

How a Tolerant Past Affects the Present: Historical Tolerance and the Acceptance of Muslim Expressive Rights

Personality and Social
Psychology Bulletin
38(11) 1410–1422
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DOI: 10.1177/0146167212450920
http://psp.sagepub.com


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Abstract

Three studies, conducted in the Netherlands, examined the relationship between a tolerant representation of national history and the acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. Following self-categorization theory, it was hypothesized that historical tolerance would be associated with greater acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, especially for natives who strongly identify with their national in-group. Furthermore, it was predicted that the positive effect of representations of historical tolerance on higher identifiers' acceptance could be explained by reduced perceptions of identity incompatibility. The results of Study 1 confirmed the first hypothesis, and the results of Study 2 and Study 3 supported the second hypothesis. These findings underline the importance of historical representations of the nation for understanding current reactions toward immigrants. Importantly, the results show that a tolerant representation of national history can elevate acceptance of immigrants, especially among natives who feel a relatively strong sense of belonging to their nation.

Keywords

national history, historical tolerance, national identification, identity incompatibility, acceptance of Muslims

Received August 23, 2011; revision accepted April 4, 2012

The Netherlands is characterized by a tradition of religious tolerance, respect and responsibility. The needless offending of certain convictions and communities does not belong to this. . . . The Dutch government will honor this tradition and issues an appeal to everyone to do the same. (Dutch Ministry of General Affairs, 2008).

This quote is from Jan Peter Balkenende, the former Dutch prime minister. He made this statement during a press conference about the anti-Islam movie 'Fitna' that was released in the Netherlands by MP Geert Wilders. Balkenende invokes a representation of Dutch national history as one of tolerance and respect, to argue for acceptance of cultural and religious diversity in the present. In public debates in Western Europe, Islam and Muslims are often presented as undermining national identity and culture (Gijsberts & Lubbers, 2009), and many West Europeans perceive their way of life and that of Muslims as incompatible (Pew Research Centre, 2005). However, Balkenende argues that the Dutch should respect migrant groups, because this is in agreement with "our" history of religious tolerance.

Representations of national history are central to the creation and maintenance of national identity (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Yet, research on attitudes toward immigrants and ethnic minorities has tended to ignore the implications of socially shared representations of history for intergroup relations (Liu & László, 2007; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Recently, some studies have shown that representations of national history can be used by politicians to legitimize social inequality of ethnic groups (Sibley, Liu, Duckitt, & Khan, 2008) and can increase opposition toward Muslim immigrants (Smeekes, Verkuyten, & Poppe, 2011). Furthermore, research has shown that a stronger genealogical, or ethnic, conception of national identity is related to more negative attitudes toward immigrants (Meeus, Duriez, Vanbeselaere, & Boen, 2010; Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009; Wakefield et al., 2011). However, there are few studies investigating whether historical identity representations can promote greater

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acceptance of immigrants and minority groups (e.g., Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006).

Following self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), the present research investigates the extent to which attitudes of Dutch natives toward Muslim immigrants depend on a religious tolerant representation of national history. SCT proposes that people who highly identify with an in-group are more likely to act in accordance with in-group norms and beliefs. This means that when historical norms and beliefs prescribe tolerance of immigrants, especially highly identified group members should behave accordingly. This prediction is interesting and important because it goes against the well-established finding that higher national identifiers tend to display more negative attitudes toward immigrants (e.g., Bourhis & Dayan, 2004; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007).

National Identity and Self-Categorization

A considerable body of social-psychological research has examined the relationship between national identification and attitudes toward immigrants (e.g., Bourhis & Dayan, 2004; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). However, it has been argued that investigations of a generic relationship between national identification and prejudice are misguided, because they disregard the content and historical context of national identity. Reicher and Hopkins (2001) proposed that different understandings of national identity exist and that these identity representations are dynamically constructed in the context of societal and political debates. The proposition that group behavior should be understood in relation to the content and context of social identity is emphasized in SCT (Turner et al., 1987).

SCT proposes that self-categorization in terms of a particular group membership implies a process of depersonalization in which people stereotype themselves in terms of what defines and characterizes the in-group compared with a salient out-group. Through this process of self-stereotyping, the norms and beliefs of the in-group become part of the psychological self and thereby provide the guidelines for appropriate intergroup behavior. In line with SCT, research has shown that in-group norms and beliefs can have exclusionary, but also prosocial, implications for attitudes toward out-groups. For instance, Tarrant, Dazeley, and Cottom (2009) found that when an in-group norm of empathy for out-group members was made salient, participants reported more positive out-group attitudes than those exposed to an in-group norm of detachment toward the out-group. Moreover, several studies have shown that attitudes of native majority members toward ethnic and religious minority groups are dependent on whether national identity is defined in ethnic (e.g., ancestry) or civic (e.g., community engagement) terms (e.g., Meeus et al., 2010; Pehrson et al.,

2009; Wakefield et al., 2011). Specifically, these studies demonstrate that civic conceptions of national identity result in more positive attitudes and behaviors toward ethnic and religious minority groups than ethnic understandings.

National History and Tolerance

In discourses on national identity, people often appeal to historical origin and lineage (Condor, 2006). The reason is that

history provides us with narratives that tell us who we are, where we came from, and where we should be going. It defines a trajectory which helps construct the essence of a group's identity, how it relates to other groups, and ascertains what its options are for facing the present. (Liu & Hilton, 2005, p. 537)

National history is the story of the making of a national in-group and is therefore central in the construction and maintenance of the national community (Condor, 2006; Renan, 1990; Sani, 2008). The national in-group typically creates a historical self-narrative that has strong normative properties. This narrative serves to justify how things are and ought to be, based on the explanation of how it came to be that way (Liu & László, 2007; Southgate, 2005). For natives, national history defines who "we" are, how "we" differ from "them" and how "we" should relate and react to "them."

