



# Majority Members' Feelings About Political Representation of Muslim Immigrants

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**Abstract:** In three survey experimental studies among national samples of the native Dutch, we examined feelings towards Muslim immigrants' political party representation. The strategy of disengagement (reject political representation) was evaluated most positively, followed by the descriptive representation strategy (participate as Muslims in existing political party). The group representation strategy (participate in the existing political system with a Muslim party) was evaluated most negatively. Furthermore, participants who perceived higher group-based power threat had more negative feelings towards political representation of Muslim immigrants, but less so towards disengaged immigrants. In addition, negative feelings were stronger towards Muslim versus Christian immigrants and this difference was somewhat more pronounced for the group representation and descriptive representation strategy compared to political disengagement.

**Keywords:** political representation, power threat, multiculturalism, immigrants

In 2010 the American Immigration Council published a special report entitled “*The growing political power of immigrants and their children.*” Census projections suggest that the United States will be more ethnically diverse in the near future with more ethnic minority members than White Americans, and there are similar census projections for countries in the European Union (Eurostat, 2010). Since the democratic political power of a group is based on its relative size, this development raises important questions for political representation. There are several ways in which immigrants and ethnic minority members can have an influence on party politics. One has to do with the “minority electorate” (or “minority vote”) and various studies in different countries have examined the party preference and voting behavior (e.g., democrat or republican) of immigrant-origin groups (e.g., Cinalli & Giugni, 2016; Dancygier & Saunders, 2006; Goldsmith & Holzner, 2015; Voicu & Comşa, 2014). A second one relates to the so-called descriptive representation of minority members in existing political parties due to preferential “co-ethnic voting” based on cultural affinity and minority group-based interests (e.g., Bloemraad, 2013; Schildkraut, 2013; Sobolewska, 2013; Tate, 2003). In countries with a multi-party political system there is the third possibility of participating in democratic politics with an ethnic or religious minority political party (group representation).

In Europe, members of immigrant-origin groups are clearly underrepresented in political institutions and this

is not a simple reflection of their recent arrival, delayed acquisition of citizenship, educational qualifications, social experiences, or cultural attitudes (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013). Migrants' reception by the dominant majority supports or undermines their ability to participate in party politics. Some sections of the majority population are likely to believe that their ingroup's power is threatened by the political engagement of minorities and therefore will resist immigrants' political representation. Other sections of the population are likely to support immigrants' ability to fully integrate and participate in society, also politically.

Given the changing demographics and the critical political issues involved, it is important for social psychologists to examine how political representation of immigrant-origin groups might affect current intergroup relations (see also Hindriks, Verkuyten, & Coenders, 2015; Milojev, Sengupta, & Sibley, 2014; Outen, Schmitt, Miller, & Garcia, 2012). In the present research we consider how Dutch natives react to Muslim immigrants becoming active in the democratic system, either by joining existing political parties (*descriptive representation*) or by establishing an Islamic party (*group representation*), and we compare these two situations with Muslims disengaging from party politics. We specifically look at the affective reactions to Muslims' political representation because the integration of Muslim immigrants is placed at the heart of West European immigration and integration debates (Helbling, 2012; McLaren, 2003; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). With embedded

experiments in three surveys among national samples of the native Dutch, we investigate whether different forms of political representation of Muslim immigrants elicit different levels of negative feelings, and whether the role of individual differences in group-based power threat for outgroup feelings differs for these forms of political representation. Furthermore, in Study 3 we compare the feelings towards the political representation of Muslim immigrants with the feelings towards Christian immigrants from the same immigrant group. This allows us to assess whether negative feelings towards political representation are more pronounced when the same immigrant group is identified as Muslim than when it is identified as Christian (Spruyt & Elchardus, 2012).

## Political Minority Representation and Natives' Views

Politics involves questions of influence and the power to make decisions that affect society. Majority members are likely to hold a belief in zero-sum competition between groups and might fear that the more influence immigrants gain, the more power they themselves will lose (Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005). Group competition is an important cause for prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Blalock, 1967; Esses, Jackson, & Bennett-AbuAyyash, 2010; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), and a critical ingredient in anti-immigrant attitudes (see Coenders, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2004; Wagner, Christ, & Heitmeyer, 2010). Minority members who are seen as being in a position to enact changes in the status quo are likely to be perceived as potential competitors for influence and power. This would mean that majority members will feel most positive about Muslim immigrants who disengage from host society politics. After all, these immigrants do not wish to participate in political parties and therefore do not pose a challenge to the power position of the native majority group.

Muslim immigrants who do want to participate in the political system and thereby pursue political influence can be expected to be evaluated more negatively. The perceived competition is probably highest when Muslims want to secure their interests and express their views by participating in the democratic political system with their own political party (group representation strategy). Descriptive representation is likely to elicit an intermediate level of resistance. On the one hand, this strategy implies that Muslim immigrants do not explicitly wish to be represented by a minority political party but rather prefer co-believers to participate within existing parties. Therefore, majority group members might view them less as competitors for power and influence than their group

representing counterparts. On the other hand, the presence of a minority representative within an existing party can act as a cue that activates group-based considerations in the minds of majority members (McConaughy, White, Leal, & Casellas, 2010). This representative is likely to be perceived as being concerned with the interests of the minority outgroup. For example, in the Netherlands mainstream political parties tend to be reluctant to include individuals who are seen as representatives of immigrant-origin groups (Michon & Vermeulen, 2013), and there have been public concerns and reports of ethnic clientelism by local minority politicians (Van den Dool, 2013). This means that majority members can be expected to be more negative about descriptive representation of Muslim immigrants than about political disengagement. Thus, we expected native Dutch to have the most negative feelings towards political group representation of Muslim immigrants, followed by descriptive representation, and to be least negative about political disengagement.

