

# **Cultural Differences in Child Images and Their Relationship to Social Delinquency Among Ethnic Minorities**

*Barrie Klein & Angel Kloos*

## **Abstract**

In this article, cultural differences in values and norms will be explored in relation to cultural differences in child images. The first question addressed concerns whether parents from different cultures differ in the values and norms that are most important to them in terms of child-rearing and, if so, what those cultural differences are and what they say about cultural differences in child images. Interwoven with this exploration is the social debate about values, norms, and problems involving ethnic minorities in The Netherlands. In addition, the issue of the relationship between cultural differences in values and norms, and problems experienced by ethnic minorities, will be addressed. We conclude that, using the individualist-collectivist concepts, there are small intercultural differences in the importance of values and norms, and that these differences might lead to cultural differences in child images. Other than this difference, European parents are remarkably similar in terms of the norms and values they think are important in child rearing. Because of the finding that the cultural differences in child images are quite small, it is argued that, if these differences have anything at all to do with problems of ethnic minorities, they certainly are not the main cause of these problems.

**Keywords:** Norms and values, cultural differences, child image, social debate, collectivist and individualist cultures

## **Introduction**

Since Jan Peter Balkenende became prime minister in 2002, norms and values have been the subject of social debate ([www.regering.nl](http://www.regering.nl)). Some commentators talk of moral decadence (Beer & Schuyt, 2004), and they therefore propose and advocate policies to fight this perceived decadence. Some see this erosion of norms and values as being closely related to the growing presence of minorities in this nation, because such minorities are sometimes seen as rejecting important Dutch norms and values. For many Dutch citizens, criminal Moroccan youth are an example of this threat. On this point, the norms and values debate and the minority problem become intertwined, because the explanation of the criminal behaviour of Moroccan youth is sought in terms of alleged deviance with respect to the moral standards of their culture. Minority parents are reproached for not taking proper care of their children, because such neglect is said to lead to negative behaviour (Beer & Schuyt, 2004).

The debate regarding the relationship of norms and values to ethnicity does not only occur in the Netherlands, but also in other Western countries such as Belgium, Austria and France (Beer & Schuyt, 2004). This development can have many serious consequences, because it can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. The very fact of linking

moral decadence with ethnicity in such a debate carries the danger of reinforcing the stigma of alleged culturally rooted moral deviance in the absence of any solid evidence. An example of a self-fulfilling prophecy which might stem from a debate conducted under such terms is that minority youth become criminals because they cannot get a decent job, and that they cannot get a decent job because employers think they are criminals based on their ethnicity. Situations like this could have serious consequences for both minorities and those belonging to the dominant culture, and thus should be avoided.

An assumption which is part of the relationship between moral decadence and ethnicity is that minorities teach their children other norms and values that are based on their culture—norms and values that are radically different from those taught in Western societies. As a result of these different norms and values, minority cultures are thought to have another image of the child. This leads to the main question of this research, which concerns whether minorities actually have different norms and values than the dominant culture in Western Europe and, if they do, whether these differences entail a different image of the child.

We will first discuss what the images are that parents have of their children, what their norms and values are, how these norms and values come

to be adopted, and the extent to which norms and values differ in collectivist and individualist cultures. We will then discuss if differences in norms and values lead to differences in the image of the child and, in conclusion, we will answer and discuss the main question.

### **Image of the child and culture**

The image of the child is something that is connected to the values of a society, and can differ over time and place. According to ten Brinke and Kanters (2010) in their introductory article in this same issue, before 1970, the image of the child was defined by the kind of adult the child was expected to become. In those times, children were seen as part of a nation's investment in the future. Because adulthood was clearly defined in those days, what a child was growing up to be was also clearly defined. Hence, the image of the child in the years prior to 1970 was something that was quite clear and also was connected to the values and the world view of a society. In addition, ten Brinke and Kanters (2010) argue that how childhood is conceptualized changes with time and culture. For example, with the rise of post-modernism, the image of the child changed dramatically.

Because many studies have been done regarding values and norms as well as cultural differences—rather than in reference to images of the child—this article will explore whether there are differences in the values and norms parents from different cultures want to teach their children, and what this has to say about cultural differences in child images. Norms will also be considered because, in a following section of this article, it will become clear that norms result from values. Although ten Brinke and Kanters (2010) argue in their article that post-modernism and globalization are responsible for a decrease in the clarity of the definition of adulthood, and thus by implication for a decrease in the clarity of child images as well, it should still be interesting to explore if there continue to be some cultural differences regarding child images. The exploration of cultural differences in child images is also something that is interesting in and of itself. In the next section of this article, we will first discuss values and norms and how they develop. Afterward, some of the available literature regarding cultural differences in values and norms will be reviewed.