National history can be represented in various ways (see Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001), and previous research has shown that representations of national history can be used to justify the exclusion of immigrants and ethnic out-groups (Sibley et al., 2008; Smeekes et al., 2011). Few studies have examined whether representations of national history can also increase acceptance of immigrants. Following SCT, historical representations that emphasize inclusion and openness can be expected to translate into greater acceptance. For instance, a study by Reicher and colleagues (2006) demonstrated that the mobilization of Bulgarians against the deportation of Jews in World War II was related to their historical national self-understanding of tolerance. A content analysis of historical documents indicated that during the war, Bulgarians defined their identity by referring to their "traditions of religious tolerance and humanity," which made them inclined to oppose oppression and to protect minorities.

In the Netherlands, an important historical self-representation is that of being a tolerant nation. Toleration of different worldviews and religions is often portrayed as a self-defining aspect of Dutch national history and identity. However, the meaning of tolerance is not self-evident. Tolerance implies putting up with something that one disapproves of or is prejudiced against (Sullivan & Transue, 1999) and is therefore considered an ideological dilemma (Billig et al., 1988). It prescribes the acceptance of beliefs

and practices that one considers as dissenting. This dilemma is reflected in the contemporary discourses about national identity and increasing ethnocultural diversification, in which historical tolerance is invoked to promote the inclusion as well as exclusion of immigrant out-groups. In the latter discourse, tolerance is considered as a historic national value of “us” that is threatened by the presence of “them” (Billig et al., 1988). Here, majority members and populist politicians emphasize the self-defining meaning of in-group tolerance to criticize Muslim immigrants for their intolerance and their unwillingness to adapt (Bowskill, Lyons, & Coyle, 2007; Verkuyten, 2004, 2012). In portraying Muslim immigrants as transgressing “our” traditional tolerant way of life, they are positioned as outsiders to the national in-group.

However, tolerance can also be used to argue for acceptance of cultural and religious diversity (Billig et al., 1988), and to promote the inclusion of immigrant out-groups. In this discourse, tolerance is portrayed as providing room for cultural and religious diversity, and this is considered a tradition that also existed in the country’s past. Historically, the concept of tolerance evolved from efforts to deal with the harmful and violent effects of religious conflicts (Walzer, 1997). The presence of a great number of Muslims in western European countries has given a renewed urgency to the idea of tolerance as a mechanism for dealing with diversity. In this article, we focus on the historical representation of national tolerance of religious diversity.

Group Identification

Not everyone within the national in-group will be equally affected by a historical tolerant national identity representation. SCT argues that, next to in-group norms and beliefs, group identification is important for understanding people’s reactions toward out-groups (Turner et al., 1987). Individual differences in social identification determine the extent to which the stereotypical group understandings are used as a standard for appropriate group behavior. When people strongly identify with a group, they are more inclined to act and interpret the world according to the group’s norms, values, and ideological beliefs (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1999; Haslam, Ellemers, Reicher, Reynolds, & Schmitt, 2010). Within an intergroup context, studies have typically focused on how group understandings interact with group identification in predicting intergroup discrimination and prejudice. For example, research has examined how national in-group understandings interact with national identification in predicting prejudice toward migrant groups (Meeus et al., 2010; Pehrson et al., 2009).

To our knowledge, there is no research showing that representations of a national history of tolerance can translate into a more accepting attitude toward immigrants among high national identifiers. There is generally little empirical evidence for the hypothesis that highly identified nationals can become more positive toward immigrant out-groups when

prosocial in-group norms and beliefs are salient. An exception is an experimental study by Butz, Plant, and Doerr (2007), which showed that high nationalistic individuals became more positive toward Arabs and Muslims when egalitarian national values were made salient, whereas this manipulation did not influence attitudes of low nationalistic participants. Moreover, this study observed that whereas high nationalistic individuals generally had more negative attitudes toward Arabs and Muslims than low nationalistic individuals, the activation of egalitarian values resulted in similar attitudes among both groups. These results indicate that highly identified nationals are not only more likely to act in accordance with salient group norms than lower identifiers but are also more inclined to display prejudice toward immigrant out-groups as a means of protecting positive distinctiveness (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Yet, and in line with SCT, when the meaning of national identity is shared, national in-group members tend to act in accordance with this meaning, and this reduces the differences between higher and lower identifiers’ out-group evaluations. For our research, this means that, while higher identifiers may generally be less positive about Muslims than lower identifiers, when a representation of national historical tolerance is salient, this would result in similar levels of acceptance of Muslim expressive rights among higher and lower identifiers.

Perceived Incompatibility

Whereas inclusive understandings of national identity provide room for immigrants to become part of the national in-group, exclusive understandings contribute to the idea that only certain ethnic or religious groups are compatible with national group membership. In the current European sociopolitical context, especially the compatibility of national identities with those related to Islam is questioned. Even when Muslim immigrants have acquired citizenship (and are thus nationals), there is still debate about whether they can be “true” members of the national in-group and whether “their” and “our” ways of life are compatible (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). Incompatibility is typically seen as identity undermining, and this perception might make natives more negative toward migrant groups (Sindic & Reicher, 2009).

Research on incompatibility has mainly examined the extent to which present day identities are perceived as incompatible and how this perception translates into intergroup attitudes (e.g., Sindic & Reicher, 2009). However, whether people perceive their way of life to be incompatible with that of an out-group will depend on how they define their national identity, which is anchored in their representations of national history. There have been very few studies examining the extent to which representations of national history influence perceptions of incompatibility (e.g., Liu, Lawrence, Ward, & Abraham, 2002). Furthermore, the perception of incompatibility by majority members has not

been examined in relation to their acceptance of Muslim expressive rights.

Research in the Netherlands has shown that 41% of the native Dutch population considers Muslim and West European ways of life to be incompatible (Gijsberts & Lubbers, 2009). More specifically, many Dutch people consider Islam as incompatible with Dutch culture and as undermining Dutch identity (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). However, it is likely that those who understand Dutch national history and identity as one of religious tolerance and openness will have lower perceptions of identity incompatibility and, as a result, show more acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. A self-defining history of tolerance implies that different subgroups have always been able to express their identity at the same time. Hence, (reduced) perceptions of identity incompatibility might explain the expected positive relationship between historical tolerance and acceptance of Muslim rights, particularly for higher national identifiers.

