VU Research Portal

Negative attitudes toward Muslims in the Netherlands

Wirtz, C.; van der Pligt, Joop; Doosje, Bertjan

published in

Peace and Conflict : Journal of Peace Psychology
2016

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1037/pac0000126](https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000126)

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Wirtz, C., van der Pligt, J., & Doosje, B. (2016). Negative attitudes toward Muslims in the Netherlands: The role of symbolic threat, stereotypes, and moral emotions. *Peace and Conflict : Journal of Peace Psychology*, 22(1), 75-83. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000126>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl

Negative Attitudes Toward Muslims in The Netherlands: The Role of Symbolic Threat, Stereotypes, and Moral Emotions

Coen Wirtz
VU University Amsterdam

Joop van der Pligt and Bertjan Doosje
University of Amsterdam

The present study addresses negative attitudes toward Muslims in The Netherlands, and combines ideas from integrated threat theory and socio-functional perspectives on threats and emotions. We proposed a model in which symbolic threat and negative stereotypes predict prejudice, social distance, and political intolerance toward Muslims through moral emotions. Results generally support the model and show that the relations of symbolic threat and stereotypes with prejudice and social distance were mediated by the moral emotions disgust, anger and pity. This was not the case for the relation between symbolic threat and political intolerance. Disgust and pity were strongly related to social distance, whereas anger was more strongly related to political intolerance. These findings confirm the importance of taking into account moral emotions in out-group attitudes.

Keywords: moral emotions, Muslim minority, political intolerance, prejudice, threat

Over the past decade tension between Muslim minorities and members of majority groups has increased in quite a few European countries. Various violent incidents between these groups have been reported, such as the fires that were set to religious buildings (e.g., religious schools, mosques, churches). Prejudice and discrimination of Muslim minorities is widespread and also illustrates the ongoing conflict between these groups. A recent survey in The Netherlands shows that 64% of Muslims living in The Netherlands experienced at least one personal incident of discrimination during that year (Andriessen, Fernee, & Wittebrood, 2014). Another survey shows that 41% of the Dutch majority population believe that Islamic culture and Western way of life do not go together (Gijssberts & Lubbers, 2009), and around 40% indicated that ethnic minorities pose a serious threat to their own culture. These views are related to the increased popularity of right-wing politicians who fuel even more fear by referring to “the Islamization of Europe.”

Negative attitudes toward immigrants are often caused by the perception that these groups pose a serious threat to the status quo

(Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011; Curşeu, Stoop, & Schalk, 2007; McLaren, 2003; Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999). According to Integrated Threat Theory (ITT; Stephan & Stephan, 1993, 1996), out-groups can pose realistic threats (e.g., economic threats) and symbolic threats (e.g., threats to norms and values of the in-group), and both can lead to negative out-group attitudes. Threats have also been related to distinct emotions in the so-called ‘sociofunctional’ approach to the study of prejudice. This research shows that different out-groups evoke different emotions as a result of the threats they pose (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Halperin, 2011; Kamans, Otten, & Gordijn, 2011). In the present study, we combine these ideas and apply them to attitudes toward Muslims living in The Netherlands. We make a distinction between three forms of out-group attitudes, that is, prejudice, social distance, and political intolerance for Muslims. We aim to provide a better understanding of how specific threats relate to different forms of out-group attitudes by investigating the role of specific emotions. We propose a model in which the effects of intergroup threats on attitudes toward Muslims are mediated by specific emotions that people experience when thinking about this group. Before elaborating on our model, we first review research on intergroup threat and the sociofunctional approach to prejudice described by Cottrell and Neuberg (2005).

Intergroup Threat

ITT makes a distinction between realistic threat and symbolic threat, and argues that both can lead to negative out-group attitudes, regardless of whether or not the threat is real (Stephan & Stephan, 1993, 1996). Realistic threat can be triggered by a competition for scarce resources (e.g., jobs, houses, territory), and generally refers to threats to the political or economical power, and/or physical safety of the in-group.

Symbolic threat refers to perceived group differences in values, norms, morals, customs and beliefs. These differences can lead to the perception of important values being violated. Because people

This article was published Online First June 29, 2015.

COEN WIRTZ received his PhD from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 2014. He works at the Department of Communication Science at the VU University Amsterdam. His main interests are intergroup relations, morality, emotions, and media psychology.

BERTJAN DOOSJE received his PhD from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 1995. He is a full professor at the University of Amsterdam, and he also holds a chair on Radicalization Studies. His main interests are ethnic attitudes and threat, radicalization processes, and intergroup emotions.

JOOP VAN DER PLIGT sadly and unexpectedly passed away in January 2015. He was an inspirational mentor and colleague; he will be missed.

CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THIS ARTICLE should be addressed to Coen Wirtz, Department of Communication Science, VU University Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1081, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands. E-mail: c.wirtz@vu.nl

have a tendency to perceive their own (group's) values, norms, and morals as objectively and universally true (e.g., Skitka, 2010), violations of those convictions are often experienced as threatening. Not surprisingly, several studies provide support for the impact of perceived value violations on prejudice and political intolerance (e.g., Cottrell, Richards, & Nichols, 2010; Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1993; Kinder & Sears, 1981; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Sears & Henry, 2003). ITT further proposes that stereotypes can also pose a threat because they create negative expectations about behavior of out-group members (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). For example, we are likely to expect negative interactions with out-group members if they are stereotypically seen as immoral or aggressive.

The relation between stereotypes and prejudice has long been established (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993; Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, 1991; Stephan & Stephan, 1993). However, whether stereotypes are best conceptualized as an independent factor that directly predicts prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 1996), an antecedent of realistic and symbolic threat (Stephan et al., 2002), or a mediating factor between these threats and prejudice (Curşeu et al., 2007), is still under debate. We expect negative stereotypes to predict prejudice independent of perceived threats. Negative stereotypes can refer to different types of traits, which may not necessarily be related to realistic or symbolic threat. For example, a group may be seen as unintelligent and lazy; both traits that are difficult to conceptualize as either the result or cause of realistic and symbolic threat. Because both threats and stereotypes refer to a generalized perception of members of a group and are likely to have the same valence, we do expect some overlap between these variables though.

Realistic threat, symbolic threat, and stereotypes have all been associated with negative out-group attitudes (for a review, see Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006). However, ITT proposes that which threat is most likely to cause these attitudes depends on intergroup context (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Given the present situation in The Netherlands, we expect that symbolic threat and stereotypes are relatively important in relation to Muslim minorities. Realistic threat is not likely to be a prime determinant of negative attitudes toward Muslims, because the public debate in The Netherlands regarding Muslims generally does not concern issues such as competition over houses or jobs, direct threats to political or economic power, or threats to physical safety of majority group members. Instead, the debate focuses on issues regarding sociocultural immigration and the associated fear of losing values and traditions (as illustrated by the first paragraph in our introduction). Therefore, the Muslim minority group is more likely to be seen as posing a symbolic threat.

Further support for this notion comes from a study by Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior (2004), who showed that threats to cultural values by Islamic immigrant groups (i.e., Moroccans¹) were more predictive of negative attitudes toward these groups than realistic threats. Additional empirical support comes from a study by Velasco González, Verkuyten, Weesie, and Poppe (2008), who investigated adolescents' reactions to Muslims in The Netherlands. Their results showed that realistic threat did not predict negative attitudes toward Muslims, but symbolic threat and negative stereotypes did (for similar results see also van der Noll, Poppe, & Verkuyten, 2010). In line with this, Smeekes and Verkuyten (2014) recently showed that people who place value on

the continuity of their culture are likely to experience symbolic threats by Muslims, which in turn relates to more political intolerance for Muslims. However, the exact role of negative stereotypes in this context is unclear, as we described earlier. Consequently, in the present study, we focus on symbolic threat and negative stereotypes and their impact on negative attitudes toward Muslims. Moreover, it is important to understand how these factors relate to each other. Therefore, in addition to previous studies, we investigate whether emotions can help explain these relations.

The Role of Emotions

ITT acknowledges that affect plays a role in predicting negative out-group attitudes, but focuses on general negative affect, not on specific emotions. According to the theory, people can feel uneasy or awkward in the presence of an out-group member, particularly if the differences between the out-group and the in-group are large (e.g., if the groups have a history of conflict). They refer to this feeling as intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). In ITT, intergroup anxiety plays a similar role as threats and stereotypes, and some see it primarily as another type of threat. We prefer to see this affective reaction as a consequence of intergroup threat (see Curşeu et al., 2007; Riek et al., 2006). Additionally, we argue that it is important to focus on more specific affective reactions, because they are expected to shed more light on the relations between intergroup threat and different forms of out-group attitudes.

According to the sociofunctional approach to prejudice, emotions can signal potential threats and can help protect people against these threats (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). Importantly, emotions also contain action tendencies that stimulate people to act in certain ways to address the source of threat. For example, disgust is an adaptive emotional response to a threat such as a contagious illness (e.g., avian influenza, oral herpes, HIV), because it stimulates movement away from a potential contaminant in order to prevent harmful disease. Cottrell and Neuberg (2005) also found empirical support for some of these processes. Groups that were most threatening to important values of their participants (e.g., gay men, activist feminist, fundamentalist Christians) also tended to evoke most disgust. In another study, Cottrell et al. (2010) found further evidence for the importance of intergroup emotions and showed that disgust partially mediates the relation between perceived symbolic threat by gays and lesbians and attitudes toward gay rights. These findings suggest that emotions can mediate the relation between perceived threat and out-group attitudes.

