively associated with support for Kurdish language rights. In contrast, for the Kurdish participants the perceived endorsement of national unity by the Turks was expected to be negatively associated to the support of language rights.

Method

Participants

Because the Kurdish conflict is a politically sensitive topic in Turkey, it is difficult to recruit participants and conduct studies on it. We managed to involve relatively large and comparable samples of Turkish and Kurdish students whereas previous research has used small samples (e.g. Bilali 2014; Bilali, Tropp, and Dasgupta 2012). The data was collected in 2012 among 625 participants from 8 colleges and universities in 7 cities who participated voluntary and anonymously in a research on societal issues in contemporary Turkey. In 2012, the political climate regarding the Kurdish conflict was relatively stable. It was after the democratic/Kurdish opening in 2009 initiated by the government and before the cease-fire agreement in March 2013.

Of the participants, 54% self-identified as Turkish and 46% as Kurdish. We used the well-known self-identification method because in this way participants themselves decide about their ethnic group membership. Of the participants 54% was female (46% male) and they were between 18 and 27 years old ($M = 21.17$, SD = 1.88). On a question with a seven-point scale, the participants described the economic status of their families as middle class ($M = 4.0$, SD = .89). The Kurds had a somewhat lower perceived economic status than the Turks ($M = 3.84$, SD = .98, and $M = 4.17$, SD = .77, respectively, $t = 5.63$, $p < .001$). On a political self-placement scale (ten-point scale) participants placed themselves slightly to the left on the political spectrum ($M = 4.82$, SD = 2.19) with the Kurds ($M = 3.75$, SD = 2.01) placing themselves more at the left of the scale than the Turks ($M = 5.72$, SD = 1.96), $t = 12.66$, $p < .001$.

Measures

Support of Kurdish language rights was measured with seven items (five-point scales) related to current debates in Turkey and adapted from previous research (e.g. Verkuyten and Yildiz 2006). Three sample items are, 'people have a right to use Kurdish language in public life', 'The governmental offices (e.g. the parliament, hospitals, and judicial system) should provide services in both Turkish and Kurdish languages', and 'Kurdish language should be allowed in the media'. A scale based on the seven items had high reliability (alpha = .94 for Turks; alpha = .95 for the Kurds).

Ethnic and national identification were each measured with four items (five-point scales). These items were adapted from previous research among Turkish and Kurdish participants (e.g. Verkuyten and Yildiz 2006). Ethnic identification was measured first and participants were asked to indicate themselves the ethnic group they belonged to and subsequently to indicate how strongly they identified with this group (e.g. 'My ethnic group is very important for how I see myself', 'I strongly identify with people of my ethnic group'). The national identification items specified national citizenship (e.g. 'I am proud to be a citizen of Turkey', 'I have a strong feeling of being a citizen of Turkey'). The ethnic identification items (alpha = .89 for Kurds as well as Turks) and the national identification items (alpha = .87 for Kurds, alpha = .92 for Turks) revealed high reliability. We found that the items used for the measurement of ethnic and national identification represented two different constructs, using Principal Components Analysis with Oblimin Rotation.

Perception of discrimination

Perception of discrimination was measured by two items: 'In general, how often are Kurds being discriminated in daily life?' and 'In general, how often are Kurds being discriminated in schools or at work?' The items are strongly correlated ($r = .87$). An average score of these items was computed.

Cross-group friendships the Turkish and Kurdish participants were asked to indicate how many of their close friends were, respectively, Kurdish and Turkish. A five-point scale was used with the response categories, None (1), Around 1/4th (2), Around half (3), Around 3/4rd (4), and Almost all (5).

The perceived endorsement (meta-perception) of national unity was measured with two items (five-point scales). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with two questions concerning the perceived belief of the out-group: 'there is among the Kurds [Turks] a strong feeling that we all belong to the same nation state' and 'there is among the Kurds [Turks] the feeling that we are one country and should work together'. For both groups of participants the items are strongly correlated ($r = .88$). Hence, for both the Turkish and Kurdish participants a measure of perceived out-group endorsement of national unity was computed.

Analyses

On a number of items the number of missing values was above 5% and these missings were imputed by means of Expectation Maximization in SPSS. All analyses were repeated using the non-imputed data in order to see whether this affected the results. Since the results did not differ substantively, the imputed dataset was used.

Results

Descriptive findings

As shown in Table 1, there were significant differences between Kurds and Turks for all measures except for perceived out-group national unity. The Kurds had higher ethnic and lower national identification than the Turks. Furthermore, it appears that the Kurds had more Turkish close friends than the Turkish participants had Kurdish friends. Additionally, the Kurds compared to the Turks perceived more discrimination of the Kurds.