## Perceived Power Threat

The majority population is not a homogeneous group when it comes to attitudes towards immigration and the integration of immigrant-origin groups. Some people feel politically, economically, and culturally threatened by immigrant outgroups while others do not. We will examine whether the importance of individual differences in perceived power threat for feelings towards Muslim immigrants depends on the political representation strategy.

Many studies have shown that majority group members display an array of negative attitudes towards ethnic outgroups when they feel threatened by that outgroup (see Wagner et al., 2010). There are many different forms of threat that, depending on the circumstances and the particular domain of life (e.g., symbolic and realistic issues), are less or more important for people's attitudes towards minority groups (see Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Considering the political nature of the current study we focused on perceptions of power threat: the belief that immigrants pose a threat to the power position of the native majority. Majority group members might believe that political participation of immigrants threatens their ingroup's power. This means that those who are more concerned about the relatively powerful position of their majority ingroup will respond more negatively towards descriptive political representation and minority group representation of Muslim immigrants. In contrast, since political disengagement does not have an impact on the existing system of political representation, native individuals who are more concerned about ingroup power should not respond more

negatively to Muslim disengagement than individuals who are less concerned about ingroup power. Thus, the relation between perceived power threat and feelings towards Muslims was expected to depend on the type of Muslim political representation (including disengagement).

## The Current Research

We tested our hypotheses in three national samples of the native Dutch. This country constitutes an ideal setting because of its multiparty political system and the existence of Muslim political parties. The Dutch House of Representatives is elected by proportional representation without a threshold, meaning that a political party only needs around 63,000 votes to win a seat in parliament. As a consequence, the Netherlands is a country with a great many political parties, 14 of which are currently (2016) represented in Parliament. Voters have a range of parties which fit their beliefs and political orientation, including several small Christian parties and different one-issue parties (e.g., “party for the elderly,” “party for the animals”). These parties represent specific sections of the population and try to achieve their particular goals within the existing political system. To secure “parliamentary trust,” Dutch governments always consist of a coalition between two or more parties and for a parliamentary majority sometimes have to rely on parties that hold only two or three seats. For example, in 2013 the government relied heavily on a small Christian-orthodox party to secure a majority for its austerity measures.

Similar to, for example, Spain, Belgium, and Denmark, there are and have been several political parties in the Netherlands that try to participate in host society politics by explicitly presenting themselves as Islamic, or that claim to draw inspiration from Islam. Some of these political parties have secured seats in municipality councils in the last Dutch local elections (2014; e.g., “NIDA” in Rotterdam and “Islam Democrats” in The Hague), and they formed the inspiration for the vignettes in our experimental research in which we focused on the national level.

We tested our predictions among nonstudent, national samples. This is important for the generalization of the findings because students might be less conservative than the general public and this may have an effect on their evaluation of immigrants’ political representation and outgroup attitudes more generally (Henry, 2008). Moreover, the use of national samples allows us to examine whether the

experimental manipulation had an effect over and above sociodemographic factors that are found to be related to attitudes towards immigrants: educational attainment, political orientation, age, and gender (e.g., Coenders & Scheepers, 2003; Meeusen, De Vroome, & Hooghe, 2013; Sears & Henry, 2003). Following the recommendation of Simmons, Nelson, and Simonsohn (2011), we controlled for these factors in an additional analysis and report the statistical results both with and without these factors.

## Study 1

In Study 1 we expected Dutch natives to have the most negative feelings towards Muslims adopting the political strategy of minority group representation, followed by descriptive representation, and then disengagement. Furthermore, participants who perceive relatively high, compared to low, outgroup power threat were expected to have more negative feelings but not in the political disengagement condition.

## Method

### Participants

A probability sample of Dutch majority members (18 years and older) was drawn by TNS-NIPO Consult, a bureau specialized in collecting national data. In December 2011, participants received an online questionnaire about Dutch history, politics and identity, and cultural diversity.<sup>1</sup> The response rate was 57%, which is normal for Dutch surveys (see Stoop, 2005). The sample consisted of 928 participants between 18 and 88 years ( $M = 50$ ,  $SD = 17.15$ ) with 52% males and 48% females.

### Experimental Procedure and Measurements

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions. Using the design of previous research (Celeste, Brown, Tip, & Matera, 2014; Matera, Stefanile, & Brown, 2011; Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998) we presented participants with a short excerpt from a fictitious interview that “was recently published in a well-known morning newspaper.” In this excerpt a 30-year-old Muslim named Ahmed was interviewed. The focus on a male person was for reasons of relevance because Muslim males are much more likely to be involved in politics than females. Ahmed first described

<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire contained different sets of survey questions (on deprovincialization, perceived discrimination of immigrants, national identity and identification, conformity, and self-certainty) that were not of interest in the current study, and several population-based survey experiments (Jackson & Cox, 2013). The experiment on political representation was introduced and presented in a separate section and the questions of perceived power threat were presented in an earlier section in which also questions about national representations and group identifications were asked.

himself as being born in Turkey, just like his parents were, but he has been living in the Netherlands for the last 20 years. When asked by the interviewer if he had a clear idea about Dutch politics, Ahmed answered "Yes, I do." Next, he was asked if he thinks it is important that Muslims are politically active in the Netherlands. Participants were then presented with either one of three answers that reflected the three political strategies. In the group representation vignette, Ahmed answered "Yes, they should try as much as possible to have an influence through an Islamic political party." In the descriptive representation vignette, Ahmed answered: "Yes, they should try as much as possible to have an influence in established, mainstream political parties." In the disengagement vignette, Ahmed answered: "No, they should not get involved in party politics."