However, these studies focused on one specific emotional reaction toward an out-group and tested its effect on a single outcome variable. The present study is the first to examine multiple emotions at the same time in this context. We aim to show that a minority out-group (Muslims), can evoke a number of discrete emotions associated with symbolic threat and negative stereotypes. Moreover, we expect that these emotions are likely to be associated with different forms of attitudes toward Muslims.

In the present study, we focus on three emotions; all three are what Haidt (2003) termed *moral* emotions. The first is *disgust*,

¹ Based on an estimate by SCP (Maliepaard & Gijsberts, 2012), 97% of Moroccans living in the Netherlands consider themselves Muslims.

which is considered an other-condemning emotion (Haidt, 2003; Miller, 1997; Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999). Disgust can be elicited when people encounter a moral contaminant (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 2000), suggesting that it is likely to occur when an out-group poses a symbolic threat by promoting opposing values and beliefs (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Cottrell et al., 2010; Levin, Pratto, Matthews, Sidanius, & Kteily, 2013; Maoz & McCauley, 2008). Disgust is also likely to result from negative stereotypes, particularly when these characterize a group as unfriendly, immoral, and unworthy of any attention (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007; Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson, & Mihic, 2008; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Disgust is strongly related to contempt, and both terms are used interchangeably to describe the same feeling (e.g., Miller, 1997), such as a response to others who act immorally or fail to live up to moral standards (Haidt, 2003; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Furthermore, both disgust and contempt generally lead to a tendency to avoid, reject, or expel the group that threatens the in-group values (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Nabi, 2002; Rozin et al., 2000). In line with other studies on stereotyping and prejudice (e.g., Fiske et al., 2002; Mackie et al., 2000), we measure both emotions and name this cluster *disgust*.

Another moral emotion, *anger*, is also relevant in the present context. Immoral acts of others often lead to anger (Haidt, 2003). We expect anger to also be triggered by an out-group that poses a threat to important values and beliefs (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Levin et al., 2013). Mackie et al. (2000) provided some support for this by showing that if participants experienced a value conflict with a minority group, they were likely to experience anger. Negative stereotypes may also be associated with anger. When low-status groups are perceived as unfriendly and violent for instance, they are likely to evoke angry feelings (e.g., Fiske et al., 2002). Anger differs from disgust in the sense that it is more likely to result in the tendency to actively remove, confront, or punish the source of the emotion, rather than to avoid it (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Mackie et al., 2000; Nabi, 2002). Anger also has a different social function than disgust; anger relates to the desire to change an undesirable outcome in order to restore a relationship (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Disgust, in contrast, is not related to changing or restoring relationships, but to excluding others from their environment. Hence, the appraisals of the relationship are different for these emotions.

A third emotion that is of relevance is *pity*. Pity is a feeling that arises from the perception of other people suffering or being disadvantaged (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010; Haidt, 2003). It is an empathic feeling related to compassion and sympathy. Pity is associated with a desire to help others (e.g., Dijkster & Koomen, 2003). Out-groups that pose a threat to in-group values are less likely to evoke pity. Similarly, groups that are associated with negative stereotypes, such as unfriendly, cold, and immoral are less likely to evoke feelings of pity (Cuddy et al., 2007). Pity leads to a tendency to approach others as opposed to avoiding or harming them (e.g., Rudolph, Roesch, Greitemeyer, & Weiner, 2004).

Previous studies conceptualized anti-immigrant attitudes in a variety of ways, including affective evaluations (Stephan et al., 1999), social distance (Sniderman et al., 2004), and willingness to expel immigrants (McLaren, 2003). In the present study, we distinguish between three types of out-group attitudes, which are