Overview of the Present Research

We examined the relationship between representations of historical tolerance, national identification, perceptions of identity incompatibility, and the acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. Following SCT, we predicted that the influence of historical representations on out-group evaluations is particularly strong for higher identifiers, because they are more inclined to act in accordance with their in-group understandings than lower identifiers. Therefore, the main prediction was that a historical representation of national religious tolerance is positively related to acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, particularly for people who feel strongly committed to their national group membership. Second, because religious tolerance relates to the acceptance of different coexisting worldviews, it was predicted that the positive effect of historical tolerance on acceptance of Muslim rights for higher identifiers could be explained by their reduced perceptions of identity incompatibility. In addition, because higher national identifiers are generally found to be more negative about relevant out-groups than lower identifiers (e.g., Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007), a historical representation of religious tolerance was hypothesized to result in equal levels of perceived identity incompatibility and acceptance of Muslim rights among higher and lower identifiers.

We tested these predictions in three studies in the Netherlands. Study 1 was a survey study, conducted in two different subsamples. Study 1A examined whether endorsement of historical tolerance was related to acceptance of Muslim expressive rights and whether this relationship was moderated by national identification. Study 1B was designed to replicate these findings in a different sample and by using a more extensive measure of historical tolerance. Study 2 was a survey study, in which we examined the role of perceived

incompatibility as an explanation for the expected interaction effect of historical tolerance and national identification in its effect on acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. Study 3 examined the same predictions in an experimental design, to test the situational effects of being encouraged to think in terms of national historical tolerance. More specifically, this study tried to show that the activation of a national history of religious tolerance causes higher national identifiers to perceive less identity incompatibility and therefore to display more acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. Thus, whereas Studies 1 and 2 were concerned with individual differences in the endorsement of historical tolerance, Study 3 followed principles of cultural knowledge and lay theories activation (e.g., Levy, West, & Ramirez, 2005).

Study 1

Method

Participants. The study was conducted among two samples of Utrecht University students. At the start of their regular class meetings, students were asked to participate in a study on attitudes toward Dutch society. The anonymous questionnaires were administered in the classroom under supervision. Study 1A was conducted among 300 social science students, and the sample consisted of 30.3% men and 65.0% women (4.7% missing). The ages ranged between 17 and 30 ($M = 20.20$, $SD = 2.13$). In Study 1B, participants were 68 pharmacy students, and the sample consisted of 26.5% men and 64.7% women (8.8% missing). The ages ranged between 18 and 28 ($M = 21.36$, $SD = 2.73$). In both samples, all participants were native Dutch.

Measures. All items were rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Historical tolerance. The extent to which participants endorsed a historical representation of religious tolerance was assessed by two items in Study 1A: "The Netherlands has a long history of religious tolerance" and "In the Netherlands there has always been room for various religions" ($r = .66$, $p < .001$). In Study 1B, historical tolerance was assessed with five items. The three additional items were the following: "Traditionally, the Netherlands is an open and tolerable society where there is much room for other cultures and religions," "Freedom of religion historically belongs to the Netherlands," and "Tolerance is a historical achievement that the Netherlands should continue to fulfill." A principal components analysis yielded a one-factor solution accounting for 65.2% of the variance. The loadings of the individual items were all higher than .70. Alpha for the five-item scale in Study 1B was .87.

National identification. The extent to which participants identified as Dutch was assessed by four items taken from previous studies in the Netherlands (Verkuyten, 2011). Two sample items were, "I feel committed to the Netherlands" and "I

identify with the Netherlands." A higher score indicated stronger national identification, and Cronbach's alpha for this four-item scale was .85 in Study 1A and .81 in Study 1B.

Acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. Six items were used to assess acceptance of rights and opportunities for Muslims to publicly express and confirm their identity. These items have been used in previous Dutch studies (e.g., Smeekes et al., 2011; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2010), and two sample items were, "Muslims should have the right to not only celebrate their Islamic holidays at home, but also in public life" and "In the Netherlands wearing a headscarf should not be forbidden." Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .76 in Study 1A and .72 in Study 1B.

Results

Preliminary analyses. In Study 1A, participants indicated a moderate level of acceptance of Muslim expressive rights ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.04$). The mean score was significantly above the neutral midpoint of the scale, $t(299) = 11.28$, $p < .001$. The mean score of historical tolerance ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.53$) was also significantly above the neutral midpoint of the scale showing that participants on average endorsed the idea that the Netherlands is a historically tolerant country, $t(299) = 10.50$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the mean score for national identification ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.05$) was significantly above the neutral midpoint of the scale, $t(299) = 7.55$, $p < .001$.

In Study 1B, participants also indicated moderate acceptance of Muslim expressive rights ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.12$). Yet, the mean score was not significantly above the neutral midpoint of the scale, $t(67) = 0.88$, $p = .19$. The mean score of historical tolerance ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.15$) was again significantly above the neutral midpoint of the scale, $t(67) = 6.41$, $p < .001$, and the mean score for national identification ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.05$) was also significantly above the midpoint of the scale, $t(67) = 6.74$, $p < .001$. In both studies, no significant gender differences were observed for the dependent variable ($ps > .45$).

Acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. For both samples, acceptance of Muslim expressive rights was subjected to a moderated multiple regression (MMR). The MMR strategy tests whether there is a significant interaction between a moderator variable (Z) and an independent variable (X) in predicting a particular outcome (Y), by using ordinary least squares regression. MMR is considered to be an adequate method for detecting moderating effects in survey and experimental designs (Aiken, West, & Krull, 1996; Stone-Romero & Anderson, 1994). In both samples, the acceptance of Muslim rights was regressed on historical tolerance (centered), national identification (centered), and their interaction term.