Following Matera et al. (2011; Celeste et al., 2014) and for assessing feelings towards Muslim immigrants, participants were subsequently asked to indicate "their feelings toward people like Ahmed." Six emotion terms were used: sympathy (reversed coded), irritation, fear, worry, admiration (reversed coded), and trust (reversed coded). For each emotion a 7-point scale was presented ranging from 1 = "Not at all" to 7 = "Very much," with 4 = "Average" as the midpoint. The items were averaged into a single, reliable scale ( $\alpha = .85$  with item-total correlations ranging between .58 and .70) with a higher score indicating more negative feelings ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ).<sup>2</sup>

*Perceived power threat (PPT)* was measured before the experiment by three items about immigrants in general: "Because many immigrants live here, native Dutch people have less and less influence," "The native Dutch are slowly losing the Netherlands to newcomers," and "Sometimes it seems like natives have to adjust to newcomers, instead of the other way around" (see Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013). The three items were averaged into a single score ( $\alpha = .90$ ,  $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) and a higher score indicates more perceived power threat.

*Political orientation* was measured by using the well-known political self-placement scale (Jost, 2006). This scale was presented at the end of the questionnaire and had five categories: left (11%), center-left (17%), center (44%), center-right (19%), or right (9%).

*Educational level* was measured by asking participants to indicate their highest level of education completed on a 7-point scale that corresponds to the Dutch educational system. For 5% of the participants primary education was their highest level, 15% completed secondary education,

49% completed vocational education, 20% obtained a Bachelor's degree, and 10% obtained a Master's degree or higher.

## Results

We first examined whether PPT differed between the three experimental conditions and this was not the case,  $F(2, 922) = .25$ ,  $p > .70$ . Considering the experimental design, differences in negative feelings were examined using the general linear model (GLM) procedure. The general linear model is a flexible generalization of analysis of variance and regression analysis and yields similar results (Rutherford, 2001; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Between-subjects analysis was conducted in which experimental condition was included as factor and perceived power threat (PPT) as a continuous centered variable. To test our prediction that the relation between PPT and feelings towards Muslims depends on the type of Muslim political representation, the model further included the interaction term between experimental condition and PPT.

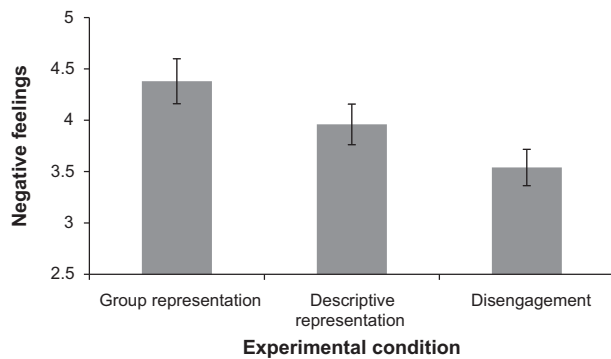
As shown in Table 1, there was a significant and relatively large (Cohen, 1988) main effect for experimental condition. As expected (see Figure 1), participants in the group representation condition felt most negative about Muslim immigrants ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 4.67$ ,  $SE = .056$ ), those in the disengagement condition felt least negative ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 3.74$ ,  $SE = .055$ ), while participants in the descriptive representation condition ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 4.16$ ,  $SE = .056$ ) occupied an intermediate position. Post hoc test indicated that all pairwise mean differences were statistically significant ( $p_s < .001$ ) and that the 95% confidence intervals did not overlap.

There also was a strong main effect of PPT, and the interaction between PPT and the experimental condition was statistically significant (Table 1). As expected simple slope analysis revealed that higher PPT was associated with more negative feelings within the descriptive and group representation conditions ( $B = .41$ ,  $t = 9.76$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $B = .44$ ,  $t = 10.38$ ,  $p < .01$ , respectively), whereas the effect of PPT within the disengagement condition was not significant ( $B = .09$ ,  $t = 1.91$ ,  $p = .06$ ).

Another way of decomposing this interaction is by investigating the negative feelings in the three conditions for lower PPT (1  $SD < \text{mean}$ ) and higher PPT (1  $SD > \text{mean}$ ) separately (Aiken & West, 1991). Analysis of variance shows that for participants with higher PPT the feelings are less

<sup>2</sup> Exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood estimation and oblique rotation extracted two factors for positive and negative feelings, respectively. Yet, the first component explained 58% of the variance, whereas the second component only explained 23%. Furthermore, after factor rotation, all items loaded relatively high on both dimensions, resulting in low factor scores. As we did not have a priori reasons to expect different results for positive and negative feelings, and because the overall scale is reliable, we analyzed outgroup feelings as a single outcome variable. However, we repeated all our analyses with positive and negative feelings as two dependent variables. This did not yield any substantive differences from the findings reported here.