relevant in the present context: prejudice, social distance, and political intolerance for Muslims. Prejudice is defined as a general affective evaluation of a group and of any person perceived to be a member of that group. In line with previous research on attitudes toward Muslims, we expect prejudice to be distinguishable from political intolerance (van der Noll et al., 2010). Whereas prejudice implies a general dislike of a particular group, political intolerance indicates the denial of rights or group-defining practices of an out-group (such as the right to wear a niqab or the opportunity to build mosques). Hence, political intolerance seems to be closely related to supporting (government) actions that would actually be detrimental for the out-group. Political intolerance can also be distinguished from social distance, because the latter implies a more passive response, that is, the preference for out-group members to stay away from one's social environment. Social distance is also distinct from prejudice, because it should be possible to generally like Muslims, and prefer not to live in the same neighborhood. Hence, the three types of out-group attitudes may be related, but we expect them to be empirically distinguishable. In addition, we expect them to differ in the extent to which they are related to the wish for specific actions that could be detrimental for the out-group. As such, we expect them to be differentially related to emotions. We expect disgust and pity to be related to both social distance and political intolerance for Muslims, whereas anger is expected to be primarily associated with political intolerance. We expect that all three emotions predict prejudice. We used structural equation modeling to test our proposed model, in which symbolic threat and negative stereotypes predict the three forms of out-group attitudes indirectly through the emotions.

Method

Participants

Participants were 103 psychology students at the University of Amsterdam. They participated for course credit. Two participants indicated that they were Muslim and were excluded from this study. The mean age of the remaining 101 participants (84 female and 17 male) was 21.12 ($SD = 5.08$).

Materials and Procedure

Participants were told that they would participate in a study that was ostensibly part of a larger survey on attitudes toward a variety of groups in present-day society. Participants were asked to answer several questions about Muslims living in The Netherlands. First we asked participants to indicate their agreement with several statements regarding Muslims on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We measured symbolic threat with five items that were based on questions used by Stephan et al. (1999), for example "Islamic norms and values frighten me sometimes," "Cultural differences with Muslims are threatening," and "Islamic values and beliefs are a great asset to our culture" (reverse scored). These items were combined, and a higher score on this measure indicated more symbolic threat ($\alpha = .78$).

To capture negative stereotypes, we presented a list of 24 trait adjectives and asked participants to indicate for each trait whether they believed it described a typical Muslim. They could answer

these items on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*to a large extent*). We were particularly interested in negative stereotypes that are generally associated with Muslims. We therefore included a measure that was previously used in research on Muslims in The Netherlands (Velasco González et al., 2008) and added some moral traits. Eleven of the traits were selected to measure negative stereotypes. Examples of the traits are “aggressive,” “immoral,” and “friendly” (reverse scored). Answers to these 11 items were averaged and a higher score on this measure indicated more negative stereotypes ($\alpha = .88$).²

Emotions were assessed with a list of five negative and five positive emotion words (based on Cuddy et al., 2007; Dijkster, 1987; Mackie et al., 2000). We asked participants to indicate to what extent they felt each emotion when thinking about typical Muslims who live in The Netherlands. They could answer these items on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*to a large extent*). Three negative items were used to measure *disgust*: “disgust,” “contempt,” and “revulsion” ($\alpha = .83$), and two negative items to measure *anger*: “anger” and “irritation” ($\alpha = .77$). *Pity* was measured with five positive terms: “compassion,” “pity,” “empathy,” “commiseration,” and “sympathy” ($\alpha = .79$). We included “happiness” and “relief” as filler items.

We used four items to capture prejudice (proposed by Stephan & Stephan, 1993, 1996): “I am curious about Islamic culture,” “my general impression of Muslims is quite positive,” “I admire Islamic culture” (all three reverse scored), and “I do not want to get involved with Muslims.” Answers to these items could be given on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). These answers were combined, and a higher score indicated more prejudice toward Muslims ($\alpha = .83$).

We measured social distance with eight items that we derived from an adapted version of Bogardus’ social distance scale (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). Participants were asked their agreement on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) with statements that followed the sentence “I would be happy to have a Muslim . . .” The statements were “living in The Netherlands,” “living in my city,” “living in my neighborhood,” “living on my street,” “as my neighbor,” “as an acquaintance,” “as a close friend,” and “as a romantic partner.” The answers to these statements correlated highly and we averaged these scores to assess social distance ($\alpha = .91$). A higher score on this scale indicated more social distance.

Finally, we used six items to measure political intolerance for Muslims in The Netherlands, for example: “The Dutch government should not allow more Muslims to come and live in our country,” “Wearing a niqab in The Netherlands should be prohibited,” and “The Muslim community should be allowed to build mosques if they want” (reverse scored). The answers could also be given on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A higher score indicated more political intolerance for Muslims ($\alpha = .72$).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The means of the main variables and their correlations are presented in Table 1. As this table shows, all correlations were in the expected direction and almost all were significant. Both sym-

bolic threat and stereotypes were related to political intolerance, prejudice, and social distance. An increase in symbolic threat and negative stereotyping was also associated with more disgust, anger, and less pity. The relation between symbolic threat and pity was marginally significant ($p = .072$). Finally, all three emotions were significantly related to political intolerance, prejudice, and social distance.