In Study 1A, historical tolerance predicted acceptance only marginally significantly, $\beta = .08$, $t(286) = 1.30$, $p = .097$. Yet, identification was a significant predictor, $\beta = -.18$, $t(286) = -3.11$, $p = .001$. Importantly, the historical tolerance by national identification interaction term was significant,

$\beta = .16$, $t(286) = 2.69$, $p = .004$. In Study 1B, both national identification, $\beta = -.21$, $t(64) = -1.90$, $p = .031$, and historical tolerance, $\beta = .44$, $t(64) = 3.98$, $p < .001$, predicted acceptance. More importantly, and similar to Study 1A, the interaction term between historical tolerance and national identification had a significant effect on acceptance, $\beta = .31$, $t(64) = 2.81$, $p = .004$. The total explained variance in acceptance of Muslim expressive rights was greater in Study 1B ($R^2 = .27$, $p < .001$) than in Study 1A ($R^2 = .05$, $p < .001$).¹

To probe the interactions, simple slopes were calculated for the relationship between historical tolerance and acceptance of Muslim expressive rights at two levels of national identification (1 SD above and below the centered mean). As predicted, in Study 1A, this analysis showed that representations of historical tolerance positively and significantly predicted acceptance at 1 SD above the mean of identification, $\beta = .34$, $t(35) = 2.10$, $p = .022$, but not at 1 SD below the mean of identification, $\beta = -.20$, $t(41) = -1.28$, $p = .11$. In Study 1B, simple slope analysis also confirmed the finding that historical tolerance positively and significantly predicted acceptance at 1 SD above, $\beta = .43$, $t(16) = 3.65$, $p = .04$, but not at 1 SD below the mean of identification, $\beta = -.23$, $t(10) = -0.76$, $p = .24$.

We conducted additional analyses to compare the acceptance levels of higher and lower identifiers (1 SD above and below the centered mean, Aiken & West, 1991), based on median splits of historical tolerance. The results are presented in Table 1. In Study 1A, higher and lower identifiers who strongly endorsed historical tolerance ($Mdn = 5.00$) displayed similar levels of acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, $t(56) = 1.02$, $p = .16$. Among those who weakly endorsed historical tolerance, higher identifiers were significantly less accepting than lower identifiers, $t(20) = 1.97$, $p = .032$. Likewise, in Study 1B, for higher and lower identifiers who strongly endorsed historical tolerance ($Mdn = 5.20$), no differences appeared in their levels of acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, $t(14) = 0.44$, $p = .33$. Among those who weakly endorsed historical tolerance, higher identifiers were significantly less accepting than lower identifiers, $t(12) = 2.34$, $p = .023$.

Discussion

The results of Study 1 support the hypothesis that the relationship between historical tolerance and the acceptance of Muslim expressive rights is moderated by national identification. In line with SCT, endorsement of historical tolerance was related to more acceptance of Muslim expressive rights for individuals who relatively strongly identified with the national category. This suggests that acceptance of immigrants can be consistent with the national identity of higher identifiers when this identity is defined in terms of a historical tradition of religious and cultural tolerance. For these individuals, the acceptance of public expressions of Islam confirms the historical Dutch identity of religious tolerance.

Table 1. Mean Levels of Acceptance of Muslim Rights by Level of Historical Tolerance and Level of National Identification, Study 1A and Study 1B

Level of national identification	Historical tolerance			
	High		Low	
	M	SD	M	SD
Study 1A				
High	4.67 _a	1.14	4.02 _b	1.35
Low	4.95 _a	0.97	5.04 _a	1.02
Study 1B				
High	4.12 _a	1.27	3.54 _b	0.93
Low	4.36 _a	0.56	4.44 _a	0.39

Note: Scores could range from 1 to 7, with higher numbers reflecting more acceptance of Muslims. Means that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

Importantly, when historical tolerance was strongly endorsed, higher identifiers did not display more acceptance compared with lower identifiers. Yet, when this identity content was weakly endorsed, higher identifiers tended to express less acceptance of Muslim expressive rights than lower identifiers. These findings are in line with SCT and show that when the historical tolerant meaning of national identity is shared among group members, the differences between higher and lower identifiers' acceptance levels are reduced.

Study 2

We conducted a second study to further examine whether the findings of the first study were reliable and could be generalized to a sample of younger participants from different educational levels. More importantly, Study 2 was designed to test whether the historical tolerance by identification interaction effect on acceptance of Muslim expressive rights could be explained by perceptions of incompatibility between Dutch and Muslim identity.

We predicted that a representation of historical tolerance interacts with national identification in affecting perceived incompatibility, which, in turn, would be related to the acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. Specifically, historical tolerance was expected to be associated with lower perceived identity incompatibility but only for individuals high in national identification. Individuals who feel committed to their national in-group and at the same time subscribe to a religious tolerant national history should not perceive the acceptance of Islamic schools, Mosques, Islamic holidays, and other visible signs of Islam as incompatible with “who we traditionally are.” Importantly, we expected that the positive indirect effect of endorsing a representation of historical tolerance on acceptance, via reduced perceptions of incompatibility, would only exist for higher identifiers.

Method

Participants. Study 2 was conducted among students at secondary and higher education. At the start of regular classroom meetings, the students were asked to participate in a study on attitudes toward Dutch society. The questionnaires were anonymous and administered in the classroom under supervision. There were 172 native Dutch adolescents and young adult participants. The sample consisted of 45.3% men and 52.9% women (1.7% missing). The ages ranged between 13 and 25 ($M = 17.42, SD = 3.31$). The participants differed in their educational level. Of all participants, 59.9% followed a high level of education, 26.7% a middle level of education, and 11% a low level of education (2.3% missing).