**Figure 1.** Negative out-group feelings by experimental condition in Study 1. Error bars indicate 95% CI.

**Table 1.** Study 1, negative outgroup feelings as a function of political representation strategies (experimental condition), perceived power threat: With and without controlling for age, gender, educational attainment, and political orientation

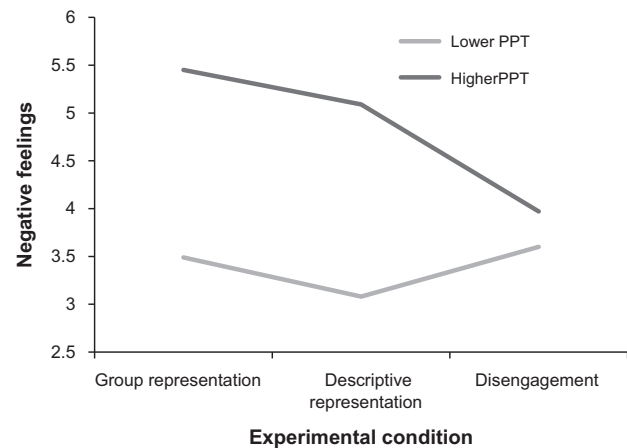
Variables	Without demographics			With demographic		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta_p^2$	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta_p^2$
Political representation	71.34	<.001	.134	72.67	<.001	.137
Perceived power threat	200.8	<.001	.179	134.9	<.001	.129
Political Repres $\times$ Threat	25.21	<.001	.052	26.87	<.001	.056
Age				5.96	.015	.006
Gender				0.19	.663	.000
Educational level				0.04	.842	.000
Political orientation				4.56	.033	.005
	$R^2 = .303$			$R^2 = .315$		

negative in the disengagement condition compared to the other two conditions ( $p_s < .001$ , Bonferroni). For the lower PPT participants, the feelings in the disengagement and group representation conditions do not differ significantly from each other while the feelings in the descriptive representation condition are more positive than in the other two conditions ( $p_s < .02$ ). These findings are shown in Figure 2.

The findings from an additional analysis controlling for gender, age, educational attainment, and political orientation yielded similar effects for the experimental condition, PPT, and the interaction between condition and PPT (Table 1).

## Study 2

Study 1 revealed a clear and relatively strong pattern of findings. Participants were most negative about Muslim group representation, followed by descriptive representation and then political disengagement. Furthermore, higher



**Figure 2.** Simple Slopes for lower PPT ( $-1$  SD) and higher PPT ( $+1$  SD) for the three experimental conditions in Study 1.

perceived power threat was associated with more negative feelings, but not in the disengagement condition.

Apart from the critical importance of carrying out replication studies (Makel, Plucker, & Hegarty, 2012; Simons, 2014), Study 2 intended to go beyond the first study in two ways. First, in Study 2 we included an additional control condition. It could be that the mere mentioning of political participation of Muslims invokes negative feelings in Dutch natives. Large-scale research has shown that about four out of ten native Dutch consider Muslims politically untrustworthy (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). This could mean that Muslim immigrants might need to explicitly distance themselves from politics (disengagement) in order to be evaluated more positively. Furthermore, the use of a control condition allows us to examine further whether the role of perceived power threat for feelings towards Muslim immigrants is specific for political representation of Muslims. A lower, or lack of, association between power threat and feelings in the control condition, in addition to the disengagement condition (Study 1), would provide additional support for such a specific role.

Second, the perceived power threat measure used in Study 1 focused on immigrants in general. Although this is in line with the tendency in Dutch society to view Muslims as prototypical immigrants, the measure did not directly assess the political power threat posed by Muslims. Muslims are sometimes considered politically untrustworthy because they are seen as remaining loyal to their country of origin and wanting to take the country over by pressing forward a hidden agenda to “Islamize” the Netherlands (e.g., Eurabia). Shadid (2006) and Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007) refer to this discourse as “fifth column sentiments” (“enemy within”) that influences debates on the integration of Muslims. Therefore, in Study 2 we included a measure of perceived power threat that reflects fifth column sentiments about Muslims.

## Method

### Participants

A different probability sample of Dutch majority members (18 years and older) was drawn by TNS NIPO Consult. Participants received an online questionnaire in February 2012 about cultural diversity, politics, group rights, and Dutch and European identity.<sup>3</sup> The response rate was 51%. The sample consisted of 802 participants, with ages ranging between 18 and 87 years ( $M = 51$ ,  $SD = 17.16$ ) with 50% females. On the political self-placement scale the sample was similar to Study 1: left (11%), center-left (19%), center (45%), center-right (18%), or right (7%). Considering educational attainment, for 6% of the participants primary education was their highest level, 20% completed secondary education, 49% completed vocational education, 18% obtained a Bachelor's degree, and 7% obtained a Master's degree or higher.

### Experimental Procedure and Measurements

The design of Study 2 was identical to that of Study 1, but an additional experimental condition was used. Thus, participants were randomly assigned to one of four different conditions whereby in the fourth control condition participants only received the beginning of the interview in which the interviewee introduced and described himself. The excerpt ended before the question was asked about the importance of Muslims becoming politically active in the Netherlands. After reading the vignette, participants were again asked to indicate their feelings towards people like Ahmed using the same six items and scales as in Study 1 ( $\alpha = .86$ ,  $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ , with item-total correlations varying between .54 and .69).

*Perceived Power Threat (PPT)* was measured in an independent and later section of the questionnaire with two items (7-point scales) reflecting fifth column sentiments: "Most Muslims are politically unreliable, in the sense that in the end, they are more loyal to their country of origin than to the Dutch society," and "Most Muslim are really not to be trusted politically, because deep down they desire to turn the Netherlands into a Islamic country when given the chance" (see Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). The items were averaged into a scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ,  $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ).