### **Values and norms**

Adopting a society's norms and values is something that is apparently very important in modern times, a conclusion that we can draw on the basis of the ongoing debate in different Western countries (Beer & Schuyt, 2004). But what are norms and values and how do they come to be adopted? This is the question that will be discussed in this section. In addition, we will also explore whether there are differences in the norms and values that European and non-European parents impart to their children.

#### *What values are and how they come to be adopted*

Values are seen as shared mental objects (Van Dijk, 1998). They have a broad cultural base and, together with culturally shared knowledge, they are part of the cultural common ground. Van Dijk (1998) states that, whatever the ideological differences are between groups, most people share the same value systems. Values are supposed to show us what good characteristics of human beings are. That these preferred characteristics are basically the same across cultures is shown by universally shared values such as happiness, equality and truth. But there are also cultural differences in values (Van Dijk, 1998). This could lead to several problems when people of different cultures interact with one other.

Values form the basis of all processes of evaluation, opinions, attitudes and ideologies. They are a basis for the evaluation systems of cultures and are seen as the pillars of the moral order of societies (Van Dijk, 1998). Because values are seen as ideal characteristics, they are supposed to be goal-directed. Everybody wants to have these ideal characteristics, because having them has positive consequences such as heightened social status and being liked by others. Cultural values lead to various norms and, in this way, indirectly regulate our behaviour. A value describes what good behaviour is, and this definition is made concrete by norms that tell us which behaviour is *not* acceptable. For example, the norm of the unacceptability of theft is a concretization of the value of being honest. We can thus see the relationship between abstract values and the concrete norms by means of which the values are affirmed and enforced.

*What norms are and how they come to be adopted*

In the discipline of sociology, there are different views of what it is that norms consist of. The most accepted view on norms is that they regulate behaviour by providing guidelines (Hechter & Opp, 2001). Norms are cultural phenomena that prescribe and proscribe behaviour in specific circumstances. The state regulates norms by imposing laws. There are also social norms which are not laws, but rather may be thought of as unwritten rules (Hechter & Opp, 2001). Following social norms is encouraged, while breaking them often results in punishment. For a norm to exist, there has to be an agreement among group members over what kind of norms exist and what kind of enforcement will occur when someone breaks the norm (Hechter & Opp, 2001). Yet norms are not only rules, because when there is no enforcement they represent ideals people strive to attain (Hechter & Opp, 2001). According to some scholars, norms can only be effective when they are internalized (Hechter & Opp, 2001). When norms are internalized, people follow them because they want to and not because they are forced to do so (Hechter & Opp, 2001). Thus conceived, internalized norms are values.

We will discuss here two of the widely accepted theoretical views on norms: the institutionalist view and the individualist view (Hechter & Opp, 2001). Each view has different assumptions of what constitute norms, and how they are conveyed, adopted, and enforced. According to the institutionalist view, norms are internal and collective in nature (Hechter & Opp, 2001): they are conceived as cognitive templates that both set agendas for action and shape policies. Because norms are seen as cognitive templates, they are internal. This means that, according to the institutional view, enforcement is not necessary (Hechter & Opp, 2001). According to this view, norms become collective, because they spread from the collective centre to the peripheries through identity formation (Hechter & Opp, 2001).

The individualist view states that norms are external, and that they only benefit those who produce them. Norms are seen as public goods, and the manner in which they are transmitted is problematic (Hechter & Opp, 2001). Because of this problematic transmission, norms are not collectivist, but are only for those who produce them. According to the individualist approach, norms exist to overcome negative external factors or to create positive external factors (Hechter &

Opp, 2001). The institutionalist approach states that norms are welfare-enhancing (Hechter & Opp, 2001). In this paper, the institutional view on norms will be used as a frame of reference. Norms are thus seen here as if they are collective, internal, cognitive templates which can be used in policies. Applied to the main question, we will explore whether different cultures can be seen as different collectives that have different norms and values. We will now turn to the issue of the content of norms, and of how they become adopted.