Measures. Because the findings of Studies 1A and 1B were similar, and because of practical reasons, we assessed participants' representation of historical tolerance again with two items: “Freedom of religion historically belongs to the Netherlands” and “Room for other religions and cultures has always been part of the Netherlands.” These two items were combined into a scale ($r = .57, p < .001$). The items assessing national identification ($\alpha = .89$) and acceptance of Muslim rights ($\alpha = .87$) were identical to Study 1. Three items taken from previous research (Sindic & Reicher, 2009) were used to measure perceptions of incompatibility between the Dutch and Muslim way of life ($\alpha = .77$). These items were “Muslims and the Dutch are like a jigsaw puzzle. They may differ, but they fit together well”; “The fact that the Dutch and Muslim way of life differ does not mean that they are necessarily in opposition”; and “Muslims and the Dutch are like members of a team where the different qualities of each member combine together to make a coherent whole.” The items were recoded so that a higher score indicated a stronger perception of incompatibility. All items were rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Results

Preliminary analyses. Participants' gender produced no significant effects in any of the analyses and was therefore not considered further. Moreover, because this sample was varied in terms of age and educational level, we assessed the possibility of variation in levels of acceptance of Muslim rights for these two predictors. Using analysis of covariance, educational level was entered as an ordinal variable (1 = *low*, 2 = *middle*, 3 = *high*), and age was included as a continuous predictor. Results indicated that there were no significant age differences, $B = .02, F(2, 167) = 0.29, p = .59$, but education significantly predicted acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, $F(2, 167) = 2.97, p = .042$. We therefore controlled for educational level in the remaining analyses. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the different measures.

Table 2. Means, SDs, and Correlations Between the Variables, Study 2

	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Historical tolerance	5.11	1.29	—		
2. National identification	4.98	1.19	.05	—	
3. Perceived incompatibility	4.28	1.35	-.27***	.01	—
4. Acceptance of Muslim expressive rights	3.69	1.30	.15**	-.10*	-.66***

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

Acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. Similar to Study 1, acceptance of Muslim rights was subjected to a MMR analysis in which acceptance scores were regressed on educational level (control), the centered historical tolerance and identification measures, and their interaction term, $R^2 = .08$, $F(4, 163) = 3.70$, $p = .007$. Both national identification, $\beta = -.15$, $t(163) = -1.96$, $p = .025$, and historical tolerance, $\beta = .17$, $t(163) = 2.17$, $p = .015$, predicted acceptance of Muslim rights. Education was also a significant predictor, $\beta = .17$, $t(163) = 2.17$, $p = .014$. Similar to Study 1, the main effect of historical tolerance was qualified by a significant historical tolerance by identification interaction, $\beta = .15$, $t(163) = 1.85$, $p = .033$. Analysis of the simple slopes showed that historical tolerance positively and significantly predicted acceptance of Muslim expressive rights at 1 *SD* above, $\beta = .45$, $t(25) = 2.66$, $p = .007$, but not below the mean of identification, $\beta = -.11$, $t(23) = -0.52$, $p = .304$.

Furthermore, comparison of acceptance levels of higher and lower identifiers in relation to their endorsement of historical tolerance (median split; *Mdn* = 5.00) revealed that higher and lower identifiers who strongly endorsed historical tolerance displayed similar levels of acceptance of Muslim expressive rights ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.13$, and $M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.86$, respectively), $t(30) = -0.31$, $p = .38$. Among those who weakly endorsed historical tolerance, higher identifiers tended to be less accepting than lower identifiers ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.24$, and $M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.70$, respectively), $t(16) = 1.76$, $p = .049$.

Perceived incompatibility. We next regressed perceived incompatibility on educational level (control), the centered historical tolerance and identification variables, and their interaction term, $R^2 = .20$, $F(4, 163) = 10.20$, $p < .001$. Historical tolerance significantly predicted incompatibility, $\beta = -.30$, $t(163) = -4.00$, $p < .001$, but the effect of identification was not significant, $\beta = .07$, $t(163) = 0.94$, $p = .18$. Education had a significant main effect on incompatibility, $\beta = -.28$, $t(163) = -3.94$, $p < .001$. Importantly, the interaction between historical tolerance and national identification was significant, $\beta = -.27$, $t(163) = -3.66$, $p < .001$. Analysis of the simple slopes showed that historical tolerance decreased perceptions of incompatibility at 1 *SD* above, $\beta = -.64$, $t(24) = -4.13$, $p < .001$, but not below the mean of

identification, $\beta = .13$, $t(22) = 0.60$, $p = .278$. In other words, only for higher identifiers, stronger endorsement of historical religious tolerance was related to lower perceptions of incompatibility between Dutch and Muslim identity.

Tests of indirect effects. Our next aim was to test the indirect effect of the interaction term on acceptance, through perceived incompatibility. The previous analyses confirmed that the interaction between historical tolerance and national identification predicted both perceived incompatibility and acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. In addition, a regression analysis showed that, controlling for education, perceived incompatibility was a significant negative predictor of acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, $\beta = -.66$, $t(165) = -10.78$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .43$. When perceived incompatibility was added to the MMR model predicting acceptance of Muslim rights, $R^2 = .44$, $F(5, 168) = 25.46$, $p < .001$, the historical tolerance by identification interaction no longer predicted acceptance of Muslim rights, $B = -.01$, $t(168) = 0.28$, $p = .27$, but incompatibility remained a significant predictor of acceptance of Muslim rights, $B = -.63$, $t(168) = -10.18$, $p < .001$.²

We subsequently used the Preacher and Hayes (2008) bootstrapping macro with 1,000 iterations to test a model whereby perceived incompatibility mediates the interaction effect of historical tolerance and identification on acceptance of Muslim expressive rights (controlling for the unique effects of education, historical tolerance, and national identification). In these analyses, the mediation is significant if the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effect do not include zero. The indirect effect of the interaction term through perceived incompatibility ($B = .13$, $SE = .05$) was estimated to lie between .04 and .24 with 95% confidence. Because zero is not in the 95% confidence interval, this indirect effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .05$. This provides evidence for our hypothesis that perceived incompatibility accounts for the interactive effect of historical tolerance and national identification on acceptance of Muslim expressive rights.