## Results

We first examined whether PPT differed between the four experimental conditions and this was not the case,

$F(3, 802) = 1.07$ ,  $p > .30$ . We again performed a GLM with negative feelings towards Muslim immigrants as dependent variable, experimental condition as factor, and perceived power threat (PPT) as continuous (centered) scores. As shown in Table 2, negative feeling was stronger among participants who perceived more power threat. Importantly, the main effect of the experimental condition was significant and relatively large. Figure 3 shows that the ranking of the feelings was similar to Study 1: participants in the group representation condition were most negative about Muslim immigrants ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 4.38$ ,  $SE = .067$ ), followed by those in the descriptive representation condition ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 3.96$ ,  $SE = .064$ ), and the disengagement condition ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 3.54$ ,  $SE = .068$ ). Participants in the control condition felt the least negative ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 3.19$ ,  $SE = .067$ ). Post hoc tests showed that all pairwise differences were statistically significant ( $p_s < .002$ ) and that the 95% confidence intervals of the means did show no overlap.

Similar to Study 1, the interaction between experimental condition and PPT was significant (Table 2). Simple slope analysis of this interaction revealed that higher PPT again was associated with stronger negative feelings within the group representation condition ( $B = .36$ ,  $SE = .044$ ,  $t = 8.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the descriptive representation condition ( $B = .34$ ,  $SE = .042$ ,  $t = 8.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but not in the disengagement condition ( $B = .02$ ,  $SE = .049$ ,  $t = .39$ ,  $p > .69$ ). Additionally, PPT was more weakly associated with outgroup feelings in the control condition ( $B = .18$ ,  $SE = .045$ ,  $t = 4.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

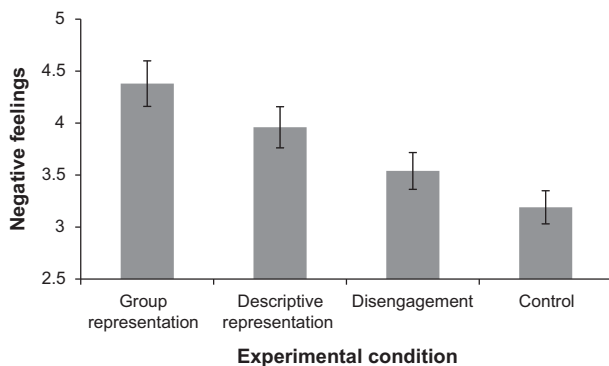
The interaction can again also be investigated by examining the negative feelings in the three conditions for lower PPT (1  $SD < \text{mean}$ ) and higher PPT (1  $SD > \text{mean}$ ) separately. Similar to Study 1 (see Figure 2) for participants with higher PPT the feelings in the group representation and descriptive representation conditions are similar and significantly more negative than in the other two conditions ( $p_s < .001$ , Bonferroni). For the lower PPT participants, there is only a significant difference in feelings between the group representation condition and the control condition ( $p = .004$ ). The findings were similar when we controlled for the demographic variables (Table 2).

To summarize, replicating the findings of Study 1, participants presented with political group representation of Muslims felt again most negative, followed by those presented with a situation of descriptive representation and then the disengagement condition. Participants in the control condition were the least negative. Also similar to Study 1, in the group representation and descriptive

<sup>3</sup> Again the questionnaire contained several population-based survey experiments and different sets of survey questions, including question on the endorsement of multiculturalism, deprovincialization, authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, national identification, and European integration. For reasons of conciseness these data are not reported here. The experiment on political representation was introduced and presented in a separate section and the questions of perceived power threat were presented in a later section in which also questions about national representations and national and European identification were asked.

**Table 2.** Study 2, Negative outgroup feelings as a function of political representation strategies (experimental condition), and perceived power threat: with and without controlling for age, gender, educational attainment, and political orientation

Variables	Without demographics			With demographics		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta_p^2$	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta_p^2$
Political representation	58.14	<.001	.180	58.91	<.001	.183
Perceived power threat	121.66	<.001	.133	81.74	<.001	.094
Political Repres × Threat	14.21	<.001	.051	15.02	<.001	.054
Age				3.06	.081	.004
Gender				0.21	.652	.000
Educational level				0.32	.573	.000
Political orientation				11.73	.001	.015
	$R^2 = .301$			$R^2 = .315$		



**Figure 3.** Negative out-group feelings by experimental conditions in Study 2. Error bars indicate 95% CI.

representation conditions participants reported more negative feelings towards Muslim immigrants when they perceived more power threat. In contrast, the effect of PPT on negative feelings was absent in the disengagement condition and weaker in the control condition.

## Study 3

The negative feelings towards Muslims found in the first two studies correspond with research that has demonstrated widespread anti-Muslim feelings in Western Europe (e.g., Helbling, 2012; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007; Strabac & Lijthaug, 2008). Yet, the clear and strong differences in negative feelings for the different political

representation strategies do not have to be specific for Muslim immigrants. It is possible that these forms of political representation by other immigrant groups elicit a similar ranking of negative reactions. However, experimental research in Belgium has shown that anti-Muslim feelings are more intense than antiforeigner feelings. For ten topics, including the perceived out-group desire to dominate and the alleged disloyalty to the host society, the attitudes were always (much) more negative for Muslims (Spruyt & Elchardus, 2012). Other research also has found that Muslim immigrants are evaluated more negatively than other immigrant groups and that Muslim are considered a security and safety threat and as wanting to Islamize the country (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007; Statham, 2016; Strabac & Lijthaug, 2008). Muslims are singled out as typical and threatening outsiders, and Islam is considered a “bright boundary” (Alba, 2005).