Ethnic and national identification were not only relatively high among the Turkish participants but they were also strongly correlated (Table 2). In contrast, among the Kurdish participants the association between ethnic and national identification is negative and the two identifications show contrasting associations with the other measures.

Support of Kurdish language rights

We examined the support of Kurdish language rights using stepwise linear regression. In the first step of the model we included the different variables and in the second step we added the interactions between ethnic group and the explanatory variables. The findings are presented in Table 3. In Step 1, there were no significant effects for age, gender, perceived SES, and political orientation (not shown in Table 3), but a strong effect for ethnic group. Not surprisingly, the Kurdish participants were much stronger in

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for the main measures and for the Turkish ($N = 376$) and Kurdish ($N = 320$) participants.

	Turks		Kurds		
	M	SD	M	SD	t-Value
Ethnic identification	3.22	1.16	3.44	1.21	2.49*
National identification	3.95	1.41	2.29	1.30	17.78***
Cross-group friendships	1.94	0.63	2.59	0.89	10.96***
Discrimination of Kurds	3.08	1.02	4.03	1.01	12.31***
Out-group national unity	2.60	1.28	2.66	1.47	0.55
Kurdish language rights	2.15	1.18	4.53	0.89	30.22**

*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.
***$p < .001$.

Table 2. Correlations between the different measures and for the two groups of participants: Turks below and Kurds above the diagonal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ethnic identification	–	−.21**	−.30**	.24**	−.08	.29**
2. National identification	.66**	–	.29**	−.41**	.51**	−.46**
3. Cross-group friendships	−.19**	−.15*	–	−.27**	.18**	−.23**
4. Discrimination Kurds	−.15*	−.28**	.09	–	−.27**	.37**
5. Out-group national unity	.06	.11*	.15**	−.02	–	−.31**
6. Kurdish language rights	−.47**	−.51**	.26**	.31**	.14*	–

*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.

favour of Kurdish language rights than the Turks (see Table 1). Furthermore and as expected, higher national identifiers were less supportive of Kurdish rights, and higher perceived discrimination of the Kurds was associated with stronger support for Kurdish rights. In addition there were significant main effects for cross-group friendships and perceived out-group beliefs about national unity but these effects were qualified by a significant inter-action with ethnic group in Step 2. The interaction between ethnic identification and ethnic group was also significant in the second step of the regression analysis (Table 3).

To examine these interactions we conducted regression analyses separately for the Turkish and Kurdish participants. For both Kurds and Turks, higher national identification was associated with lower support of Kurdish rights ($\beta = -.29$, $t = 4.48$, $p < .001$, and $\beta = -.33$, $t = 5.75$, $p < .001$, respectively), and more discrimination of the Kurds was associated with stronger support of Kurdish rights ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.64$, $p < .01$, and $\beta = .19$, $t = 4.35$, $p < .01$, for Kurds and Turks, respectively). For the Kurds, higher ethnic identification was associated with stronger endorsement of Kurdish language rights ($\beta = .17$, $t = 3.12$, $p < .01$), while Turks who identified more strongly with their ethnic group

Table 3. Regression analysis explaining support for Kurdish language rights: standardized regression coefficients and standard errors in brackets.

	Step 1	Step 2
Ethnic group (Kurds)	.46** (.11)	.53** (.08)
Ethnic identification	−.04 (.03)	−.17** (.05)
National identification	−.36** (.03)	−.31** (.05)
Cross-group friendships	.05* (.05)	.16** (.08)
Discrimination Kurds	.15** (.04)	.15** (.05)
Out-group national unity	.07** (.03)	.13** (.04)
Ethnic idenf. × group		.43** (.07)
National idenf. × group		.11 (.07)
Friendship × group		−.31** (.10)
Discrimination × group		−.08 (.07)
Out-group unity × group		−.21** (.05)
R^2 change	.68	.03
F-value	143.63**	14.81**

*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.

supported the endorsement of Kurdish rights less ($\beta = -.22$, $t = 3.92$, $p < .01$). Perceived importance attached to national unity by the out-group was a significant predictor among the Turks but not the Kurds ($\beta = -.09$, $t = 1.51$, $p > .05$). As expected, the more the Turkish participants thought that the Kurds endorse national unity the more they accepted Kurdish language rights ($\beta = .16$, $t = 3.77$, $p < .01$). Also cross-group friendship was a significant predictor only for the Turkish participants ($\beta = .16$, $t = 3.80$, $p < .01$), with having more Kurdish friends being related to stronger support for Kurdish language rights (for the Kurds, $\beta = -.04$, $t = .77$, $p > .05$).