In order to explain how norms are adopted, we will examine three models of the content and development of norms. The first model focuses on the actions of the ego, the second model focuses on the ego's reactions to the actions of others and the third model will focus on negotiating between the ego and others (Hechter & Opp, 2001). According to the model which focuses on the action of the ego, norms reflect patterns of action. When some kind of behaviour is seen as appealing, many people will imitate it. A particular action becomes a norm and, because it is appealing and socially reinforced, more people will behave in accordance with it (Hechter & Opp, 2001). When a certain behaviour is not seen as appealing any more, people will find other options that are more appealing and thus change the norm. This model, however, has a number of shortcomings. The first of these is that the model doesn't explain why some frequently seen behaviours become norms and others become habits to which no particular positive value is attached. Secondly, this model doesn't explain when and how behaviour becomes transformed in a way that changes the existing norms (Hechter & Opp, 2001).

The second model focuses on the ego's reactions to the actions of others. This model focuses on the individual's concerns regarding the behaviour of others (Hechter & Opp, 2001). According to this model, individuals don't only consider whether a particular behaviour is appealing to them, but they also look at the behaviour of others (Hechter & Opp, 2001). An individual prefers that others act in a way that benefits, or potentially benefits, himself or herself, and will try to foster this behaviour in others. The encouragement of behaviour in this way results in the development of a social norm (Hechter & Opp, 2001). One important shortcoming of this model is that it is only useful in situations in which the costs

and benefits of some kind of behaviour can be determined (Hechter & Opp, 2001).

The third model will focus on negotiation between ego and others (Hechter & Opp, 2001). This model highlights the role of negotiating in social norms (Hechter & Opp, 2001). People can only interact successfully with each other when they interpret situations, behaviours and roles in the same way (Hechter & Opp, 2001). When people go to another place where these interpretations are different, conflicts may arise. In order to resolve conflicts, individuals have to negotiate over their interpretations (Hechter & Opp, 2001). Negotiation involves interpretation of the intentions and meaning of the actions of the other actor and the definition of these actions in terms of one's own private interpretation (Hechter & Opp, 2001).

In this paper, the content and development of norms will be approached within the frame of reference of this third model, which focuses on negotiation between the ego and others. This model is useful for our particular purposes because it explains how norms develop when people within a particular collective have different values. This is the case when people of different cultures live together. This model also explains why problems sometimes arise in interactions between minorities and those belonging to a majority culture. People of different cultures do not interpret situations, behaviours and roles in the same way and this can lead to problems. The models state that problems can be avoided when minorities and those belonging to the dominant culture negotiate about their norms. But, in actual practice, this kind of negotiation does not take place, because the majority often simply insists that minorities adapt to their own (i.e., the majority's) norms. Thus, those in the majority often resist negotiating and refuse to adopt some of the norms of the minorities, and thus problems stemming from cultural differences in norms do not disappear.

#### *Norms and values in collectivist and individualist cultures, and in Western societies*

To gain more insight into the differences in the child image between Western parents and non-Western parents, this section will present an overview of the differences between what European and non-European parents try to teach their children. A popular distinction when comparing different cultures involves supposed distinctions between an individualist culture and a collectivist

culture. One of the first researchers to introduce these terms was Harry C. Triandis (Larsen & Buss, 2008). He describes a collectivist culture as one in which people are interdependent within their in-groups. People in such a culture also give priority to the goals of their in-groups and are very concerned about relationships with other people (Triandis, 2001). In individualist cultures, on the other hand, people are, according to Triandis (2001), autonomous and independent of their in-groups. They give priority to their personal goals and they behave more in accordance with their own attitudes and self-interest than in a way that conforms to the norms of their culture.

According to Triandis (1989) northwest European countries can be seen as having an individualist culture, whereas African and Asian countries generally have collectivist cultures. According to this characterisation, it is possible to treat northwest European countries as individualist cultures. Therefore most, research done on other individualist cultures can be applied to these countries. And it is also possible to treat most non-European cultures as collectivist, and therefore most research concerning collectivist cultures can be applied to non-European cultures (Triandis, 1989).