In Study 3 we compared the feelings towards the three forms of political representation of Turkish Muslim immigrants and Turkish Christian immigrants.<sup>4</sup> This allows us to examine whether the feelings are more negative towards Muslims compared to Christians of the same ethnic group and whether this holds for the three forms of political representation. Considering that the contemporary criticism and negative stereotypes of Muslims can easily make Muslim into a “suitable enemy” (Feteke, 2009) or “indigestible minority” (Huntington, 2004, p. 188), we expected that the feelings towards Muslim Turks will be more negative than towards Christian Turks. Furthermore, we expected this difference in feelings to be more pronounced for group representation and descriptive representation than for political disengagement in which Muslims form less of a threat to the existing power structure.

## Method

### Participants

A probability sample of Dutch majority members (18 years and older) was drawn by I&O Consult. Participants received an online questionnaire in February 2016 about cultural diversity, politics, and group rights.<sup>5</sup> The sample consisted of 1,161 participants, with ages ranging between 18 and 90 years ( $M = 55.33$ ,  $SD = 14.94$ ) with 45.1% females. On the political self-placement scale the sample was similar to Studies 1 and 2: left (12%), center-left

<sup>4</sup> It is possible to make a comparison between feelings towards Muslims and Christians originating from Turkey because in the 1970s and 1980s not only Muslims but also Christians emigrated from Turkey to the Netherlands.

<sup>5</sup> The questionnaire again contained different sets of survey questions (endorsement of multiculturalism, authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, social trust, group indispensability, national identification, and tolerance) and several population-based survey experiments. The experiment on political representation was introduced and presented first in the questionnaire directly after the questions on perceived power threat.

(18%), center (40%), center-right (20%), or right (10%). Considering educational attainment, for 2% of the participants primary education was their highest level, 21% completed secondary education, 46% completed vocational education, 19% obtained a Bachelor's degree, and 12% obtained a Master's degree or higher.

### Experimental Procedure and Measurements

In this third study and direct at the beginning of the questionnaire, a 2 (Muslim vs. Christian) by 3 (political representation) experimental design was used. Thus, participants were randomly assigned to one of six different conditions using the same newspaper excerpt with the same three political representation conditions as in Studies 1 and 2. However, for half of the participants the excerpt described a Turkish Muslim and for the other half the same person was described as a Turkish Christian. In the vignettes, the interviewee was asked if he thinks it is important that Turkish Muslims [Turkish Christians] are politically active in the Netherlands. The answer in, for example, the group representation vignette was "Yes, they should try as much as possible to have an influence through an own Islamic [Christian] political party." After reading the vignette, participants were again asked to indicate their feelings towards people like Kemal (i.e., non-Muslim first name) using the same six items and scales as in the previous studies ( $\alpha = .86$ ,  $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ , with item-total correlations varying between .55 and .73).

*Perceived Power Threat (PPT)* was measured before the experimental manipulation with the three items on immigrants in general used in Study 1 and one additional item on immigrants ("The Netherlands is slowly been taken over by all these immigrants"). The items were averaged into a scale ( $\alpha = .93$ ,  $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ).

## Results

The level of perceived power threat did not differ significantly between the experimental conditions,  $F(5, 1,160) = 1.65$ ,  $p = 1.43$ . We performed a GLM with negative feelings towards Muslim immigrants as dependent variable, political representation and religious group as two experimental factors, and perceived power threat (PPT) as a continuous (centered) score. As shown in Table 3, negative feelings were stronger among participants who perceived more power threat. The significant and relatively large main effect of religious group indicates that the feelings towards Turkish Muslims ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 4.17$ ,  $SE = .038$ ) were more negative than towards Turkish Christians ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 3.59$ ,  $SE = .039$ ). Importantly, the main effect of the political representation condition again was significant and relatively large. In addition, there was a small but significant interaction effect between political

**Table 3.** Study 3, negative outgroup feelings as a function of political representation strategies, religious group, and perceived power threat

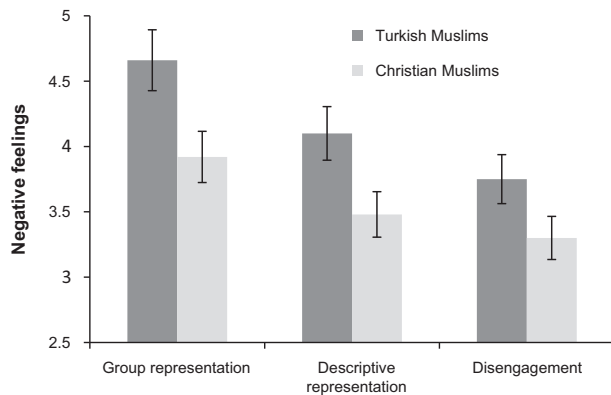
Variables	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta_p^2$
Political represent	61.34	.000	.096
Religious group	114.50	.000	.091
Perceived power threat	395.44	.000	.256
Political Repres $\times$ Religious Group	3.90	.020	.007
Political Repres $\times$ Threat	36.28	.000	.059
Religious Group $\times$ Threat	3.55	.060	.003
Political Repres $\times$ Religious Group $\times$ Threat	1.02	.361	.002
$R^2 = .398$			

