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Social Psychology Quarterly 2011 74: 121

DOI: 10.1177/0190272511407619

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AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Social Psychology Quarterly
74(2) 121–143
© American Sociological Association 2011
DOI: 10.1177/0190272511407619
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Dual Identity as a Two-Edged Sword: Identity Threat and Minority School Performance

Gülseli Baysu[1], Karen Phalet[1], and Rupert Brown[2]

Abstract

*Some members of ethnic minority groups respond to identity threat in ways that are detrimental to their school career, while others persist despite an unwelcoming school environment. It was hypothesized that ethnic and national identities, as combined in "separated," "assimilated," or "dual identity" strategies, moderate consequences of identity threat for minority school performance and that the adaptive value of different identity strategies depends on the intergroup context. Random samples of Turkish Belgian young adults (*N *= 576) were interviewed about their school performance (i.e., high, middle, or low success) and past experiences of discrimination in school as an indicator of identity threat. Results revealed that Turkish Belgians with "separated" or "assimilated" identity strategies were less likely than "dual" identifiers to disengage from school when perceived threat was high. Conversely, dual identifiers were most successful when perceived threat was low. Implications of the up- and downsides of dual identity for minority school performance are discussed.*

Keywords

discrimination, identity threat, dual identity, school performance, acculturation

International studies of minority school performance have documented a persistent educational disadvantage of the children of immigrant workers in European societies (Heath and Brinbaum 2007; Marks 2005). As members of disadvantaged minority groups that are typically devalued in the eyes of the majority population, they have to cope with pervasive negative stereotyping and discrimination (Hagendoorn 1995; Zegers de Beijl 2000). Although there is little hard evidence linking discriminatory treatment in school to minority school failure (Heath, Rothon, and Kilpi 2008), minority experiences of ethnic discrimination have been related to more frequent school disengagement and/or to lower grades (Eccles, Wong, and Peck 2006; Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff 2003). Moreover, "stereotype threat" experiments have demonstrated that situationally induced

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negative stereotypes of low academic ability have debilitating effects on the academic performance of stereotyped group members, such as African American students (Steele, Spencer, and Aronson 2002). On the whole, experiences of unfairness, exclusion, or negative stereotyping may induce identity threat in members of devalued minority groups, which would in turn affect minority performance (Purdie-Vaughns et al. 2008). Identity threat is thus seen to arise whenever situational cues convey the (implicit) message that one's group identity is devalued in a particular setting (Branscombe et al. 1999a).

When an intergroup setting is seen to pose a threat to one's identity, one may respond with increased anxiety and withdrawal—as when perceived threat entails underperformance or disengagement—or alternatively, with increased persistence and motivation to succeed—when threat provokes a challenge response (Derks, van Laar, and Ellemers 2006). For instance, some minority students were found to respond to experienced discrimination in ways that were detrimental to their school performance, whereas other students persisted in spite of a less welcoming school environment (Oyserman et al. 2003). This raises the key question of when minority group members will show resilience in the face of identity threat and when they will reduce their efforts and disengage from the academic domain. The main aim of this study is to examine differential vulnerability to identity threat in minority school careers. We argue that minority identity strategies, which are defined by varying combinations of ethnic and national identities, may mitigate or exacerbate the impact of identity threat on school performance.

From the perspective of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), vulnerability to identity threat depends crucially on different levels of commitment to the devalued group. The more we are committed to a devalued ingroup, the more we will feel threatened in our social identity whenever the ingroup becomes a target of negative stereotyping or discrimination (Branscombe et al. 1999a; Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002). Looking beyond the commitment to a single ethnic ingroup, we find that minority group members have multiple identity options, including ethnic, national, and dual identities (Deaux 2006). In view of their double membership in the ethnic community and the wider society, the second generation in particular has to negotiate both ethnic and national identities. Whereas they share a common national identity with the majority group as fellow citizens, their ethnic identity as minority group members sets them apart from the mainstream. The various ways in which they combine both identities make up different identity strategies. Identity strategies refer to situated acts of ethnic and/or national self-identification in distinct intergroup contexts (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Tajfel and Turner 1986). In line with a well-documented bidimensional approach of ethnic and national cultures and identities in acculturation research (Berry et al. 2006; Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus 2000), we distinguish between "separated" (i.e., mainly ethnic), "assimilated" (i.e., mainly national), and "dual" (i.e., both ethnic and national) identity strategies, as compared to a residual category of those who are weakly committed to both identities.[1] We expect that a dual identity strategy may be a crucial

[1]Berry et al. (2006) labelled this fourth category, which refers to those who are weakly committed to both ethnic and national cultures and identities, "marginalization." Yet its meaning is ambiguous, since those who are at the periphery of both identities may as well consider themselves as unique individuals, as world citizens, or as belonging to some other social category that is not ethnic or national (Bourhis et al. 1997). Therefore, no hypotheses about this residual category are put forward.

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moderator of minority students' vulnerability to identity threat in academic settings. So-called "dual identity threat" is likely to arise when the majority group denies, questions, or rejects the double membership claims of the second generation as fellow citizens (Berry et al. 2006; Ellemers et al. 2002). The adaptive value of a dual identity strategy thus depends crucially on the intergroup context, particularly the acceptance of cultural diversity by the majority group.

Turkish labor migration to western Europe goes back to the late 1960s and early 1970s. Turkish "guest workers" were recruited from less economically developed rural parts of Turkey to be employed in semi- or unskilled manual work. From the early 1980s onward, family reunion and formation policies enabled the permanent settlement of Turkish immigrant families and communities. At the same time, the post-industrial transition relegated large portions of immigrant workers to enduring unemployment or economic inactivity. The children of Turkish immigrant workers, who are now leaving school and entering the labor market, are one of the most educationally disadvantaged groups internationally (Heath and Brinbaum 2007), and ethnic educational disparities in Belgium are among the largest in Europe (Phalet, Deboosere, and Bastiaenssen 2007). At the same time, small yet increasing numbers of Turkish Belgians are staying on in school and succeeding at higher education. While Turkish educational disadvantage is well documented at the group level, research so far has largely ignored differential academic outcomes within the Turkish minority group.