Dual identity

We examined for the Kurdish participants whether dual identity had an additional effect on the support of Kurdish language rights by adding in a third step of the regression analysis the interaction term between ethnic and national identification (centred scores). The results show that this interaction was significant ($\beta = .15$, $t = 3.08$, $p = .002$). Simple slope analyses indicated that higher ethnic identification was not related to stronger support for Kurdish language rights when national identification was relatively high (1 SD above the mean; $\beta = .04$, $t = .54$, $p > .10$). Yet, when national identification was relatively low (1 SD below the mean), ethnic identification was associated with support for Kurdish language rights ($\beta = .30$, $t = 4.32$, $p < .001$). This pattern of findings is in agreement with the minority identity model and not with the dual identity model.

Discussion

The question of the right to use Kurdish language in public life and institutions is a central issue in the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. The present results show that Turks were much less in favour of these rights than Kurds. More importantly, we found that for both ethnic groups some of the intergroup factors are similarly related to the support of Kurdish language rights while others show contrasting effects. This indicates that self-identified Turks and Kurds do not only tend to differ in their level of support but also in the role of some of the social psychological processes underlying their support.

To start with the commonalities, the findings demonstrate that among both groups higher national identification was associated with lower support for Kurdish language rights, and higher perceived discrimination of Kurds with higher support. The latter finding indicates that the recognition of pervasive inequalities represents a more general argument for accepting and endorsing minority rights (Verkuyten and Yildiz 2006). This argument is central in debates on minority rights and appears to influence people's views in similar ways, independently of their majority or minority group

position: also Turkish participants supported Kurdish language rights more when they recognized the discrimination that Kurds experience.

The former finding indicates the possible political downside of national identification for minority groups in a society with a long history of assimilationist policies (Bilali 2014). The literature tends to point at the positive consequences of a shared national identity for intergroup relations in society, and for the resolution of conflicts (see Schildkraut 2014). Emphasizing a common national identity draws attention away from intergroup disparities and stimulates a feeling of shared belonging and the endorsement of the unifying discourse (Keyman 2012). This, however, can have negative implications for minority groups because it ignores their grievances and interests and thereby undermines their demands for group rights. Both the Turkish and Kurdish participants who identified more strongly as Turkish citizens were less supportive of Kurdish language rights.

This political downside becomes even clearer in combination with ethnic identification. Collective action is more likely when one identifies strongly with one's disadvantaged minority group (Van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears 2008). Among the Kurdish participants higher ethnic identification was associated with stronger support for Kurdish language rights, but in particular for participants who did not simultaneously identify with the Turkish nation. This finding is in contrast to research on politicized dual identity among immigrant groups (Simon and Grabow 2010; Fischer-Neumann 2014), but in support of a politicized ethnic identity. For Kurdish participants who identify with Turkey, higher ethnic identification was not associated with stronger endorsement of the importance of recognizing the right of Kurds to publicly use their own language. This indicates that national identification can undermine the perceptions of injustice and feelings of entitlement derived from ethnic minority group identification.

We found no evidence that for the Kurds cross-group friendship had a similar undermining effect. For them, cross-group friendship was not associated with lower endorsement of their linguistic rights. This finding does not support recent theoretical reasoning and empirical research that demonstrates that for disadvantaged groups positive contact can be associated with reduced awareness of group inequality and decreased support for social change (e.g. Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux 2007; Saguy et al. 2009). The correlation between cross-group friendship and support for language rights was indeed negative, but in the regression analysis friendship had no independent effect on the support for Kurdish rights. Higher cross-group friendship was also associated with lower ethnic identification, lower perceived discrimination and higher national identification. This might indicate that friendships with Turks lead, for example, to lower Kurdish identification and therefore to less endorsement of Kurdish minority rights, or that friendships lead to higher national identification and therefore to less endorsement

of these rights. These types of indirect effects of cross-group friendship should be examined in future studies and would indicate that cross-group friendship can have an indirect political undermining effect for disadvantaged minority groups (Wright and Lubensky 2009).[2]

Among the Turks more friendships with Kurds was independently associated with stronger support of Kurdish rights. This pattern of findings is in agreement with the research literature that shows that positive effects of cross-group interaction are considerably stronger among advantaged majorities than for disadvantaged minorities (Pettigrew and Tropp 2011). It further indicates that cross-group friendship can weaken the support for unequal practices and rights. Because successful social change requires recognition by the advantaged of the unequal and unfair hierarchical situation, this finding suggest that the development of cross-group friendship has promise for social change. Future studies should further examine the role of cross-group friendship in the support for equal social policies in post conflict societies.