So we can state that Western cultures are supposed to be individualist and non-Western cultures are supposed to be collectivist. But what about minorities in Western countries who are raised in non-Western countries, or who have parents who were raised in non-Western countries? Are they collectivist because they have been raised with aspects of non-Western cultures? Or are they individualist because they live in individualist countries? A great deal of research has been conducted in order to explain these questions. To explore whether minorities in Western countries are individualist or collectivist, minority and majority-culture participants get a "Who am I" test in which they describe in a couple sentences who they are. Answers to this question are evaluated. Research like this has been conducted by Bochner, (1994); Cousins (1989); and Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990). Outcomes of these "Who am I" tests reveal that minorities tend to describe themselves in a contextual perspective, while majority-culture participants describe themselves more in terms of character (Knipscheer & Kleber, 2008). Based on this difference, we can conclude that minorities display an interdependent sense of self and that

majority participants display an independent sense of self. An interdependent sense of self is associated with collectivist cultures, which tend to emphasize group commonalities rather than individual differences. An independent sense of self is associated with individualist cultures, which tend to emphasize individual differences among persons. Based on this research, it has been concluded that minorities from non-Western countries who live in Western countries can be seen as collectivist, while those belonging to the majority culture can be seen as individualist. This fundamental cultural difference is a possible explanation of the existing problems between minorities on the one hand, and those in the majority culture on the other.

Before discussing research that has compared individualist and collectivist parents regarding the norms and values they want to teach their children, we will look at the work of Halman, Luijkx and Van Zundert (2005), who have described the values which European parents want to teach their children.

#### *Values in European cultures*

What is remarkable about the values that European parents want to teach their children is that there is a substantial amount of agreement about the importance of some of the values. The values that are judged as most important are responsibility, good manners, tolerance and respect for other people, and hard work. The value that does not have an equal amount of support throughout Europe is the value of hard work, with Eastern European parents judging hard work to be more important than Northern and Western European parents do (Halman et al., 2005).

Values found by Halman et al. (2005) to be of lesser importance are: thrift, saving money, and taking care of one's possessions; independence, determination and perseverance; obedience; religious faith; unselfishness; and imagination. Most of these values show a roughly equal amount of support throughout Europe, with some minor exceptions for independence and unselfishness. In addition, imagination is typically more valued in Western and Northern European countries than it is in Eastern Europe, but the differences are not as profound as those regarding hard work.

#### *Norms and values in individualist and collectivist cultures*

A great deal of research has been done into differences in child-rearing norms in these two types of cultures. This research shows that parents from collectivist cultures place a greater emphasis on child-rearing norms associated with collectivist cultures, while parents from individualist cultures place a greater emphasis on child-rearing norms associated with individualist cultures. For example, Harwood, Handwerker, Schoelmerich and Leyendecker (2001) compared European, American and Puerto Rican-American mothers on the extent to which they correspond in their child-rearing practices to the stereotypes of the groups to which they belong. The authors assumed that the European Americans would be found to be stereotypically individualist and the Puerto Rican Americans would be found to be stereotypically collectivist (also called sociocentric). Harwood et al. (2001) categorized the participants into four clusters: self-maximization, self-control, proper demeanor and decency. The former two are typical values in an individualist upbringing and the latter two are values in a collectivist upbringing. The experiment showed that most mothers falling in the former two categories (83%) are European American, and that 85% of the mothers falling in the latter two categories are Puerto Rican American.

As this research shows, in individualist cultures, more mothers place a greater emphasis on self-maximization and self-control. Harwood et al. (2001) define self-maximization as development of the self as an autonomous person who places an emphasis on independence, self-confidence and development of one's full potential. According to them, self-control is related to self-maximization because impulses toward greed, aggression and egocentrism need to be controlled. These latter impulses are viewed as potential dangers to the development of autonomy. This research also showed that more mothers from collectivist cultures place a greater emphasis on proper demeanour. Harwood et al. (2001) define this concept as the proper way to relate to other people, as demonstrated by showing respect, cooperating with others, and being accepted by the larger community. In addition, the concept includes the fulfilment of familial obligations. A person who fulfils the requirements of proper demeanour is

considered to be a “decent person” (Harwood et al. 2001).

The results of this study are supported by those obtained in a study employing the same model that was conducted by Leyendecker, Lamb, Harwood and Schölmerich (2002). Their study also found that more mothers in the United States who were originally from Central America placed more emphasis on proper demeanor and decency than European American mothers did. In addition, more of the European-American mothers judged self-maximalization and self-control to be more important than Central American mothers did. Both studies mentioned above also show that the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures is not always very clear. Leyendecker et al. (2002) showed that the Central American mothers value some individual norms quite highly as well. And what is noticeable about the results of the study by Harwood (2001) is that not all the Puerto Rican American parents fall into the two collectivist categories, and not all the European American parents fall into the two individualist categories. This means that the differences between these types of cultures are not as clear as the stereotypes imply and that there is also a certain amount of variation within both groups.