representation and religious group. As shown in Figure 4, the ranking of the feelings towards both religious groups was similar to what was found in Studies 1 and 2: participants in the group representation condition were most negative about the Muslim or Christian Turkish immigrant ( $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 4.66$ ,  $SE = .067$ , and  $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 3.92$ ,  $SE = .071$ , respectively), followed by those in the descriptive representation condition (towards Muslim,  $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 4.10$ ,  $SE = .063$ ; towards Christian,  $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 3.48$ ,  $SE = .065$ ), and the disengagement condition (towards Muslim,  $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 3.75$ ,  $SE = .067$ ; towards Christian,  $M_{\text{adjusted}} = 3.38$ ,  $SE = .064$ ). Post hoc tests showed that for both religious groups separately all pairwise differences for the three political representation conditions were statistically significant ( $p_s < .001$ ) and that the 95% confidence intervals did show no overlap. In addition, the significant interaction effect between political representation and religious group indicates that the difference in mean score between the two religious groups is smallest in the disengagement condition ( $M_{\text{difference}} = .37$ ), followed by the descriptive representation condition ( $M_{\text{difference}} = .62$ ), and then the group representation condition ( $M_{\text{difference}} = .74$ ). Thus, compared to Christian Turks, the feelings towards Muslim Turks are increasingly more negative with stronger group-based political involvement in host society politics.

Similar to Studies 1 and 2, the two-way interaction between political representation condition and PPT was significant (Table 3). Simple slope analysis of this interaction revealed that higher PPT was associated with stronger negative feelings within the group representation condition ( $B = .35$ ,  $SE = .032$ ,  $t = 11.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the descriptive representation condition ( $B = .39$ ,  $SE = .029$ ,  $t = 13.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and weaker, but also significantly, in the disengagement condition ( $B = .11$ ,  $SE = .031$ ,  $t = 3.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

We also examined this two-way interaction in terms of the feelings in the three conditions for lower PPT (1  $SD < \text{mean}$ ) and higher PPT (1  $SD > \text{mean}$ ). For participants with higher PPT there is a clear ranking in negative feelings with all the pairwise differences being significant ( $p_s < .009$ , Bonferroni). For the lower PPT participants





**Figure 4.** Negative out-group feelings by political representation and religious group in Study 3. Error bars indicate 95% CI.

and similar to Study 1 (see Figure 2), the feelings in the disengagement and group representation conditions do not differ significantly from each other while the feelings in the descriptive representation condition are more positive than in the other two conditions ( $p_s < .003$ , Bonferroni).

The effects of PPT on negative feelings are similar for the two religious groups in the three political representation conditions because the three-way interaction is not significant (Table 3). The findings were similar in an additional analysis in which we controlled for age, gender, educational level, and political orientation (not shown in Table 3).

To summarize, replicating the findings of Studies 1 and 2, participants presented with political group representation of Muslims felt again most negative, followed by those presented with a situation of descriptive representation and then the disengagement condition. Also similar to the first two studies, in the group and descriptive representation conditions participants reported more negative feelings towards immigrants when they perceived more power threat. In contrast, the effect of PPT on negative feelings was weaker in the disengagement condition. Additionally, the feelings towards Muslim Turks were much more negative than towards Christian Turks and this difference was more pronounced in the group and descriptive representation conditions compared to the disengagement condition. Yet, for the Christian and Muslim Turkish immigrants a similar rank ordering of negative feelings for the three political representation conditions was found.

## Discussion

Social psychological research has examined intergroup relations in plural societies predominantly in terms of social categorization, acculturation processes, cultural diversity ideologies, and intergroup contact. Yet, continuing

migration and changing demographics make the question of political power and influence increasingly important for intergroup relations. One critical aspect of this question is how majority members feel about immigrants' democratic strategies in the political domain.

In three studies among national samples of Dutch natives we found that they have the least negative feelings towards Muslims who opt for the strategy of political party disengagement, followed by those who prefer descriptive (co-religious) representation, whereas the political group representation strategy was evaluated most negatively. In all three studies the effect sizes of the experimental manipulation were large (Cohen, 1988), which indicates that participants reacted quite strongly towards these political party strategies. Furthermore, the similar findings in the data collected in 2011 (Study 1), 2012 (Study 2), and 2016 (Study 3) indicate that the results are robust and not due to specific incidents or tragedies such as the Paris attacks in November 2015.

Unlike sociocultural changes, political participation deals with questions of who gains and who loses power and influence. Group-competition and group-based threat are important causes for prejudice and discrimination and various forms of threat drive negative attitudes towards immigrants (see Coenders et al., 2004; Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005; Wagner et al., 2010). The feelings towards Muslim immigrants in the group representation strategy are probably the most negative because an Islamic party poses the greatest threat to the privileged power position of the native majority group. This strategy means that Muslim immigrants organize themselves and collectively compete with other parties for influence and power within the democratic political system, similar to what Christian political parties and one-issue parties do.

The strategy of descriptive representation involves Muslim immigrants who wish to participate in democratic politics, but choose to do so by joining existing political parties (Schildkraut, 2013; Tate, 2003). This means that natives are not faced with an organized Muslim front and might consequently feel less threatened. Yet, the descriptive representation strategy was evaluated more negatively than the disengagement strategy. A likely explanation is that majority members resist politically active minority members because they fear that they might gradually take over existing political parties. Indeed, in the Netherlands some political parties (e.g., Labour parties) are known to attract a relatively large share of Muslim candidates and Muslim votes, which might influence the party's agenda-setting and political program. Another possible reason is that majority members are afraid of clientelism by minority group politicians (Lemarchand & Legg, 1972). In the Netherlands, there have been public concerns and reports of clientelism by local minority politicians who, for

example, intimidate and pressure local administrators to allocate subsidies to ethnic minority organizations (Van den Dool, 2013).