Against this background, the present study focuses on the interplay of perceived identity threat with different identity strategies of successful and less successful Turkish Belgians. Measuring past experiences of discrimination as a source of identity threat, the study aims to examine differential consequences of identity threat for the school performance of Turkish Belgians with different identity strategies. In particular, are Turkish Belgians with a dual (rather than a separated or assimilated) identity strategy better able to successfully navigate their school careers, or are they more vulnerable to school disengagement in the presence of identity threat? To answer this question, we develop an interactive perspective on the adaptive value of different identity strategies in specific intergroup contexts.

In order to estimate the net effects of perceived threat and identity strategies on school performance, we control for entry level (academic or vocational track placement at entry into secondary school), early school segregation (self-reported presence of immigrants in primary and lower secondary school), and other entry factors. The Belgian educational system has a fairly rigid hierarchical tracking structure, which allocates students to academic or vocational types of tracks at entry into secondary school (at the normative age of 12) while allowing some (mainly downward) mobility between tracks in later years. Academic tracks prepare students for higher education (polytechnics or university), whereas vocational tracks lead directly to the labor market. Due to skills polarization in today's post-industrial economies, however, vocational training is increasingly disconnected from access to stable and well-paid jobs. In the absence of nationally standardized grade or exam systems as measures of academic outcomes, the Belgian school system allows categorical distinctions between three types of school careers, which correspond to high, middle, and low success groups in our study. Specifically, using retrospective longitudinal data, we predict where Turkish

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Belgians end up later in their school careers while setting equal their starting levels: When starting at the academic level (i.e., the reference category), do they continue into higher education (high success group); do they complete secondary school at the same level (middle success group); or do they fail to complete at this level (low success group)?

EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION AS IDENTITY THREAT

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986) postulates that people are motivated to maintain positive social identities as well as positive personal identities. Just as one's personal identity may be threatened by unfavorable social comparison with others, one's social identity may be threatened when one's ingroup is devalued. Because experiences of discrimination communicate the devaluation of one's social identity, they are seen to pose a threat to the identity of minority group members (Branscombe et al. 1999a). Experiences of discrimination have been used as indicators of identity threat in a range of intergroup settings (Derks, van Laar, and Ellemers 2007a; Purdie-Vaughns et al. 2008; Verkuyten and Thijs 2002). In a major longitudinal study of African American academic outcomes, Mendoza-Denton and his colleagues (2002) showed that past experiences of racial discrimination, through communicating rejection and inducing feelings of threat, interfered with school success later on. Similarly, Benner and Kim (2009) longitudinally demonstrated lagged negative effects of past discrimination on later school engagement and grades among Chinese American students. They explained the lasting impact of early experiences of discrimination on academic outcomes as a result of additive experiences of racial micro-aggressions or "brief everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group" (2009:1683). Such daily experiences would create a threatening environment for minority students, who may respond to perceived threat by disconnecting from school (see also Garcia Coll et al. 1996).

Along similar lines, "stereotype threat" experiments, which have been replicated across a wide range of intergroup situations and behavioral domains, have found small yet robust negative effects of situationally induced negative stereotyping on the academic performance of stereotyped group members (Steele et al. 2002). Stereotype threat is defined as the fear of behaviorally confirming a negative group stereotype, so that one's personal failure reflects negatively on the value of one's ingroup in comparison with a relevant outgroup (Steele 1997). As such, stereotype threat is a specific instance of the wider notion of social identity threat (Branscombe et al. 1999a). Complementing experimental evidence of stereotype threat, Massey and his colleagues found longitudinal evidence of cumulative stereotype threat effects on the grades of African American students in the United States (Massey et al. 2006; Massey and Fischer 2005). Although stereotype threat originally explains decrements in the academic performance of highly motivated and successful minority students, repeated exposure to stereotype threat in the course of minority school careers may also explain disengagement from school as the stereotyped domain (Oyserman et al. 2003; Steele 1997).

In bringing together research on discrimination and negative stereotyping, an important question—and one that has received less research attention—is raised: When will minority students

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continue to invest effort in the presence of identity threat and when will they disengage? According to social identity theory, one determinant of differential vulnerability to social identity threat is the level of commitment to a threatened group (Branscombe et al. 1999a; Ellemers et al. 2002). As a result, individual differences in commitment to a stereotyped group may moderate stereotype threat effects on individual performance. Thus, racially identified Afro-Caribbean students in the United States were especially vulnerable to stereotype threat (Deaux et al. 2007), as were highly gender-identified women students (Schmader 2002). Likewise, Turkish Belgians may differ in their vulnerability to identity threat depending on their commitment to ethnic (Turkish) and/or national (Belgian) identities separately and in conjunction. Those identity strategies that are less adaptive in the Turkish Belgian intergroup context would then be associated with an increased risk of school disengagement and hence with lower levels of school success further down the road.

IDENTITY STRATEGIES AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Identity strategies in this study refer to relatively stable commitments or attachments to a particular group identity (Ellemers et al. 2002). They are conceived as dimensions of individual difference that have been shaped by cumulative personal experiences in rather stable intergroup systems (Oyserman et al. 2003). Building on a bidimensional approach of acculturation (Berry et al. 2006; Ryder et al. 2000), we distinguish between three theoretical identity strategies (and a residual category for those who are low on both dimensions): Individuals with a separated strategy place relatively high value on their ethnic group; those with an assimilated strategy value their national group highly; and those with a dual identity strategy value both ethnic and national groups highly.[2]

How will a separated identity strategy, prioritizing the commitment to a highly valued ethnic identity, affect minority responses to identity threat in school? Findings from acculturation research are mixed, ranging from negative through zero to positive associations of ethnic identity with the school adjustment of ethnic minorities across groups and countries (Berry et al. 2006). On the positive side, there is ample (longitudinal) evidence associating a strong ethnic or racial identity and belonging with resilience in the academic domain (Fuligni, Witkow, and Garcia 2005; Oyserman et al. 2006; Spencer et al. 2001), particularly when ethnic/racial self-identity is coupled with awareness of discrimination (Oyserman, Brickman, and Rhodes 2007). For instance, connection to one's ethnic/racial group was found to buffer negative effects of discrimination on the school performance of African Americans (Eccles et al. 2006). Also in line with race/ethnicity as a resource, Mendes et al. (2008) showed that African American participants' responses to social rejection in an interracial context resulted in increased cardiovascular activation, in accordance with a challenge response pattern, which enhanced their performance on a word-finding task. Extending research on social identity threat, Derks et al. (2006, 2007a, 2007b) found that those minority group members who valued their group identity more positively were more motivated to succeed in the presence of high identity threat. More generally, social identity

[2]For our purposes, the notion of dual identity refers to a bidimensional approach of acculturation. It is similar to the so-called "dual identity" model of Gaertner and Dovidio (2000), which focuses on reducing intergroup bias rather than on improving minority performance.