Another study conducted by Marie-Anne Suizzo (2007) compared parents from four ethnic groups in the United States with respect to values and goals they judge to be important for their children. The groups being compared were Chinese, African, Mexican and European-Americans. She hypothesized that, because the former three ethnic groups have their roots in collectivist cultures, they would support conservative goals and values such as tradition and conformity, self-transcendence, benevolence, and universalism to a significantly greater extent than European Americans would. Conversely, she expected that European American parents would judge self-enhancement goals such as achievement and power as more important.

The participants in Suizzo’s study had to indicate how important they judged five categories of goals and values were for their children. The results obtained showed that parents from the three ethnic groups which originate from collectivist cultures support goals and values associated with the categories tradition and conformity; power and achievement; and benevolence and pro-social to a greater extent than European Americans did. These

goals and values are associated with collectivist cultures.

The goals and values associated with tradition and conformity are, amongst others, respect for elders, good manners and family honor. The goals and values associated with power and achievement are, amongst others, public recognition for achievements, being wealthy, and having a prestigious profession, whilst the goals and values associated with “benevolence and pro-social” are, amongst others, forgiveness, group harmony and altruism.

Suizzo (2007) also shows that there are no clear differences among the three collectivist ethnic minority groups and individualist European American group on goals and values associated with the categories “relatedness” and “agency and self-direction.” However, there were significant differences within the three collectivist groups. This study also indicates that, in addition to variation between collectivist and individualist groups in child-rearing goals and values, there is also a certain amount of variety within collectivist and—perhaps—within individualist groups. The categories of goals and values on which the collectivist and individualist groups do not differ significantly are associated with self-fulfillment, self-reliance, resilience and relationships (Suizzo, 2007).

Gonzales-Ramos, Zayas and Cohen (1998) asked Puerto-Rican mothers to rank thirteen child-rearing values in order of importance. The mothers ranked values associated with collectivist cultures, like being honest, respectful and obedient; loyalty to family; and responsibility as most important. The main characteristic of individualism, “independence”, was ranked seventh and, surprisingly, values like getting along with others and respect for older people, were ranked as less important than independence. The values ranked as least important were “being assertive” and “being creative”, two values typically associated with individualism.

Summarizing, it can be stated that all of the studies discussed above show that there are cultural differences in values and norms that parents want to teach their children. These cultural differences can be attributed to the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures. But there is also criticism of the use of broad categories like “individualist” and “collectivist”. An example of such criticism concerns whether such broad

terms are adequate to capture the wide variation in norms and values present within many cultures (Harwood et al., 2001). This issue, along with other criticism, will be discussed in the next section.

*Some criticism on the distinction between individualist and collectivist cultures*

Although the distinction between individualist and collectivist cultures is widely accepted and applied in many studies, some researchers have criticized this distinction. In this section, these criticisms will be discussed. First, the view of Halman et al. (2005) on the validity of the concepts in Europe is discussed. Secondly, the summary of the criticism of the collectivist and individualist concepts provided in Larsen and Buss (2008) will be considered.

The work of Halman et al. (2005) shows that parents from different European countries are remarkably similar in the values that they want to teach their children. Instead of finding clear differences between east and west European countries in the importance of independence, something that might have been expected according to the individualist and collectivist distinction, they find only very small differences in the importance of independence between some Western European countries. So Triandis' (1989) claim that northwestern European countries are individualist cultures does not imply that Eastern European countries cannot be characterized as individualist countries or that these latter should be characterized as collectivist cultures. Nor does it imply that there should be some clear differences between Eastern European parents and northwestern European parents in terms of which values they want to teach their children. Indeed, Triandis did not mention this in his article, but it is also important to note that no such conclusion can be deduced from his study.

Larsen and Buss (2008) give an overview of the criticism of the individualist-collectivist concepts. First they cite the remarks of Matsumoto (1999) that most of the evidence for the concepts come from North America and East Asia and may not be applicable to other cultures. In addition, there is far more overlap in people from different cultures than the concepts of individualist and collectivist imply (Larsen & Buss, 2008). Secondly they cite A.T. Church (Church, 2000), who notes that the characterization of cultures in terms of such broad categories may be overly simplistic. It is possible that the differences between persons from

individualist and collectivist cultures may reflect quantitative differences rather than qualitative differences. This implies that characteristics of both collectivist and individualist cultures may be present in each culture, and that differences are a matter of degree, and not of kind (Larsen & Buss, 2008).