Some correlations were quite high, which could lead to problems of multicollinearity. However, the highest VIF value was 3.05, indicating that there was no problematic multicollinearity between the variables. To detect multivariate outliers we calculated the Mahalanobis distance statistic. One case exceeded the critical value (26.12, $df = 8$), and was considered a multivariate outlier. This case was dropped in further model testing. All variables were normally distributed; skewness and kurtosis values were not critically high (highest skewness value = $-.49$, highest kurtosis value = $-.83$). There were no missing values. First, we performed confirmatory factor analysis to test whether the different constructs as discussed reflect the latent variables in the measurement model. Next, we examined the fit of the structural model. Both models were examined by maximum likelihood estimation of parameters using Mplus 6 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010).

Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for a measurement model that included all latent factors: symbolic threat, negative stereotypes, disgust, anger, pity, prejudice, social distance, and political intolerance. Each item was specified to load on only the hypothesized factor, and the errors were not allowed to covary. However, the latent factors were allowed to covary. The model showed the following fit indices, indicating an acceptable fit: $\chi^2(874) = 1562.35$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 1.79$; CFI = .76; TLI = .74; RMSEA = .09 with 90% CI [.08, .10]; SRMR = .10.³ All factor loadings were between .33 and .96 and statistically significant, $ps < .001$. Modification indices showed that all items loaded higher on the intended factors than on any other factor.

² A factor analysis showed that these items loaded on the first factor (loadings from .60 to .77). Other items loaded on multiple factors and did not relate to the other variables that we measured. Exceptions are “shallow,” “disorganized,” and “ignorant,” which were negatively related to pity and positively to the other variables. However, their impact was relatively small compared to the stereotype measure we used.

³ Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested several fit indices to determine overall fit of a model, of which some are absolute fit indices, and others are incremental fit indices. The χ^2 goodness-of-fit statistic assesses the general fit between the model and the data. A chi-square statistic that is small and nonsignificant indicates a good fit. However, for small samples the χ^2/df ratio is more reliable; with a value under 2.50 indicating an acceptable fit. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) are also absolute fit indices. Suggested cut off values for an adequate model fit are .06 for RMSEA and .08 for SRMR, with lower values indicating a better fit. Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) are incremental fit indices measuring the proportionate improvement of fit between the tested model and the null model that assumes no covariance among variables. A cut off value close to .95 is suggested for CFI and TLI, with higher values indicating a better fit.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Between the Main Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Symb. threat	—							3.28	1.07
2. Stereotype	.66**	—						3.64	.77
3. Disgust	.60**	.64**	—					2.79	1.07
4. Anger	.63**	.64**	.74**	—				3.39	1.14
5. Pity	-.18	-.44**	-.16	-.13	—			3.89	.83
6. Prejudice	.45*	.65**	.60**	.56**	-.37**	—		3.77	1.27
7. Distance	.47*	.50**	.55**	.52*	-.23*	.62**	—	2.82	.89
8. Political intolerance	.53**	.46**	.39**	.49*	-.22*	.46**	.35*	4.02	.93

Note. Symb. threat = symbolic threat; Distance = social distance.

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

Model Testing

In our model, the emotions fully mediated the relations between symbolic threat and stereotypes and the three outcome variables. We allowed the three outcome variables to correlate,⁴ as well as anger and disgust. This model showed a reasonable fit of the data, $\chi^2(8) = 20.95$, $p = .007$; $\chi^2/df = 2.62$; CFI = .96; TLI = .87; RMSEA = .127 with 90% CI [.06, .20]; SRMR = .046. Inspection of a fully saturated model showed a significant direct path from symbolic threat to political intolerance for Muslims. Incorporating this path in the model improved the fit, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 10.62$, $p < .01$. The fit indices of this model were: $\chi^2(7) = 10.33$, $p = .17$; $\chi^2/df = 1.48$; CFI = .99; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .069 with 90% CI [.00, .15]; SRMR = .031. This model is depicted in Figure 1 and provided a good fit of our data. As the figure shows, the paths from disgust, anger, and pity to prejudice were all significant, accounting for 47.5% of the total amount of variance of prejudice. Our findings show that the more disgust and anger, and the less pity participants reported, the more prejudiced they were. As expected, social distance was predicted by disgust and pity; more disgust and less pity were associated with more social distance. Anger was marginally related to social distance. The emotions accounted for 36.1% of the total amount of variance of social distance. As predicted, political intolerance was only significantly predicted by anger. Together with the other predictors, anger accounted for 33.7% of the total amount of variance of political intolerance. Figure 1 further shows that negative stereotypes were positively related to disgust and anger, and negatively to pity. Symbolic threat was significantly related to disgust and anger. Moreover, the relations between stereotypes and the three outcome variables seem to be indirect through the emotions, whereas the effects of symbolic threat seem partially mediated by the emotions.