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theory predicts that the affirmation of group value will protect minority group members against identity threat in unequal status relations. Accordingly, experimentally induced affirmation of positive group value was shown to enable resiliency by motivating a positive challenge response in the face of identity threat (Derks et al. 2006, 2007a, 2007b).

On the negative side, stereotype threat research has shown that merely making a devalued ethnic or racial identity situationally salient is sufficient to produce negative effects on minority performance (Steele et al. 2002). Although stereotype threat research does not usually include individual-difference measures of identity, it was found that ethnic minority students with a strong sense of ethnic identity were more vulnerable to identity threat (Cole, Matheson, and Anisman 2007).

Along similar lines, sociological research on "segmented assimilation," which spells out critical contextual conditions for second-generation attainment in the receiving society and in ethnic communities (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), relates a negative pattern of disengagement or "downward assimilation" to reactive ethnicity among disadvantaged minorities. Reactivity refers to the accentuation of ethnic loyalties in response to socioeconomic exclusion and racial discrimination in the receiving society. On the other hand, and in line with ethnicity as a resource, cohesive ethnic communities were found to protect minority youngsters from the downward pull of the wider environment (Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2008). For instance, Vietnamese immigrant communities instill a separated ethnic identity in youngsters, which helps them to succeed in spite of ethnic barriers in school (Zhou and Bankston 1994). In the Turkish Belgian intergroup context, cohesive Turkish immigrant communities are similarly characterized by strong social ties and cultural continuity across generations (Phalet and Güngör 2009; Phalet and Heath forthcoming). Moreover, the commitment to cultural values and traditions was revealed as a significant source of positive self-worth in Turkish youth (Güngör 2007). Against this background, and in accordance with the protective impact of group value in social identity theory, we expect that a separated identity strategy may effectively protect Turkish Belgians from disruptive consequences of identity threat in school. Therefore, we predict positive associations of a separated identity strategy with school success in the presence of identity threat.

As opposed to separation, an assimilated identity strategy foregrounds the commitment to a common national identity. Acculturation studies across ethnic groups and countries find consistent positive associations of national identity with various indicators of social adaptation among ethnic minority group members, including school adjustment (Berry et al. 2006). Similarly, American identity was revealed as a robust predictor of academic success among the second generation in the United States—in line with an "upward assimilation" pattern (Alba and Nee 2003; Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2008). From the perspective of social identity theory, an assimilated identity is akin to an individual mobility strategy, when members of a devalued group shed their low-status group identity with a view to passing into the high-status group. Accordingly, the orientation toward individual mobility was found to protect members of devalued groups from social identity threat (Derks et al. 2007a). Similarly, reasoning from stereotype threat research, an assimilated identity strategy might shield minority students against threat effects by enabling them to dismiss negative stereotypes of

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inferior academic ability or aptitude of the minority group as not self-relevant.

Turning to the Turkish Belgian intergroup context, daily routines and social interactions in schools powerfully convey assimilationism as an explicit and implicit norm (Stevens 2008). From an interactive approach to acculturation as an intergroup process (Bourhis et al. 1997; Zagefka and Brown 2002), we expect an assimilated strategy to be most adaptive in an assimilationist school environment. More generally, the pay-off of an assimilated identity hinges upon its normative fit with majority group expectations. In Belgian schools, for instance, an assimilated identity strategy may facilitate school belonging for minority students through communicating conformity to majority group norms. We therefore expect that an assimilated identity strategy may have adaptive advantages for Turkish Belgians, reducing their vulnerability to identity threat by connecting them to the school environment. To sum up, we have argued that alternative assimilation or separation strategies among Turkish Belgians may serve similar protective functions in the presence of identity threat.

For the adaptive role of a dual identity, which values both ethnic and national identities highly, there is again evidence on both sides of the ledger. On the negative side, dual identity threat arises when the majority group is seen to reject or deny the dual membership claims of minority group members. From a social identity theory perspective, it would be possible to argue that dual identity threat will most strongly and negatively affect dual identifiers, since it implies the failure of their attempt to bridge their ethnic identity with the larger society (Branscombe et al. 1999a). Along those lines, dual identifiers showed less motivated performance than otherwise identified minority group members when the outgroup valued only majority group characteristics (i.e., under conditions of high threat) than when they valued both minority and majority group characteristics (i.e., under conditions of low threat) (Derks et al. 2007a). In parallel, recent findings from stereotype threat research are suggestive of a possible downside of dual identity for performance under threat. Thus, Deaux and colleagues (2007) experimentally demonstrated that Afro-Caribbean immigrants who self-identified as African Americans (i.e., dual identifiers) performed significantly worse in the stereotype threat condition than those with a separated identity as West Indians. Deaux and colleagues (2007) explained their findings in terms of the contents of identity threat, since African American identity is most threatened in the context of U.S. race relations, as distinct from a West-Indian identity, which refers primarily to the country of origin.

On the positive side of the ledger, dual identities are often (though not always) found to predict better psychological adaptation in ethnic minority group members, including school adjustment (Berry et al. 2006; but see Rudmin 2008 for a critique). For instance, academic success for African Americans and Latinos was enhanced by the development of bridging identities, affirming ethnic/racial group value while simultaneously engaging with opportunities in the wider society (Oyserman et al. 2007). The latter findings are in line with a bidimensional approach of acculturation, which posits that a bicultural identity will enable minority students to engage in cross-cultural contact and culture learning while feeling securely rooted in the heritage culture and identity.

From an interactive perspective, however, the adaptivity of a bicultural strategy depends crucially on the acceptance

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of cultural diversity by the majority group (Bourhis et al. 1997; Zagefka and Brown 2002). Turning to the Belgian intergroup context, pervasive public prejudice and discrimination against immigrant workers imply the rejection of cultural diversity. Specifically, dual identity claims are at odds with an ethnic representation of national identity, which excludes ethnic minorities as outsiders who do not belong to the nation (Meeus et al. 2010). Therefore, we expect that a dual identity strategy may have a downside for Turkish Belgians when identity threat signals the failure of their attempt to bridge their ethnic identity with the larger society.