Discussion

Study 2 replicated and extended the findings of Study 1 among a more varied sample. Specifically, results confirmed that stronger endorsement of historical tolerance was related to more acceptance of Muslim expressive rights among higher but not lower national identifiers. Furthermore, higher and lower identifiers showed similar levels of acceptance when they endorsed a national representation of historical tolerance.

More importantly, the results of Study 2 supported the hypothesis on the indirect effect of historical tolerance on acceptance, via perceived incompatibility, for higher identifiers. In line with our prediction, for highly identified nationals, the endorsement of historical tolerance was negatively associated with perceptions of identity incompatibility, and this subsequently translated into more acceptance of Muslim expressive

rights. Thus, higher identifiers who perceived the Netherlands as a traditionally open and religious tolerant society did not tend to see Muslim identity as incompatible with “our” way of life. As a result, they were inclined to be more accepting of Muslims expressing their religion in public life. For lower national identifiers, historical tolerance was not associated with perceived incompatibility and acceptance.

Study 3

Although the results of the first two studies are similar and provide support for our predictions, they leave room for alternative causal explanations. It is possible that participants endorsed a tolerant historical representation of their national in-group because this fits with their current views on religious and cultural diversity, rather than vice versa. Hence, the results of these studies do not show that a representation of historical tolerance actually causes higher identifiers to have more positive attitudes toward Muslims. Therefore, the third study used an experimental design to examine the causal effects of inducing a representation of historical religious tolerance on acceptance of Muslim expressive rights and perceived identity incompatibility. Study 3 tried to show that encouraging people to think in terms of a national history of religious tolerance has an impact on perceptions of identity incompatibility and acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, but only for higher and not for lower national identifiers. Research on lay theories and ideologies has shown that studies that experimentally activate theories or ideologies provide similar findings as when the endorsement of lay theories are measured by self-report (e.g., Levy, West, Ramirez, & Karafantis, 2006).

Method

Participants. Participants were 113 students at Utrecht University who received 6 Euros for their participation. Of these, 16 participants were excluded from the analyses because they indicated that they were Muslim or non-Dutch, leaving a total of 97 participants (38.1% men, 61.9% women). The ages ranged between 18 and 42 ($M = 23.60$, $SD = 3.54$).

Procedure. Students at Utrecht University were invited to the laboratory to participate in a study on societal issues. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (a) Dutch history of religious tolerance or (b) Dutch historical concern with water maintenance. The latter condition acted as a control, because Dutch national history was made salient, but this representation has no relevance for inter-group relations (see Smeekes et al., 2011). To minimize demand effects, the experiment was presented to participants as two separate studies: “Study 1” on writing about history and “Study 2” on cultural diversity. In both conditions, participants started with a writing assignment in which they were asked to type in a separate box on the computer screen

their responses (maximum three sentences) to the following: “Please describe why you feel that national history is important for a national identity.” Subsequently, they were told that four short quotes from speeches and interviews about Dutch culture and history would follow. They were instructed to carefully read these quotes, as a second writing assignment about these quotes would follow. In the historical tolerance condition, these quotes emphasized the importance of the Dutch history of religious tolerance, whereas in the control condition, the Dutch history of water maintenance was highlighted. After the quotes, participants received a second writing assignment in which they were asked to type in a separate box on the screen their responses (maximum three sentences) to the following: “Please describe why you feel that the Dutch history of religious tolerance [water maintenance] is an important part of Dutch national identity.” After this, all participants were told that they had completed “Study 1” and would proceed to “Study 2.” In “Study 2,” participants completed the measures of national identification, perceived incompatibility, acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, and demographics.

Measures. All items were rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Manipulation check. The experimental manipulation was checked by asking participants to respond to the following two statements: “The Netherlands is traditionally an open and tolerant country with much room for other cultures and religions” and “Freedom of religion historically belongs to the Netherlands.” The items were combined into a scale ($r = .64$, $p < .001$).

National identification. The four items that were used to assess Dutch identification were identical to previous studies ($\alpha = .80$).

Perceived incompatibility. We used the same three items as in Study 2 (reverse scored), plus three additional items to measure perceptions of incompatibility between the Dutch and Muslim way of life ($\alpha = .78$). Because the three items used in Study 2 were worded in the direction of compatibility, we added three items that assessed incompatibility directly: “The traditional Dutch culture clashes with that of Muslims,” “Muslims in the Netherlands undermine the Dutch way of life,” and “The maintenance of Dutch norms and values is threatened by the presence of Muslims.”

Acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. The extent to which participants accepted Muslim rights was measured with the same six items as in Study 1 and Study 2 ($\alpha = .73$).

Results

Manipulation check. One-way ANOVA revealed that the experimental manipulation was successful. Participants in the historical tolerance condition were more likely to agree with the idea that the Netherlands has a history of religious tolerance and openness ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.45$) than participants in

Table 3. Means and SDs for Measured Variables by Condition, Study 3

	Historical tolerance		Control	
	M	SD	M	SD
National identification	4.92 _a	1.07	5.14 _a	0.91
Perceived incompatibility	3.11 _a	0.92	3.47 _b	0.84
Acceptance Muslim expressive rights	5.01 _a	0.84	4.71 _b	1.12

Note: Comparisons in a different row with different subscripts are significantly different at $p \leq .05$.

the control condition ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.42$), $F(1, 96) = 2.71$, $p = .05$. The mean level of national identification did not differ between the two conditions (see Table 3 for M s and SD s by condition for each measured variable).

Preliminary analyses. We assessed the possibility of variation in responding to the experimental manipulation by participant gender, age, and political orientation (ranging from 1 = *left* to 5 = *right*). We conducted a MANOVA on the dependent measures, in which we examined the main effects of these control variables, as well as their interactions with the experimental manipulation. Because the main effect of gender was not significant for any of the dependent variables ($ps > .56$) nor were the interactions ($ps > .16$), we collapsed across participant gender for all subsequent analyses. Although there were no significant interactions between the experimental manipulation and political orientation ($ps > .24$) and age ($ps > .22$), political orientation, $B = -.27$, $F(1, 93) = 28.40$, $p < .001$, and age, $B = -.12$, $F(1, 93) = 5.93$, $p = .013$, both exerted a significant main effect on acceptance of Muslim rights. We therefore controlled for these variables in all subsequent analyses.