To test the significance of these indirect relations, we performed additional Sobel tests in Mplus. As predicted, results indicated that the total indirect effects of negative stereotypes and on each outcome variable were significant ($ps < .05$). The indirect effects of symbolic threat on prejudice ($Z = .13$, $p = .042$) and social distance ($Z = .13$, $p = .022$) were also significant, but the indirect relation between symbolic threat and intolerance was not ($Z = .06$, $p = .21$). Tests of specific indirect effects generally supported our predictions and showed that disgust significantly mediated the relation of stereotypes with prejudice ($Z = .18$, $p = .004$) and social distance ($Z = .16$, $p = .014$), as well as the relation between symbolic threat and prejudice ($Z = .09$, $p = .041$). Disgust only

partially mediated the relation between symbolic threat and social distance ($Z = .08$, $p = .059$). Further analyses showed that anger significantly mediated the relation of stereotypes with prejudice ($Z = .11$, $p = .049$) and political intolerance ($Z = .14$, $p = .041$). Anger partially mediated the relation between symbolic threat and political intolerance ($Z = .08$, $p = .074$), as well as the relation between stereotypes and social distance ($Z = .11$, $p = .068$). Finally, pity significantly mediated the relation of stereotypes with prejudice ($Z = .13$, $p = .006$) and social distance ($Z = .09$, $p = .048$). However, pity did not mediate any relation between symbolic threat and the outcome variables.

In sum, stereotypes had an indirect relation with prejudice through all three emotions, an indirect relation with social distance through disgust, and an indirect relation with political intolerance through anger. Symbolic threat had an indirect relation with prejudice through disgust, a partial indirect relation with social distance through disgust, and a partial indirect relation with political intolerance through anger.

Alternative Model Testing

As indicated in our introduction, there is debate on whether stereotypes are best conceptualized as an independent threat that predicts prejudice, as antecedent of the other types of threat, or as mediating factor between the other threats and prejudice. We tested two alternative models in which stereotypes predict symbolic threat (Model B) and in which stereotypes mediate the effect of symbolic threat (Model C).⁵ Table 2 shows the fit indices of these models and our proposed model (Model A) and shows these alternative models fit of our data worse than our proposed model. This suggests that negative stereotypes play a similar role as symbolic threat and independently predict emotions through which they affect prejudice and political intolerance.

We also tested two alternative models to further investigate the role of prejudice. Some argue that prejudice precedes threats (Pereira, Vala, & Costa-Lopes, 2010), so that the latter mediate the impact of prejudice on social distance and political intolerance (Model D). Others argue that prejudice predicts the other outcome

⁴ There are theoretical reasons to expect common variance between these variables, because all are related to a negative view on Muslims.

⁵ In all alternative models we only changed the paths as indicated, so the direct path from symbolic threat to support for discriminatory policies remained present in each model.

Figure 1. Path model showing relations between main variables. Nonsignificant paths are depicted with dashed lines. Standardized regression coefficients are displayed. # $p < .10$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

variables and thus mediates the impact of emotions on social distance and political intolerance (Model E). The fit indices of these models are also presented in Table 2 and show a worse fit than our proposed model, suggesting that prejudice is best modeled as an outcome variable, predicted by emotions.

Some research suggests that anger and disgust are jointly experienced as a reaction to perceived moral violations and are strongly related in those situations (Gutierrez & Giner-Sorolla, 2007; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Our results indeed showed strong correlations between anger and disgust. We also tested a model (Model F) in which we combined disgust and anger into one variable. Table 2 shows that the fit indices of this alternative model were not better than our proposed model (even slightly worse). Although the models did not differ in goodness of fit, we prefer our model because it is more informative and reveals different roles for anger and disgust, particularly in terms of outcome variables.

Discussion

In this study, we proposed and tested a model that extends previous research by assessing the combined role of symbolic threat, stereotypes, and three emotions in predicting negative attitudes toward Muslims. Our study focused on three specific forms

of out-group attitudes that were empirically reasonably distinguishable: prejudice, social distance, and political intolerance for Muslims. Results generally supported our proposed model and showed that the impact of symbolic threat on prejudice and social distance was mediated by emotions. This was not the case for support for political intolerance. A possible explanation for the direct link between symbolic threat and political intolerance could be the wording of the two variables; both referred to sociocultural aspects of Islam (e.g., Islamic values, banning niqabs). Results further showed that the relations between stereotypes and the three forms of attitudes were also mediated by emotions. Our study thus replicates previous findings by showing that symbolic threat and stereotypes are important predictors of attitudes toward Muslims (e.g., Velasco González et al., 2008).