In summary, we argue that the same level of perceived identity threat may have differential consequences for minority school success depending on the adaptive value of different identity strategies in specific intergroup contexts. To this end, we have identified partly overlapping and partly competing arguments and findings from different strands of research on social identity theory, stereotype threat, and acculturation. Applying these arguments and findings to the Turkish Belgian intergroup context as a critical case of persistent educational disadvantage, we now derive our hypotheses. While stereotype threat research suggests mainly negative consequences of a separated identity strategy for performance under threat, social identity theory suggests a possible protective role of ethnic identity in the face of identity threat. In the context of cohesive Turkish immigrant communities, we therefore hypothesized positive associations of a separated identity with school performance under high threat (Hypothesis 1). Since an assimilated identity strategy allows minority students to distance themselves from the threatened minority group, and in view of predominant assimilationism in the Belgian intergroup context, we also expect positive associations of an assimilated strategy with performance under threat (Hypothesis 2). Finally, both social identity theory and stereotype threat research have associated a dual identity strategy with increased vulnerability to identity threat. In contrast, acculturation research mainly documents its adaptive side. In view of the generally low acceptance of cultural diversity in the Turkish Belgian intergroup context, however, we expect that a dual identity strategy may hamper minority school performance in the presence of identity threat (Hypothesis 3).

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 576 Turkish Belgian young adults in Antwerp (51 percent women) and in Brussels (50 percent women) in the age range of 18 to 35 (with 53 percent and 52 percent, respectively, aged 25 or younger) (TIES Belgium 2008).[3] Both Antwerp and Brussels are multicultural cities with major Turkish immigrant communities: respectively 3.6 and 2.4 percent of all inhabitants of Antwerp and Brussels were of Turkish origin in the 2001 Census. Participants were randomly drawn from the Turkish second generation in both cities, that is, they were all born in Belgium with one or both parents born in Turkey. They were visited at home by trained interviewers who took computer-assisted personal interviews in Dutch (in Antwerp) or in French (in Brussels). Across cities, the average

[3]The total sample size was 604. Cases with missing values on school performance (12), those who did not study beyond primary school (9 cases), and those whose self-reported ethnic origin was not Turkish were dropped from the analysis. Mean imputation was used for cases with few missing values.

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parental education was primary or lower secondary school in Turkey. Most participants had complete school careers at the time of the interview: 24 and 21 percent were still full-time students in Antwerp and Brussels, respectively; the others were either employed, unemployed, or otherwise inactive.

Measures

School performance. School performance was measured longitudinally as final or current success levels (high or middle vs. low), conditional on track placement at entry into secondary school (academic vs. vocational tracks). Participants with complete school careers reported their final educational qualifications and full-time students their current educational level. The hierarchical tracking structure of the Belgian school system allows us to distinguish between three types of school careers, which correspond to high or middle vs. low levels of academic success. When starting in academic tracks, one may either continue into higher education (2 = *high success group*), or complete secondary school in academic tracks (1 = *middle success group*), or else one may fail to complete an academic track (0 = *low success group*).

Experiences of personal discrimination in school. Participants indicated retrospectively how often they had personally experienced hostility or unfair treatment as a secondary school student because of their origin or background. Answers were given on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = *never* to 5 = *frequently*, with higher ratings indicating more frequent discrimination (centered around the scale mean in the analysis). The construct validity of the narrow measure of direct personal discrimination in school was corroborated by the expected associations with group-level and indirect forms of discrimination as external correlates: respectively $r = .32$, $p < .001$, with *whether students of Turkish origin as a group experienced hostility or unfair treatment in school*; and $r = .38$, $p < .001$, with *whether students of Turkish origin were less welcome in school than non-minority Belgian students*. As these correlations also suggest, direct personal discrimination is a related but theoretically distinct construct from more frequently reported perceptions of discrimination at the group level (Taylor, Wright, and Ruggiero 1992). This study focuses narrowly on past personal experiences of discrimination by teachers or peers in school as they affect academic outcomes.

Turkish and Belgian identities. Participants indicated separately to what extent they felt committed to the Belgian identity and to the Turkish identity on a six-point scale ranging from 0 = *not at all* to 5 = *very strongly*. To allocate participants to the different identity strategies, a median-split procedure was applied to both measures in the pooled sample (Ward and Rana-Deuba 1999) with 0 = *relatively weakly committed* as a reference category vs. 1 = *relatively strongly committed*. As a result of the median split, participants were roughly equally distributed between identity strategies: separated (28 percent), assimilated (28 percent), dual (19 percent), and residual (25 percent). The median of Turkish identity was 4 in both cities, whereas that of Belgian identity was 3.5 in Brussels and 3 in Antwerp. The construct validity of the single indicators of ethnic and national identification was supported by significant associations with acculturation orientations in the school context as external correlates: $r = .25$, $p < .001$ with preference for maintaining the Turkish culture and $r = .14$, $p = .001$ with preference for adopting the Belgian culture in school, respectively.

Control variables. In order to estimate the net effects of theoretical predictors of school performance, we controlled for

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entry levels and early school segregation as influential entry factors, as well as for age group and student status at the time of the interview. Parental education, city, and gender were omitted from the final analyses in the absence of significant effects. Level at entry into secondary school was measured retrospectively: 0 = *academic track* versus 1 = *vocational track* as the reference category. As a measure of school segregation, participants reported retrospectively how many children of immigrant origin attended their secondary school on a five-point scale from 1 = *almost none* to 5 = *almost all,* with higher scores indicating higher proportions of immigrant pupils (centered in the analysis). Age (0 = *18–25* vs. 1 = *aged 26–35* as the reference category) and student status (0 = *other* vs. 1 = *student* as the reference category) were dummy coded.

RESULTS

Descriptives

Across cities, 72 percent of the participants had started secondary education in academic tracks as compared to 28 percent in vocational tracks (with significantly more academic track placement in Brussels than in Antwerp). At the time of the interviews, 24 and 30 percent were in the high and middle success categories respectively, having accessed or completed higher education (high) or having completed academic tracks (middle), as against 45 percent in the low success category, who had either taken vocational training or had left school early—with somewhat more frequently successful careers in Brussels than in Antwerp. Participants had attended secondary schools where close to 50 percent of pupils were of immigrant origin on average (M = 2.83; SD = 1.01)—with higher segregation levels in Brussels than in Antwerp. Most participants recalled one or more personal experiences of discrimination in lower secondary school (M = 1.86; SD = 0.99), especially in Brussels. They were strongly committed to a Turkish identity (M = 4.05; SD = 1.36) and moderately committed to a Belgian identity (M = 2.60; SD = 1.87), with more national identification in Brussels than in Antwerp. Accordingly, when using a median split of the pooled samples across cities in order to assign participants to different identity strategies, an assimilated strategy was more frequent in Brussels, while separated or residual strategies were more frequent in Antwerp (for city differences, see Appendix A).