A study by Oyserman, Coon and Kimmelmeier (2002a) suggests that even more caution needs to be exercised when generalizing from individualist-collectivist research. They meta-analyzed many studies and found that the effect of the sizes of the differences in many studies is small and that, for example, European Americans tended to be slightly more individualist and slightly less collectivist than people from only some other cultures. In addition, they found that European Americans were not more individualist than African Americans or Latinos, and that European Americans were not less collectivist than Japanese or Koreans. The Japanese and Korean cultures are presumed to be typically collectivist (Larsen & Buss, 2008). The last criticism Larsen and Buss (2008) mention is a comment by Fiske (2002), who states that the individualist-collectivist characterization is too general, and that it ignores the specific context in which people live and grow up, which is also an important factor in shaping human behavior.

After this consideration of the criticism of the concept of individualism-collectivism, one question remains: What consequences does such criticism have for the purposes of this article? As is made clear by the discussion above, there might indeed be a certain intercultural variation in values, but there is also a variation within a given culture. This might hold for child images as well, as child images are connected to values (ten Brinke, 2009). A second note of caution has to do with the fact that not all individualist and collectivist characteristics are equally applicable to those cultures defined by one of these two concepts (Matsumoto, 1999). Thus, when it is possible to conclude, based on research done regarding differences in values and norms in individualist and collectivist cultures, that there are cultural differences regarding child images, such a conclusion does not imply that these differences apply equally to every culture bearing those two labels. In addition, given the small differences between cultures (Oyserman, Coon & Kimmelmeier, 2002a), differences in child images might be small as well. The last point that has to be

made is that differences between collectivist and individualist might be more a matter of degree rather than of kind (Larsen & Buss, 2008). So differences in child images might also reflect quantitative differences, and not qualitative differences.

#### *Summarizing*

So what can be said about cultural differences in the norms and values that parents want to teach their children? First, it is remarkable how similarly European parents think regarding which values are important for their children. The values that are judged as most important by them are responsibility, good manners, tolerance and respect for other people, and hard work (Halman et al., 2005). As regards the differences between collectivist and individualist parents in terms of the norms and values they want to teach their children, it can be stated that individualist parents tend to emphasize independence, self-confidence and development of one's full potential while collectivist parents tend to emphasize relating in a proper way to other people by means of respectfulness, cooperation with others, and being accepted by the larger community (Harwood et al., 2001).

Furthermore, collectivist parents tend to judge respect for elders, good manners, family honor, public recognition, having a prestigious profession, forgiveness, and being altruistic as more important than individualist parents would do (Suizzo, 2007). Gonzales-Ramos et al. (1998) found that collectivist parents think that being honest, respectful and obedient, loyal to the family, and responsible are the most important values in child-rearing. These findings, and the findings of Harwood et al. (2001) fit nicely into the collectivist and individualist concepts.

The studies mentioned above all point out that there are some differences between individualist and collectivist parents. But there is also some disagreement between the studies. This disagreement points to the fact that, when comparing collectivist and individualist cultures, within-culture variation always needs to be considered. In addition, when comparing collectivist and individualist cultures, one always has to keep in mind that it is very well possible that they only differ in the amount of importance they place on different norms and values, and not that there are completely different norms and values

present in the two culture types. Other than some disagreement as to what norms and values are important for their children, parents from both culture types also show a certain amount of agreement on what norms and values are important. Larsen and Buss (2008) conclude their discussion with the remark that there might be more within-cultural variation than variation between cultures. Thus, it may be the case that the problems between those in the majority culture and minorities are not caused by cultural differences, since the cultural variation is larger within cultures than between cultures.

#### **Integration of image of the child with norms and values**

Based on the literature found on image of the child and norms and values, there are some cultural differences in norms and values that parents want to teach their children, and these differences may reflect cultural differences in child images. What these differences exactly are is not made clear by research, so looking at the values and norms that differ between cultures may give a hint of the differences in child images.

Based on research on norms and values in collectivist and individualist cultures, we can conclude which norms and values are valued highly by parents in both types of cultures. As stated above, parents from individualist cultures emphasize independence, self-confidence and development of one's full potential (Harwood, 2001). Because these parents clearly want their children to be independent and self-confident, it is possible that they see children as unique human beings who have their own qualities. In addition, parents may see their children as dependent on them, but children have to be, and *can* be, independent, because the society they grow up in requires children to be independent. If this does not happen, it is possible that these children will not succeed in their lives (ten Brinke & Kanters, 2010).