However, we extend that work by showing that specific emotions mediate the relations between symbolic threat and stereotypes with attitudes toward Muslims. We showed that disgust was primarily related to social distance, and that anger was most strongly related to political intolerance for Muslims. Pity was also (negatively) related to social distance, but was not related to political intolerance once anger was taken into account. As predicted, all three emotions were associated with prejudice. Anger

Table 2
Structural Equation Fit Indices for Five Path Models

Model	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA	90% CI of RMSEA	SRMR
A	10.33	7	.17	1.48	.99	.07	.00–.15	.03
B	50.66	10	< .001	5.07	.90	.20	.15–.26	.11
C	20.15	10	.028	2.01	.97	.10	.03–.16	.06
D	38.73	10	< .001	3.87	.93	.17	.12–.23	.08
E	23.79	13	.033	1.83	.97	.09	.03–.15	.07
F	10.08	6	.12	1.68	.98	.08	.00–.17	.03

has been associated with the action tendency to do something about an unpleasant situation by trying to remove the source of frustration (e.g., Kuppens, van Mechelen, Smits, & de Boeck, 2003; Mackie et al., 2000). Our findings confirm that. Disgust, on the other hand, stimulates movement away from a contamination source (e.g., Nabi, 2002; Rozin et al., 2000), which may explain why disgust seemed primarily related to social distance. These findings stress the importance of taking specific discrete emotions into account when predicting specific attitudes toward immigrant minority groups.

These findings are in line with work based on the stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002), which shows that emotions mediate the relation between specific stereotype content and intentions to either help or harm members of out-groups (Cuddy et al., 2007). Our model adds to that work by incorporating symbolic threat as well as multiple out-group attitudes, which provides more insight in possible routes to negative responses toward out-groups.

A possible limitation of our study is that we did not measure fear. Some would argue that people who hold different values can be threatening and evoke fear as a result (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Mackie et al., 2000). We believe, however, that fear is less relevant in the present context. As we outlined in the introduction, our participants belonged to the majority group in The Netherlands and were likely to perceive themselves to be more powerful than members of a minority group. This perception will give rise to other-condemning moral emotions (i.e., disgust, anger) rather than to fear when experiencing a symbolic threat. Related to this point is the omission of realistic threat in this study. As we made clear in our introduction, we believe that realistic threat will not predict attitudes toward Muslims for members of the majority group in The Netherlands (see, e.g., Velasco González et al., 2008). However, future research should control for this type of threat.

Another possible limitation concerns the selected sample for this study, which was relatively small and consisted of highly educated and predominantly female respondents. Some studies have shown that particularly older and lower educated people tend to have negative out-group attitudes (e.g., Pettigrew et al., 2008). However, the effects of demographic characteristics on out-group attitudes are relatively small and seem to disappear when threats are taken into account (e.g., Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2014). Still, to make a stronger case for our model, future studies should investigate whether it also applies to a more representative sample.

Because of the correlational nature of our study, we need to be careful with drawing strong conclusions about the causal directions of the relations between the variables. However, we tested several alternative models in which some variables changed position in the sequence, and we showed that none of these alternative models fit our data better than our proposed model. This suggests that both symbolic threat and stereotypes are best conceptualized as independent predictors of prejudice and not as successive factors, as some suggest (e.g., Curşeu et al., 2007; Stephan et al., 2002). Thus, negative stereotypes did not seem to mediate the effects of symbolic threat or vice versa. Our findings are also inconsistent with research suggesting that threats mediate the effect of prejudice on discrimination (Pereira et al., 2010). Our study shows that prejudice toward Muslims directly relates to other types of bias, and is best treated as an outcome variable predicted by perceived threats.

As indicated in our introduction, surveys indicate that a sizable proportion of the Dutch majority population seems to be fearful of Islamic culture and values, and our study supports the importance of this symbolic threat. To understand and possibly reduce negative attitudes toward Muslims in Western societies, it could be beneficial to take a closer look at the specific emotions that result from symbolic threat. Although some emotions are automatic responses and therefore seem difficult to change, persuading individuals to pay attention to their own feelings may provide an opportunity. For instance, in their study Esses and Dovidio (2002) asked participants to either list their own feelings while watching a clip showing discrimination against an out-group member, or to list their thoughts. After watching, participants who wrote down their feelings reported more positive emotions toward this out-group and preferred more close contact than did participants who focused on their own thoughts. In addition, this effect was mediated by emotions toward that group. These findings suggest that paying attention to our own feelings in a negative intergroup context can result in positive changes in emotions and attitudes toward members of the out-group. Thus, when majority group members in Western societies are made (more) aware of the inappropriateness of some of their own emotions (e.g., disgust, anger) this might also change their emotions and negative attitudes toward minority groups. Hence, this study provides some insight on the processes that could help to reduce conflict between members of majority groups and Muslim minorities in Western societies.