Multivariate Analyses

We estimated multinomial logistic regression models with school performance as a categorical dependent variable. Estimated effect parameters *B* in logistic regression are also reported as the odds ratio (Exp(*B*)). To facilitate the interpretation of interactions, the estimated probabilities that correspond to differential odds ratios are also reported (Alba 1987). Effects of a dual identity strategy were specified as the interaction between Turkish and Belgian identity variables, while the conditional effects of Turkish and Belgian identity in the presence of the interaction term indicate effects of separated and assimilated strategies respectively. In order to support Hypotheses 1 and 2 on the associations of school performance under high threat with separated and assimilated identity strategies, significant and positive two-way interactions of Turkish or Belgian identity with experiences of discrimination would be required. To test Hypothesis 3 on the association of performance under threat with a dual identity strategy, we estimated the three-way interaction of both ethnic and national identities with experiences of discrimination.

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Table 1. Logistic Regressions of High and Middle Success (vs. Low Success) on Background Variables, Belgian and Turkish Identity, Experienced Discrimination, and Their Interactions

Dependent variable: school performance	Middle vs. Low success		High vs. Low success	
Independent variables	*B*	Exp(*B*)	*B*	Exp(*B*)
Intercept	−0.62 (.29)*		−0.77 (.29)**	
Entry level	−2.14 (.31)***	0.12	−1.69 (.28)***	0.18
Student	0.25 (.35)	1.28	1.89 (.32)***	6.59
Age	0.30 (.25)	1.35	0.62 (.27)*	1.86
Segregation in secondary	−0.04 (.12)	0.96	−0.31 (.12)**	0.73
Discrimination in secondary	−0.39 (.27)	0.68	−0.04 (.21)	0.96
Turkish identity	0.25 (.32)	1.29	−0.57 (.33)[b]	0.57
Belgian identity	0.76 (.33)*	2.13	0.52 (.30)[b]	1.68
Turkish × Belgian	−0.62 (.47)	0.54	0.05 (.47)	1.05
Discrim. × Turkish	0.67 (.35)[a]	1.96	0.96 (.32)**	2.62
Discrim. × Belgian	0.98 (.36)**	2.67	0.42 (.31)	1.52
Discrim. × Turkish × Belgian	−1.65 (.51)***	0.19	−1.78 (.48)***	0.17
Chi-Square	196.49 (22)			
Nagelkerke R^2	.33			

Note: Cells contain effect parameters B, standard errors in parenthesis and odds ratio, Exp(B). Reference categories are those between the ages of 18–25, not student anymore, who started their secondary education with academic track, and experienced average levels of segregation.
[a]$p \leq .06$. [b]$p = .09$.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Main analyses. As the theoretical associations in this study generalized across cities, we present only the pooled models for Turkish Belgians in both cities. As can be seen from Table 1, there were no significant main effects of experienced discrimination and Turkish identity on school performance. Only Belgian identity had a significant main effect: Turkish Belgians with an assimilated identity strategy were more than twice as likely to be in the middle (vs. low) success group (Exp(B) = 2.13). A similar association with high (vs. low) success failed to reach significance. In line with Hypotheses 1 and 2, significant and positive two-way interactions of discrimination with Turkish and Belgian identity indicated positive associations of separated and assimilated identity strategies respectively with school performance (see Table 1): in the presence of past experiences of discrimination in school, Turkish Belgians with assimilated or separated strategies had better chances of ending up in the middle or high (vs. low) success groups. In addition, and in line with Hypothesis 3 on dual identity as a moderator, these two-way interactions were further qualified by a significantly negative three-way interaction of discrimination with Turkish and Belgian identities (see Table 1).

Table 2 shows the odds ratios and the corresponding probabilities for each identity strategy conditional on high vs. low threat.[4] Similar patterns of differential

[4]For instance, for dual identifiers under high threat, the odds ratios are calculated as the sum of the intercept and the log odds for the main effects of discrimination (centered); Turkish identity and Belgian identity (categorical); the two-way interactions of Turkish × Belgian identities, Discrimination × Turkish identity, and Discrimination × Belgian identity; and the three-way interaction of Turkish × Belgian identities × Discrimination. To estimate probabilities: exp(x) is divided by (1 + exp(x)).

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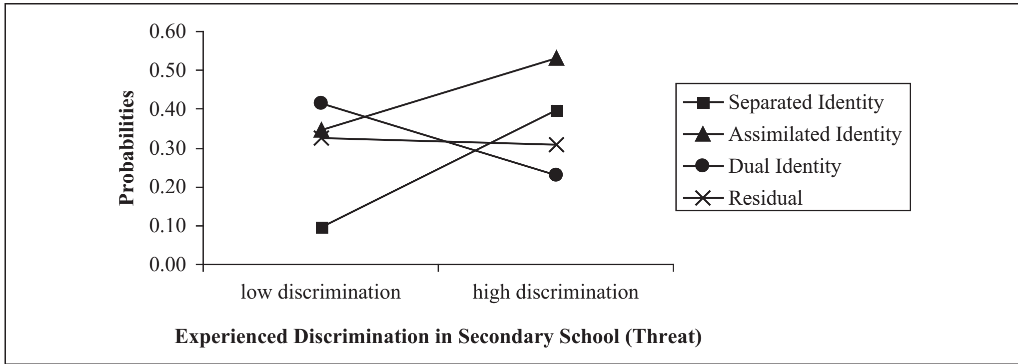

Figure 1. High (vs. low) success as a function of experienced discrimination and identity strategies: estimated probabilities for Turkish Belgians

Table 2. Odds Ratios (Exp(*B*)) and Estimated Probabilities (*P*) of School Performance for Different Identity Strategies at Low and High Levels of Experienced Discrimination in School