Several other findings support our proposition that power threat considerations lead majority members to rank political strategies differently. First, in all three studies and by using different measures, perceived power threat (PPT) was related to negative feelings in the two more competitive political representation conditions but not (Studies 1 and 2) or less strongly (Study 3) in the disengagement condition. Thus, when it was explicitly stated that Muslims did not want to be involved in Dutch politics (disengagement), higher perceived power threat was not, or more weakly, related to more negative out-group feelings. In other words, individual differences in PPT did not play a role, or played a smaller role, in feelings towards Muslim immigrants when there was no mention of politics (control condition in Study 2) or when Muslims explicitly stated that they do not want to be involved in Dutch party politics (disengagement). Another way of interpreting this finding is that the particular political representation strategy matters much more for individuals who perceive relatively high power threat compared to those who perceive relatively little power threat. In the three studies there is a clear and consistent ranking of outgroup feelings for the former group of individuals and not for the latter group. These findings indicate that perceived power threat does not have a general negative effect on outgroup feelings but rather is specific to situations in which political influence and power are at stake. This is similar to studies that show, for example, that the role of realistic and symbolic threats for outgroup attitudes depends on the relative importance of these considerations in a particular context or domain of life (e.g., Bizman & Yinon, 2001; Tausch, Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2007).

Second, Study 2 revealed that Dutch natives were quite positive about Muslim immigrants when political representation was not mentioned. In fact, participants in the control condition were more positive than those in the disengagement condition in which political representation was explicitly rejected. In the Netherlands, Muslims are often seen as being politically untrustworthy and trying to Islamize the country (Shadid, 2006; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). As a result the mere association of Muslim immigrants with political party participation seems to invoke negative feelings among Dutch natives. When there is no mentioning of political interest there is less information to justify one's negative feelings towards Muslim immigrants.

Third, in Study 3 it was found that feelings towards Muslim Turks were more negative than towards Christian Turks. This is in agreement with experimental and survey research that has shown that in Europe anti-Muslim feelings are more widespread than anti-immigrant feelings

(e.g., Spruyt & Elchardus, 2012; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). In addition, the findings in Study 3 indicate a more general negative sentiment towards political participation of (Turkish) immigrants. For both Muslim and Christian Turks the same ranking in feelings for the political representation conditions was found. Thus, also Christian Turks were evaluated more negatively when they support group representation compared to descriptive representation or political disengagement. This indicates that group-based forms of political representation of both Muslim and Christian immigrants are more threatening than descriptive representation and political disengagement. Yet, the difference in negative feelings towards both religious groups was larger in the group representation condition than in the disengagement condition, with the descriptive representation condition in between. The particular significant effect was small but does suggest that political representation of Muslim immigrants can be more threatening than of Christian immigrants.

## Limitations

There are several limitations to the current research that provide directions for future studies. First, our research was conducted in the Netherlands and focused on political party representation of Muslim immigrants. The context of the Netherlands might be important because of its system of proportional representation with numerous political parties. This system offers the possibility for small parties to have real influence, similar as in other European countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and Austria. Yet, the way in which majority members react to immigrants' political strategies might be different in other countries with different political systems (e.g., UK or Germany) (Statham, 2016).

Second, we focused on democratic political representation. While party membership is an important and standard way of looking at politics, future research could also employ other measures of political behavior, such as voting, joining political rallies, contacting politicians, signing petitions, or Internet activism (Carlisle & Patton, 2013; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010). The evaluation of these political activities might be different than for political party membership. Furthermore, future research could examine political parties in terms of the goals that they pursue. For instance, natives might react more positively to Muslims' political parties that strive for equal access to the labor market or to health care, than for the building of new Mosques or the founding of Islamic schools (Hindriks et al., 2015).

Third, we focused on feelings of majority members but it is important to also consider the perspective of Muslim immigrants and how they feel about the different strategies of political representation. Muslim immigrants are not a

homogeneous group and their political views might depend, for example, on their religious group identification, involvement in religious practices and organizations, and their experiences with rejection and discrimination (e.g., Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2010). Furthermore, meta-perceptions are another interesting avenue for future research: what majority members think that immigrants prefer politically and what immigrants think that the majority wants them to do (Brown & Zagefka, 2011).

## Conclusion

Among three national samples and using an experimental design our research demonstrates that majority members respond relatively strongly to the different democratic forms of political party representation of immigrants. The Dutch majority members preferred Muslim and Christian immigrants not to get involved in host society party politics (disengagement). Participants were quite negative about strategies that imply joining existing political parties (descriptive representation), and even more negative about establishing an own minority group party for participating democratically in the political system (group representation). The potential loss of political power is threatening for majority members and critical for their affective reactions towards immigrants' political strategies. The findings suggest that the challenges that plural societies face might have much to do with questions about "who can decide" and these questions will only increase in importance because of the demographic changes that most Western countries are facing. The implication is that it is important for social psychological research on immigration and cultural diversity to focus on changing power relations and to go beyond the existing emphasis on identity, acculturation, and intergroup contacts. Such a focus allows social psychologists to make additional contributions to theory and empirical research as well as to societal debates and social changes.

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