As mentioned above, collectivist parents think that being honest, respectful and obedient, loyal to the family, and responsible are the most important values in child-rearing (Gonzales-Ramos et al., 1998). They also value public recognition, forgiveness, and being altruistic to a greater extent than individualist parents (Suizzo, 2007). Based on these highly valued characteristics, it is concluded that parents of collectivist cultures see their children as being a part of the community. They are

dependent on this community and will continue to be dependent even in adulthood. Because of this, they will have to learn how they can be good group members, and their parents think that they can be good group members.

### Conclusion and discussion

In this article, we initially posed the question of whether there are cultural differences in norms and values, and if there are, what implications such differences have for the cultural differences in the image of the child. It can be concluded on the basis of the evidence that we have examined that there are cultural differences in norms and values between individualist and collectivist cultures. The main characteristic in which those cultures differ is the amount of emphasis placed on individual autonomy. As stated earlier, autonomy and independence are seen as very important in individualist cultures, which predominate in Western countries. Group membership and interdependence are highly valued in collectivist cultures, which predominate in non-Western countries. But despite these differences, there are other essential norms and values that are common to both types of cultures: values such as love, happiness and respect. Based on these findings, we contend that, despite essential differences in the value of autonomy, the overall norms and values of people of Western and non-Western countries are basically the same. This leads to the conclusion that the overall norms and values of non-Western minorities living in Western countries do not differ that much from those in the majority culture, but what does this mean for the differences between minorities and those in the majority culture with respect to the image of the child?

The evidence presented and discussed here suggests that parents of Western and non-Western cultures differ in their image of the child. Based on the most important norms in Western cultures, it is suggested that parents of the majority culture see their children as unique human beings who have their own qualities. They also see their children as dependent on them, while recognizing that they have to be, and *can* be, independent of them. Based on highly valued norms in non-Western countries, it is clear that minorities see their children as being dependent on both the family and the broader community, and it is suggested they think their children can be taught to be valuable members of the group. In conclusion, it can be stated that the

child images of those in the majority culture and minorities differ in terms of how they see their children with regard to others. But do those differences in image of the child also lead to differences in the norms and values children are taught? A lot of norms and values are seen as fundamental, so it can be questioned whether minorities and natives teach their children completely different norms and values. We suggest that this is not the case, because norms such as “do not steal” and values such as “respect” are common to both cultures. We therefore suggest that the norms and values taught to children by minorities and by those born and raised in Western societies to their children do not radically differ from one another.

What implications does this conclusion have? Most especially, what are the implications of this conclusion for the social debate discussed in the introduction? As stated in the introduction, in European countries, difficulties with minority youth are thought to be related to their culture. In this way, ethnicity is linked with moral decadence. As stated in the introduction, an assumption which is part of the relationship between moral decadence and ethnicity is that minorities teach their children norms and values that deviate from Western values. We stated that a possible consequence of this is that minorities have another image of the child.

Based on the conclusions of this article, we can affirm that these assumptions are incorrect. After reviewing the evidence discussed above, we have found that minorities of non-Western countries who live in Western countries do not differ all that much from those in the majority culture in their overall norms, and it was also noted that norms and values taught by minorities and those in the majority to their children are almost the same. Based on these conclusions, it is our opinion that moral decadence and non-Western ethnicity are not related to each other. But if the problems of minority youth are not caused by the norms and values they are taught, then what are they caused by?

Sheatsly (1966) suggested that the higher levels of criminality of black youth in America are related to their socioeconomic status. In America, many blacks have a low socioeconomic status, a variable which is more closely related to criminality than race is (Sheatsly, 1966). It is our opinion that this kind of mechanism also explains why minorities in European countries commit more

crimes. We assume that minorities are over-represented in the lower socioeconomic strata of society, because they have fewer educational and occupational opportunities. These diminished opportunities seem to be caused in part by self-fulfilling prophecy and discrimination. These conclusions have a number of policy implications.