	Exp(*B*)		Probabilities (*P*)	
School performance	Middle vs. low success	High vs. low success	Middle vs. low success	High vs. low success
Separated identity: strong Turkish and weak Belgian commitments				
Low discrimination	0.52	0.10	0.34	0.09
High discrimination	0.92	0.66	0.48	0.40
Assimilated identity: strong Belgian and weak Turkish commitments				
Low discrimination	0.63	0.53	0.39	0.35
High discrimination	2.08	1.13	0.68	0.53
Dual identity: strong Belgian and Turkish commitments				
Low discrimination	1.17	0.71	0.54	0.41
High discrimination	0.54	0.30	0.35	0.23
Residual category: weak commitments to both identities				
Low discrimination	0.79	0.48	0.44	0.32
High discrimination	0.36	0.44	0.27	0.31

Note: High and low levels of discrimination indicate high and low levels of identity threat

odds ratios and expected probabilities were obtained for middle and high (vs. low) success groups. We will first show and interpret the latter interaction pattern in more detail. Next, we will briefly discuss the replication of this pattern across high and middle levels of success. As shown in Figure 1, the benefits of a separated identity strategy differed in the expected way as a function of

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perceived threat. Separation was associated with very low probabilities of school success in the absence of perceived threat (P = .09) and with much increased success probabilities when perceived threat was high (P = .40). In line with Hypothesis 1, this pattern suggests that separation may offer some protection against school disengagement under high threat. In line with Hypothesis 2, while an assimilated identity strategy was positively associated with school success regardless of perceived threat, Turkish Belgians with an assimilated identity did better when perceived threat was high rather than low. Their chances of being highly successful increased from P = .35 to P = .53 with increasing levels of perceived threat. To sum up, high perceived threat was associated with increased resilience for those Turkish Belgians with either separated or assimilated identities, as indicated by better chances of being in the high success group in spite of prior experiences of discrimination in school. In contrast, and in line with Hypothesis 3 on increased vulnerability to identity threat, a dual identity strategy was beneficial for school success when perceived threat was low. It was much less adaptive, however, at high levels of perceived threat: Turkish Belgians with a dual identity had the lowest probability of being in the high success group under high threat (P = .23), as compared with a high chance of being successful in the absence of threat (P = .41).

Despite better chances of being at the middle level of success overall (completing secondary school) than at the high level (continuing beyond secondary school), the expected differential effects of experienced discrimination are fully replicated across levels of success as outcomes. Specifically, comparing middle vs. low success levels, a separated identity strategy was associated with better chances of success when the perceived threat was high (P = .48) vs. low (P = .34), and an assimilated identity strategy predicted much better chances under high (P = .68) versus low perceived threat (P =.39). Most importantly, Turkish Belgians with a dual identity had fewer chances of success than those with separated or assimilated identities under high perceived threat (P = .35), and they were most successful in the absence of threat (P = .54)[5].

In addition, initial track placement at entry into secondary school had strong and lasting effects on later school performance. Students who started in academic tracks were eight times (1/0.12) more likely to be in middle (vs. low) success groups and almost six times (1/0.18) more likely to be in high (vs. low) success groups than those who started in vocational tracks. The older age group was almost twice as likely (Exp(B) = 1.86), and full-time students were more than six times as likely to be in the high

[5]We tested simple effects of identity strategies on school performance within low and high threat levels, using a median split of experienced discrimination. When comparing high versus low success groups, at low levels of perceived threat, minorities with a separated identity were significantly less likely to be successful than dual identifiers ($p < .01$) and those with an assimilated identity ($p < .01$). At high levels of threat, dual identifiers were significantly less likely to be successful than those with a separated identity ($p < .05$) or with an assimilated identity ($p < .01$). When comparing middle vs. low success groups, at low levels of perceived threat, dual identifiers were significantly more likely to be successful than those with separated ($p < .01$) and assimilated identities ($p < .05$). Conversely, at high levels of threat, dual identifiers were slightly less successful than those with a separated identity ($p = .06$) and clearly less so than those with an assimilated identity ($p < .01$). The only difference between success levels as outcomes regards the role of a separated strategy when perceived threat is low; whereas separated and assimilated identities were equally adaptive at the middle level, separation was less adaptive than assimilation at higher levels of success only.

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success group (Exp(B) = 6.59). School segregation had the expected negative impact, with students in most segregated schools being close to five times more likely to end up in the low (vs. high) success group (1/0.73 = 1.37 per unit so 1.37^5 for 5 units change). Finally, Turkish and Belgian identities were significantly negatively correlated (r = –.13, p = .002), suggesting that Turkish Belgians perceived some tension between ethnic and national identities.

Additional analyses. We hypothesized that Turkish Belgians with different identity strategies would respond differently to similar experiences of discrimination in their early school careers. An alternative hypothesis would be a mediation hypothesis, which predicts that experiences of discrimination in secondary school would cause minority group members to endorse different identity strategies, which could in turn affect school performance. Discrimination, however, was not significantly predicted by identity strategies, nor did identity strategies predict school performance (except for a positive main effect of an assimilated identity). In other words, participants with separated, assimilated, and dual identity strategies did not differ significantly in the levels of experienced discrimination in secondary school.[6] Similar levels of experienced discrimination across identity strategies strengthen our interpretation of identity strategies as moderators of the differential effects of experienced discrimination on school success. They also help to rule out another competing explanation of our findings in terms of retrospective bias in the measure of past experiences of discrimination. For instance, dual identifiers might have reported more past discrimination than their assimilated peers because of a heightened awareness or retention of such experiences. Similarly, in the absence of significant associations between levels of school performance and experienced discrimination (there were no main effects of discrimination experiences), there are no empirical grounds for retrospective bias as a function of school performance, so that students who had failed in school would retrospectively attribute their failure to discriminatory treatment in school (for the correlation table, see Appendix B).

Finally, another rival interpretation could be that participants with low, middle, and high performance outcomes would adopt different identity strategies as a consequence of their schooling experiences. In this case, identity strategies would be reactive responses rather than explanatory factors which contribute to varying levels of school performance. To test this assumption, we specified an alternative model with school performance categories, experienced discrimination, and their interactions as independent variables—in addition to the same control variables—and with identity strategies as a multinomial dependent variable (contrasting separated, assimilated, and dual identifiers with those low-on-both-identities as the reference category). As similar interaction patterns were observed in the reversed model, minorities in the high success group, for instance, were equally likely to adopt a separation or an assimilation strategy in the presence of high threat. This pattern begs the question why some minority group members adopted a separation strategy while others adopted an assimilation strategy under similar conditions (i.e., at the same levels of school performance and experienced

[6]Analysis of variance yields no significant effects of identity strategies on experienced discrimination. Mean levels of perceived discrimination for the different identity strategies were very similar: M separated = 1.88, M assimilated = 1.88, M dual = 1.87, M residual = 1.86.