For the Turks, more cross-group friendship was associated with a stronger belief that the Kurds attach importance to national unity. This meta-perception was independently associated with higher support for Kurdish linguistic rights. Thus, when the Kurds were seen as endorsing national unity, Turkish participants were less reluctant to accept the use of Kurdish language in politics, government, the media and public life. This demonstrates that for Turks the belief about whether Kurds support or rather challenge the unity of the Turkish state matters for their willingness to accept minority rights that are sometimes construed as undermining this very unity (Kentel, Ahıska, and Genç 2007; Konda 2011). More generally, this finding confirms the relevance of meta-perceptions for out-group attitudes (Vorauer, Main, and O'Connell 1998; Shelton, Richeson, and Salvatore 2005). It is not only what oneself thinks and beliefs but also what one thinks that the out-group wants and does that determines people's out-group attitudes. Yet, there was no evidence that this meta-perception played an independent role in the Kurdish support for Kurdish rights. Kurdish participants who believed that Turks emphasize national unity did not show less support of these rights.

Some limitations of the current study should be noted. First of all, the 'Kurdish question' in Turkey is politically quite sensitive making it rather challenging to conduct research on it. Nevertheless and in contrast to previous studies with relatively small samples (e.g. Bilali 2014), we managed to collect data among relatively large and comparable student samples of Turks and Kurds. The findings make an important contribute to our understanding of the endorsement of linguistic minority rights, but it is unclear whether they can be generalized to the population or to other settings in which these rights are politically challenged. Some of the findings on group identifications are parallel to other studies (e.g. Dixon and Ergin 2010; Bilali 2014) suggesting that the findings have more general meaning. In addition,

the results support our theoretically derived predictions and describe some of the important intergroup dynamics of the ways that minority rights are evaluated in the Turkish–Kurdish conflict.

Since we assessed our predictions using correlational data we cannot evaluate the causal direction of the relationships. It is rather difficult to use an experimental design for manipulating variables such as cross-ethnic friendship and ethnic and national identification because of the sensitive nature of the political climate (but see Čehajić, Brown, and Castano 2008). In addition, to our knowledge, no relevant longitudinal data are available in Turkey.

To conclude, the present research suggests that advantaged and disadvantaged groups in an intractable conflict do not only differ in their support for minority rights but also in some of the underlying social psychological correlates. For the Turks, higher national and ethnic identification were associated with lower support for Kurdish linguistic rights, while cross-group friendship, perceived discrimination of Kurds and the belief that Kurds endorse national unity were associated with more support for rights. This indicates that among the Turks there are perceptions, beliefs and social interactions that work against, and others that stimulate, the endorsement of Kurdish linguistic rights. For the Kurdish participants there is evidence that national identification has negative implications for the Kurdish struggle to gain more rights and an equal social standing (Bilali 2014). Stronger national identification seems to undermine the mobilizing meaning that Kurdish group identification has for linguistic rights support. Furthermore, friendship with Turks can undermine the support for Kurdish linguistic rights because it strengthens national identification and reduces ethnic identification (Note 1). These are important findings that improve our understanding of majority and minority group members' support of linguistic minority rights in assimilationist contexts and provide possible directions for measures to develop a sustainable peace process after a violent conflict. The findings further show that there are relevant individual differences within both ethnic groups, such as for ethnic and national identifications, group perceptions, and cross-group friendships. This means that neither the Kurds nor the Turks are a homogenous group. Within both groups there is a diversity of beliefs and views that are important for the evaluation of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict and Kurdish linguistic rights, and some of these differences were examined in the current study.

Notes

1. Language is an important marker of Turkish and Kurdish identity but this does not mean that all Kurds speak Kurdish or no Turks speak it. Yet, here we are interested in the importance of ethnic self-identification.
2. We conducted several stepwise regression analyses to explore which of the possible mediating relations is most likely in our dataset. The significant independent

effect in Step 1 of higher friendship with Turks being associated with lower endorsement of Kurdish minority rights ($\beta = -.23$, $t = 4.23$, $p < .01$), was most strongly reduced ($\beta = -.11$, $t = 2.08$, $p = .038$) when national identification was added to the regression equation in Step 2, and the further addition of ethnic identification yielded a non-significant effect for cross-group friendship ($\beta = -.06$, $t = 1.14$, $p > .05$). This suggests that more Turkish friends is related to stronger national identification and weaker Kurdish identification and therefore to weaker endorsement of Kurdish language rights.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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