Perceived incompatibility. The incompatibility score was regressed on the experimental manipulation variable (coded as $-1 = control$, $1 = historical\ tolerance$), the centered national identification score, and the manipulation by identification interaction term (controlling for political orientation and age), $R^2 = .22$, $F(5, 88) = 4.99$, $p < .001$. The experimental manipulation significantly predicted incompatibility, $\beta = -.21$, $t(88) = -2.10$, $p = .04$, but identification did not, $\beta = -.07$, $t(88) = -0.76$, $p = .45$. Political orientation was a significant predictor of incompatibility, $\beta = .33$, $t(88) = 3.48$, $p < .001$, and age was a marginal significant predictor, $\beta = .18$, $t(88) = 1.85$, $p = .07$. Importantly, the main effect of experimental manipulation was qualified by a significant experimental manipulation by identification interaction, $\beta = -.16$, $t(88) = -1.62$, $p = .05$. Analyses of the simple slopes of identification showed that the experimental manipulation significantly decreased incompatibility at 1 SD

above, $\beta = -.42$, $t(16) = -1.78$, $p = .048$, but not at 1 SD below the mean of identification, $\beta = -.03$, $t(17) = -0.14$, $p = .45$.

In addition, further analyses (controlling for political orientation and age) showed that, in the historical tolerance condition, higher identifiers and lower identifiers did not significantly differ in their levels of incompatibility ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.27$, and $M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.80$, respectively), $t(16) = 0.97$, $p = .18$. In contrast, in the control condition, higher identifiers perceived more incompatibility than lower identifiers ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.93$, and $M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.86$, respectively), $t(16) = 1.45$, $p = .04$.

Acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. The same analytical approach was used for acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, $R^2 = .32$, $F(5, 88) = 8.39$, $p < .001$. The experimental manipulation significantly predicted acceptance, $\beta = .20$, $t(88) = 2.17$, $p = .03$, but identification was not a significant predictor, $\beta = .14$, $t(88) = 1.56$, $p = .12$. Political orientation, $\beta = -.49$, $t(88) = -5.47$, $p < .001$, and age, $\beta = -.22$, $t(88) = -2.45$, $p = .02$, were also significantly related to acceptance. However, the experimental manipulation by national identification interaction exerted no significant direct effect on acceptance, $\beta = -.03$, $t(88) = -0.31$, $p = .76$.

Tests of indirect effects. The previous analyses established that the interaction between experimental manipulation and identification predicted incompatibility but had no direct effect on acceptance. However, it is possible that this interaction exerts an indirect influence on acceptance through incompatibility (Hayes, 2009; Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005). A regression analysis confirmed that incompatibility predicted acceptance of Muslim rights, $\beta = -.54$, $t(86) = 6.66$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .44$. We subsequently used Preacher and Hayes' (2008) bootstrapping macro with 1,000 iterations for testing the indirect effect of the interaction term on acceptance through incompatibility (controlling for the unique effects of political orientation, age, the manipulation, and identification). The indirect effect of the interaction term through incompatibility on acceptance ($B = .11$, $SE = .06$) was estimated to lie between .01 and .24 with 95% confidence, which is significantly different from zero. This shows that for higher identifiers, the salience of historical religious tolerance increases acceptance of Muslim expressive rights, via (reduced) perceptions of incompatibility.

Discussion

The results of Study 3 provide further support for our hypothesis that making a representation of historical tolerance salient can increase highly identified group members' support for Muslim expressive rights through a reduction of perceived identity incompatibility. The analysis showed that, compared with a control condition, highly identified individuals experienced less identity incompatibility with Muslims when their country's history of religious tolerance was salient. This, in turn, resulted in increased support for Muslim expressive rights. For lower identifiers, the experimental manipulation

did not change their perceptions of incompatibility, and hence no such indirect effect was observed.

General Discussion

The key finding of the current research is that a representation of historical religious tolerance is associated with a more positive attitude toward Muslim immigrants, especially among individuals who find their national identity important. This result was found in three different studies, among different samples, and when historical representations of religious tolerance were measured and manipulated. This indicates the generalizability and robustness of this finding.

Whereas previous research has shown that representations of national history and identity can be used to justify exclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities (e.g., Bourhis & Dayan, 2004; Pehrson et al., 2009; Sibley et al., 2008; Smeekes et al., 2011), the current findings indicate that tolerant representations of national history can elevate acceptance of immigrants, particularly among higher national identifiers. Study 1 showed that highly identified Dutch natives tended to be more accepting of Muslims publicly expressing their religious identity when they perceived religious tolerance as historically defining their nation. Results from Study 2 replicated these findings. In addition, this study showed that the stronger highly identified natives endorsed historical tolerance, the less they perceived their way of life and that of Muslims to be incompatible, and this, in turn, was associated with more acceptance of Muslim expressive rights. Furthermore, the experimental findings in Study 3 provided causal support for the prediction that, for higher identifiers, the positive effect of a tolerant representation of national history on acceptance of Muslims could be explained by reduced perceptions of identity incompatibility.

Importantly, in all studies, the positive (indirect) effect of a representation of historical tolerance on acceptance of Muslims was only observed for higher identified nationals. This finding indicates that high levels of national belonging do not inevitably lead to the rejection of immigrants but can actually go together with acceptance. In line with SCT, this shows that the attitude toward immigrant out-groups is determined by the interplay between the strength to which people feel committed to their national group membership and the norms and beliefs they ascribe to it (Haslam et al., 2010). In the current research, highly identified nationals displayed more positive out-group attitudes when historical tolerant norms and beliefs defined the national category.