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discrimination and controlling for segregation, age, and track at entry into secondary). Accordingly, the reversed causal model explained less than half of the variance as compared with the theoretical model (Nagelkerke R^2 = .15 as against .33 for the theoretical model) and produced fewer correct classifications of cases on the dependent variable (39.5 percent vs. 59 percent). We conclude that the data appear to support our theoretical approach of identity strategies as relatively stable person variables which moderate the psychological impact of situationally induced experiences of threat, specifically performance effects of experienced discrimination in the school context.

DISCUSSION

A major aim of this study was to understand when minority group members would respond to identity threat in ways that are detrimental to their school performance and when they would persist in the face of threat. We hypothesized that both ethnic and national identities, as they are combined in separated, assimilated, or dual identity strategies, moderate the consequences of identity threat for minority school performance. Overall, the pattern of findings was largely consistent with our expectations. Specifically, the first hypothesis predicted better performance for Turkish Belgian minority group members with a separated identity strategy under high perceived threat. In line with this hypothesis, a separated identity strategy was associated with better chances of being successful in the presence of high perceived threat. In line with the second hypothesis, which predicted that an assimilated identity strategy may mitigate the disruptive effect of perceived threat on performance, an assimilated identity strategy was also associated with better chances of being successful in the presence of high perceived threat. Moreover, regardless of perceived threat in the school context, an assimilated identity strategy was associated with better chances of school success. Finally, and in line with the third hypothesis, our findings suggest that a dual identity strategy is a two-edged sword, leading to more positive performance outcomes in low threat contexts and to more negative outcomes in high threat ones.

We now briefly comment on each of these findings. The first, that Turkish Belgians with a separated identity showed increased resilience under high threat, fits with social identity theory, in that when strongly identified members of a disadvantaged group have a chance to affirm the value of their group, they can become challenged to overcome the negative stereotypes confronting them (Derks et al. 2006, 2007a). The Turkish Belgian second generation constitutes a devalued minority group in the Belgian intergroup context. As the children of Turkish immigrant workers, they are chronically exposed to identity threat in the form of widespread public prejudice and structural discrimination against immigrants. At the same time, typically strong social ties within Turkish immigrant communities are a chronic source of ethnic affirmation, which may support group value in the face of identity threat.

The protective role of a separated identity resonates with Dion's (2001) argument that visible minorities, for whom the experience of discrimination is in the air they breathe, may develop resilience in the face of discrimination through attributing negative outcomes to unfair treatment rather than personal failure. Similarly, the rejection-identification model (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999b) underlines the buffering role of increased ethnic identification in

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response to experienced discrimination. Specifically, ethnic identity was found to reduce the negative impact of repeated exposure to experiences of discrimination on personal well-being. Whereas the rejection-identification model conceives of ethnic identity or "reactive ethnicity" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) as a mediator of the consequences of experienced discrimination, ethnic identity in our study functions instead as a moderator of these consequences. Moderation seems more likely when binding ethnic ties within immigrant communities support the continued ethnic identification of the second generation, so that ethnic identity depends less on intergroup experiences of discrimination than on shared history and culture with other ingroup members (Deaux 2006). Accordingly, among second generation Turkish Belgians in our study, relatively high levels of Turkish identification were the rule, and levels of identification did not depend on past experiences of discrimination.

When perceived threat was low, however, Turkish Belgians with a separated identity had a very low chance of accessing higher education. In the absence of past experiences of discrimination, the combination of a strong Turkish and a weak Belgian identity seems to hinder rather than help Turkish Belgians in higher education. It should be added that their chances of completing secondary school were much better than those of continuing beyond secondary school. The latter finding suggests that separation is particularly detrimental at the higher and academically more demanding levels of education, when the absence of perceived threat precludes the possibility of externally attributing experiences of failure in school to discrimination (Major, Quinton, and McCoy 2002). Along these lines, acculturation studies have documented generally negative associations of a separation strategy with sociocultural adaptation, including self-reported school adjustment and achievement, in contrast with mainly positive associations of separation with psychological adjustment or well-being (Berry et al. 2006; Güngör 2007).

Finally, the protective impact of a separated identity seems to run counter to expectations from stereotype threat research, which has associated the situational salience of, and the personal commitment to, a devalued group identity with increased vulnerability to perceived threat (Steele et al. 2002). One reason could be that ethnic identity, and Turkish identity in particular, as distinct from some other group identities, commonly involves strong social ties and shared cultural meanings and practices among ingroup members as powerful sources of positive group value (Deaux 2006). Thus, cohesive ethnic communities and cultures might be particularly effective in buffering strong identifiers from possible risks or costs associated with identity threat. This argument is in line with existing findings of strong racial or ethnic identity as a psychological resource (Fuligni, Witkow, and Garcia 2005; Oyserman et al. 2006; Spencer et al. 2001).

As for an alternative assimilated identity strategy, we found positive associations with school success regardless of perceived threat. One explanation for this overall positive effect of an assimilated identity is derived from an interactive approach of acculturation processes (Berry et al. 2006; Bourhis et al. 1997). Assimilationism is the norm in the Belgian school context, communicated explicitly as well as implicitly through daily routines and social interactions in mixed classrooms (Stevens 2008). In an assimilationist school environment, an assimilated identity strategy on the side of minority students may facilitate their school engagement by increasing congruence with majority group norms

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and expectations. In addition, Turkish Belgians with an assimilated identity were found to do even better when perceived threat was high rather than low. In particular, when perceived threat was high, an assimilated identity strategy was associated with very high chances of school success across middle and high levels of success as outcomes (i.e., secondary school completion and continuation beyond secondary school, respectively). It is possible that minority group members who consider themselves as individual members of mainstream society may disregard identity threat that targets the minority group by distancing themselves from the threatened group. Reasoning from social identity theory, we can expect they would adopt an individual mobility strategy in the face of perceived threat against the minority group and try even harder to prove they are worthy of majority group acceptance.