Current integration policies focus on the integration of minorities into Western societies, but based on the model of development and content of norms that focuses on the negotiation between ego and others, this does not appear to be the correct approach. According to this model of the development of norms, the best way to handle interactions between people of different cultures is to negotiate between the different interpretations regarding situations, behaviours and roles. There has to be an environment in which people respect one another's interpretations, norms and values. Policy should recognize and support the diversity of norms and values, and it should foster respect for diverse cultures. We believe that these changes will lead to decreased discrimination and less negative self-fulfilling prophecy. In this way, we can assure equal educational opportunity for both minorities and those in the majority culture, and it is expected that this change will be accompanied by a reduced frequency in criminal behavior among currently disadvantaged ethnic minorities.

Of course, this article also has a number of limitations. One of these limitations is that there may indeed be a link between values and norms on the one hand, and child images on the other, but that such a link has yet to be demonstrated by the research that has been conducted to date. It is therefore important to be cautious in inferring child images from values and norms. In addition, the differences in child image that were inferred from differences in values and norms do not tell the whole story. Of course, a complete child image contains many more aspects than those which are mentioned in the present article. The same point holds for values and norms in a particular culture. Cultures contain many more norms and values, and interactions between them, than the ones considered here. In other words, this article has provided a simplified view of cultures, norms and values, and child images.

It should also be pointed out that this article has focused on cultural differences. We hope it is clear now that there are more resemblances among cultures than there are differences.

Therefore, when thinking about cultures, it might be a good idea to consider their similarities before their differences. It is of course obvious that it is those characteristics in which we differ from others that are most notable, and that therefore tend to receive the most attention.

## References

- Beer, P.T., Schuyt, C.J.M. (2004). *Bijdragen aan waarden en normen*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Bochner, S. (1994). Cross-cultural differences in the self-concept: A test of Hofstede's individualism/collectivism distinction. *Journal of Cross-cultural psychology*, 25, 273-283.
- Brinke, S. ten & Kanter, C. (2010) Images of Childhood: From a unilinear progress of becoming to a flexible and undefined ending. *Social Cosmos e.v.*
- Church, A. T. (2000). Culture and personality: Toward an integrated cultural trait psychology. *Journal of Personality*, 68, 651-703.
- Cousins, S. (1989). Culture and selfhood in Japan and the US. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 124-131.
- Dijk, T.A. (1998). *Ideology: a multidisciplinary approach*. Londen: Sage.
- Fiske, A.P. (2002). Using individualism and collectivism to compare cultures: A critique of the validity and measurement of the constructs. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 78-88.
- Gonzales-Ramos, G., Zayas, L.H. & Cohen, E.V. (1998). Child-Rearing Values of Low Income, Urban Puerto Rican Mothers of Preschool Children. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 29, 311-382
- Halman, L., Luijckx, R. & Zundert, M. van (2005). *Atlas of European Values*. Tilburg University, the Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill.
- Harwood, R.L., Handwerker, W.P.,
- Schoelmerich, A. & Leyendeck, B. (2001). Ethnic Category Labels, Parental Beliefs, and the Contextualized Individual: An Exploration of the

Individualism – Sociocentrism Debate. *Parenting: Science and practice*, 1, 217-236.

Hechter, M. & Opp, K.D. (2001). *Social norms*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Knipscheer, J. & Kleber, R. (2008). *Psychologie en de multiculturele samenleving*. Den Haag: Boom onderwijs.

Larsen, R. J., & Buss, D. M. (2008). *Personality psychology*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Leyendecker, B., Lamb, M. E., Harwood, R. L. & Schölmerich, A. (2002). Mothers' socialisation goals and evaluations of desirable and undesirable everyday situations in two diverse cultural groups. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 26, 248-258

Matsumoto, D. (1999). Culture and self: An empirical assessment of Markus and Kitayama's theory of independent and interdependent self-construals. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 2, 289-310.

Oyserman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002a). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 3-72.

Sheatsley, P. B. (1966), White Attitudes towards the Negro. In: *Deadalus*. Cambridge, MA: American Association of Arts and Sciences. 95, 217-238.

Suizzo, M.A. (2007). Parents' Goals and Values for Children: Dimensions of Independence and Interdependence Across Four U.S. Ethnic Groups. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 38, 506-531.

Triandis, H.C. (1989). The self and social behavior in different cultural contexts. *Psychological Review*, 96, 269-289.

Triandis, H.C., McCusker, C. en C.H. Hui (1990). Multimethod probes of individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 1006-1020.

Triandis, H.C. (2001). Individualism-Collectivism and Personality. *Journal of Personality* 69:6.