However, we observed in all studies that, compared with lower identifiers, higher identifiers were more negative about Muslims when the salience of historical tolerance was low, and displayed similar attitudes when the salience of historical tolerance was high. In line with the social identity perspective, this indicates that higher compared with lower identifiers are not only more likely to act in accordance with in-group norms but also more inclined to

display negative out-group attitudes as a means of enhancing positive distinctiveness (Jetten et al., 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This pattern of findings provides support for SCT, because it shows that when the meaning of national identity is shared among group members, differences in out-group evaluations between higher and lower identifiers are reduced. Similar findings have been observed in other research on intergroup relations (Butz et al., 2007; Jetten et al., 1997), which indicates the generalizability of these social identity processes.

The findings of Studies 2 and 3 show that, for higher national identifiers, the reduction of perceptions of incompatibility between the Dutch and Muslim ways of life is one of the mechanisms through which the salience of historical tolerance improves attitudes toward Muslims. Previous research has shown that perceived incompatibility is a powerful predictor of attitudes toward immigrants (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007) and other nationals (Sindic & Reicher, 2009). The current research provides an important addition by showing that perceptions of incompatibility depend on people's historical understanding of their national identity and their level of national identification.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

We showed that representations of national history have implications for current attitudes toward Muslim immigrants and the extent to which group identities are considered compatible. This indicates that, to develop a better understanding of intergroup attitudes, it is important to focus on the contents that people ascribe to their group identity, and not only on the extent to which people feel attached to it. More specifically, these findings underscore the importance of taking representations of a group's history into account when studying national identity and intergroup relations (Sibley et al., 2008; Smeekes et al., 2011). It is by interpreting national history that people define and understand their national identity, and this relates to and determines how they perceive religious and ethnic out-groups (Smeekes et al., 2011). When tolerance of cultural and religious diversity defines "who we traditionally are," national majority members are more likely to accept public expressions of immigrant identities. Hence, as illustrated by Balkenende's quote at the beginning of this article, representations of historical tolerance can serve to improve current attitudes toward Muslim immigrants. Importantly, this is particularly likely for natives who have a relatively strong sense of belonging to the nation.

It is important to note, however, that representations of national tolerance can also be used to justify a policy of exclusion. In this discourse, Muslims are presented as being intolerant of "our" liberal principles and ways of life, and thereby as a threat to the tolerant tradition of the country (Bowskill et al., 2007; Verkuyten, 2012). Hence, the notion of tolerance is not positive by definition. It is likely that

people who subscribe to this exclusionist interpretation of tolerance perceive high incompatibility between the Muslim and Dutch ways of life. Moreover, this use of tolerance can be linked to assimilationist beliefs, which emphasize the identity of the national in-group by demanding ethnic and religious minority groups to fully adjust to the dominant national norms and values (Verkuyten, 2011). It has been shown that those in favor of assimilation use this discourse of tolerance to justify the exclusion of immigrants from the insider status (i.e., true nationals) and to argue for conformity to the national way of life (e.g., Bowskill et al., 2007; Verkuyten, 2004, 2012). The present study examined the stereotypical representation of Dutch history as being one of religious tolerance and openness. This conceptualization of tolerance can be linked to the ideology of multiculturalism, which holds that cultural and religious differences should be publicly affirmed, recognized, and valued (Modood, 2007). Those in favor of multiculturalism have been found to use this discourse of tolerance to argue for the inclusion of immigrants (Verkuyten, 2004). Future studies should look at multiple and coexisting meanings of tolerance and examine how these are strategically used to promote and justify ideas of inclusion and multiculturalism or rather exclusion and assimilation of immigrants.

In this research, we focused on perceptions of incompatibility as a mechanism between historical tolerance, national identification, and acceptance of Muslims. However, there might be additional processes explaining this relationship that can be examined in future studies. One possibility is that representations of a group's history are linked to perceptions of collective continuity and continuity threat (e.g., Sani, 2008). A study by Jetten and Hutchison (2010), for example, showed that the more people perceived the continuity of their collective identity to be threatened by a merger, the more they resisted the upcoming merger. Likewise, natives could perceive the increasing presence of immigrants as threatening to their sense of national continuity. Yet, the acceptance of immigrants could also be construed as an expression and continuation of "our" historically rooted nature of openness and religious tolerance.

There is also the question whether our findings are specific to the Dutch context or have broader relevance. The Netherlands is generally considered a historically tolerant society, and most participants in our studies endorsed this collective representation. It is likely that historical representations of tolerance are less self-defining in other nations. However, with rising levels of immigration in many European countries, the question of national identity maintenance and the incompatibility between national and ethnoreligious identities is not confined to the Dutch context. Studies in other countries should examine how majority members' representations of national history are related to their attitudes toward immigrants. In addition, future studies could examine whether our proposed relationships can be generalized to other out-groups and whether other prosocial national

norms and beliefs can foster greater acceptance of immigrant and minority groups.

Conclusion

The main aim of our research was to determine whether a religious tolerant representation of national history results in more acceptance of Muslims among highly identified nationals and whether this effect could be explained by (reduced) perceptions of identity incompatibility between the Dutch and Muslim way of life. The findings of our studies provide support for these relationships. More generally, this research shows (a) the necessity of considering representations of national history for understanding majority members' attitudes toward immigrants and (b) the need to explain how prosocial norms and beliefs interact with national identification in fostering greater acceptance of migrant groups.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. One possible explanation for the relatively low explained variance in Study 1A is the reliability of the measurement of historical tolerance, which contained only two items. The other is the sample of social science students who tend to be quite similar in their political orientation and attitudes toward multicultural society. Study 1B was conducted among a different student sample, and historical tolerance was measured with more items. This resulted in a higher explained variance in acceptance of Muslim rights.
2. The Preacher and Hayes (2008) macro for indirect effects only produces unstandardized (B), but not standardized (β), regression weights. Therefore, we report the unstandardized regression weights for this analysis.

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