Lastly, we found that a dual identity strategy is often a two-edged sword. Dual identifiers had best chances of school success in a welcoming school environment, that is, in the absence of experiences of discrimination at school. In contrast, they were more vulnerable than those with assimilated or separated identities in a less welcoming environment. At first glance, this finding appears to be at odds with much of the evidence from acculturation studies associating an integration strategy—that is, bicultural commitments to the ethnic and national cultures and identities—with better adaptation (Berry et al. 2006; see Rudmin 2008 for a critical review). From an interactive approach to acculturation (cf. supra), however, the psychological viability of an integration strategy hinges upon the public recognition and accommodation of cultural diversity. Consequently, the psychological advantage of a dual identity strategy may not generalize to receiving societies, such as Belgium, where the public acceptance of distinct ethnic cultures and identities is generally low. The increased vulnerability of dual identifiers to disengagement in the face of experienced discrimination resonates with some recent findings extending social identity theory and stereotype threat research to "dual identity threat" (Derks et al. 2007a). Being a dual identifier involves simultaneous strong attachments to the ethnic community and to the wider society, such as when the second generation wants to combine school belonging with ethnic loyalties (Berry et al. 2006). Dual identity threat can be seen as "acceptance threat" (Ellemers et al. 2002), which would arise whenever the majority group denies or rejects the double membership claims of dual identifiers. For dual identifiers, therefore, experiences of discrimination would signal the failure of their attempt at bridging ethnic and national identities. As Brown, Rutland, and Watters (2007) have shown, a dual identity can be a stressful strategy in an achievement context. In their longitudinal study in British schools, Asian minority children with an integration strategy of acculturation, while reporting higher levels of self-esteem and peer acceptance, also evidenced more emotional symptoms of social anxiety in school than children with either separation or assimilation strategies. Importantly, this apparent downside of dual identity may apply only in situations where the dual identity of devalued minority group members is a stigmatized identity. Indeed, under low threat, that is, having experienced little or no discrimination in their early school careers, Turkish Belgians with a dual identity had better chances of school success than those with either separated or assimilated identities. This psychological advantage of a dual identity in more welcoming environments is in line with the expected benefits of biculturalism in acculturation research (Berry et al. 2006) and with some findings of the adaptive value

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of bicultural or bridging self-identities (Oyserman et al. 2007).

To sum up, our findings lay the ground for future research, which should further develop a contextualized approach to minority performance in multigroup settings from the interplay of perceived identity threat with different identity strategies. There are also limitations, however. One limitation is the cross-sectional nature of our data, so that causal direction cannot be empirically determined. It seems plausible that identity-performance associations work both ways, so that early school performance motivates the development of particular identity strategies, which in turn affect future performance. Reverse causation yielded less explanatory power, however, as we discovered by testing alternative path models. Moreover, we measured current or final school performance conditional on prior performance at entry into secondary school. Conditioning on prior performance makes it much less plausible that we are modeling the effects of prior school failure or threat to personal self-worth. Nevertheless, prospective longitudinal studies should further improve our understanding of the interplay between identity processes and school performance as they unfold over time. An additional limitation of the study is the use of single indicators to assess ethnic and national identities. Although single indicator measures of group identification are commonly used and were proved externally valid (e.g., Phinney, Cantu, and Kurtz 1997), more elaborate composite measures of identity would be required to find out whether the findings generalize to different dimensions or components of group identities. Moreover, future research on the interplay of dual identity and identity threat should include different intergroup contexts, varying from relatively low to high overall levels of acceptance of the dual identities of minority group members. More research is needed to unravel the contextual conditions that make the difference between the up- and downsides of dual identity for minority success in mainstream settings.

Finally, we conceived of levels of identification as a relatively stable person variable, so that individuals were seen to differ in their commitment to group identities. Social identities in natural (rather than artificial) groups tend to be rather stable (e.g., Verkuyten and Zaremba 2005), as they are anchored in relatively enduring unequal group positions in society. Accordingly, our data showed no significant age differences between people with distinct separated, assimilated, and dual identity strategies. Still, future research should address the interplay of stable self-identifications with situationally salient identities in order to improve our understanding of situated identity strategies in the school context.

To conclude, this study examined the role of different separated, assimilated, and dual identity strategies among members of a devalued minority group in enabling resilience in the presence of identity threat. In brief, we found that Turkish Belgians with either separated or assimilated identity strategies tended to persist and do relatively well in school despite past experiences of discrimination. Their identity strategies apparently buffered them from the otherwise negative consequences of identity threat for school performance. In contrast, those Turkish Belgians with a dual identity strategy appeared to be more vulnerable to identity threat and hence more at risk of school disengagement in the presence of past experiences of discrimination at school. We interpreted these findings against the background of low acceptance of cultural diversity in Belgian schools as intergroup contexts. More generally, our

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Belgian findings suggest that dual identity does not enable successful adaptation in the absence of majority group acceptance and support. In other words, the success of minorities depends crucially on the acceptance of their social identities and cultural engagements by the powerful majority groups and institutions.

APPENDIX A

Descriptive Statistics of Variables in Each City

	Brussels	Antwerp		
	Percentages		Pearson χ^2 (*df*)	*p*-value
Entry track			6.81 (1)	.009
Vocational	22%	32%		
Academic	77%	68%		
Student			0.86 (1)	
Student	24%	21%		
Other	76%	79%		
Age			0.05 (1)	
18–25	53%	52%		
26–35	47%	48%		
Identity strategies			12.15 (3)	.007
Separated	25%	30%		
Assimilated	36%	23%		
Dual	18%	19%		
Residual	21%	28%		
School performance			5.59 (2)	.06
High success	29%	31%		
Middle success	29%	21%		
Low success	42%	48%		
	Within group means (*SD*)		*t (df)*	
Segregation in secondary school	3.02 (1.01)	2.70 (0.99)	3.67 (574)	.000
Discrimination in secondary school	1.96 (0.96)	1.80 (1.01)	1.86 (574)	.06

N = 576.

APPENDIX B

Correlation Matrix of The Variables

	Entry	Student	Age	Segregation	Discrim.	Turkish	Belgian
Student	.17**						
Age	−.09*	−.45**					
Segregation in secondary	−.09*	.01	−.04				
Discrimination in secondary	−.02	.02	−.04	−.06			
Turkish identity	−.02	.02	−.07	.08	.01		
Belgian identity	.12**	.14**	−.07	−.15**	.01	−.13*	
School performance	.35**	.30**	−.06	−.15**	.07	−.09*	.17**

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

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FUNDING

This research has been funded with a grant award to the corresponding author by Marie Curie Research Training Network and by ZEIT Stiftung.

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