References

- Andriessen, I., Fernee, H., & Wittebrood, K. (2014). *Ervaren discriminatie in Nederland* [Experienced discrimination in the Netherlands] (2014–03). Den Haag, Nederland: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Butz, D. A., & Yogeewaran, K. (2011). A new threat in the air: Macroeconomic threat increases prejudice against Asian Americans. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 47, 22–27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2010.07.014>
- Cottrell, C. A., & Neuberg, S. L. (2005). Different emotional reactions to different groups: A sociofunctional threat-based approach to "prejudice." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88, 770–789. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.5.770>
- Cottrell, C. A., Richards, D. A. R., & Nichols, A. L. (2010). Predicting policy attitudes from general prejudice versus specific intergroup emotions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 46, 247–254. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2009.10.008>
- Cuddy, A. J. C., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2007). The BIAS map: Behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, 631–648. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.4.631>
- Curşeu, P. L., Stoop, R., & Schalk, R. (2007). Prejudice toward immigrant workers among Dutch employees: Integrated threat theory revisited. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37, 125–140. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.331>
- Dijker, A. J. (1987). Emotional reactions to ethnic minorities. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 17, 305–325. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420170306>
- Dijker, A. J., & Koomen, W. (2003). Extending Weiner's attribution-emotion model of stigmatization of ill persons. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 25, 51–68. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15324834BASP2501_4
- Eagly, A. H., & Mladinic, A. (1989). Gender stereotypes and attitudes toward women and men. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 15, 543–558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167289154008>

- Esses, V. M., & Dovidio, J. F. (2002). The role of emotions in determining willingness to engage in intergroup contact. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 1202–1214. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/01461672022812006>
- Esses, V. M., Haddock, G., & Zanna, M. P. (1993). Values, stereotypes, and emotions as determinants of intergroup attitudes. In D. M. Mackie & D. L. Hamilton (Eds.), *Affect, cognition, and stereotyping: Interactive processes in group perception* (pp. 137–166). San Diego, CA: Academic Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-088579-7.50011-9>
- Esses, V. M., Veenvliet, S., Hodson, G., & Mihic, L. (2008). Justice, morality, and the dehumanization of refugees. *Social Justice Research*, 21, 4–25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11211-007-0058-4>
- Fischer, A. H., & Roseman, I. J. (2007). Beat them or ban them: The characteristics and social functions of anger and contempt. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 93, 103–115. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.93.1.103>
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 878–902. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878>
- Gijsberts, M., & Lubbers, M. (2009). Wederzijdse beeldvorming [Mutual impressions]. In M. Gijsberts & J. Dagevos (Eds.), *Jaarrapport integratie 2009* [Annual report on integration 2009] (pp. 254–287). Den Haag, Nederland: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136, 351–374. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0018807>
- Gutierrez, R., & Giner-Sorolla, R. (2007). Anger, disgust, and presumption of harm as reactions to taboo-breaking behaviors. *Emotion*, 7, 853–868. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.7.4.853>
- Haddock, G., Zanna, M. P., & Esses, V. M. (1993). Assessing the structure of prejudicial attitudes: The case of attitudes toward homosexuals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 1105–1118. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.65.6.1105>
- Haidt, J. (2003). The moral emotions. In K. R. Sherer & H. H. Goldsmith (Eds.), *Handbook of affective sciences* (pp. 852–870). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Halperin, E. (2011). Emotional barriers to peace: Emotions and public opinion of Jewish Israelis about the peace process in the Middle East. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 17, 22–45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10781919.2010.487862>
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 6, 1–55. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118>
- Hutcherson, C. A., & Gross, J. J. (2011). The moral emotions: A social-functional account of anger, disgust, and contempt. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100, 719–737. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0022408>
- Kamans, E., Otten, S., & Gordijn, E. H. (2011). Power and threat in intergroup conflict: How emotional and behavioral responses depend on amount and content of threat. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 14, 293–310. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1368430210372525>
- Kinder, D. R., & Sears, D. O. (1981). Prejudice and politics: Symbolic racism versus racial threats to the good life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40, 414–431. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.40.3.414>
- Kuppens, P., Van Mechelen, I., Smits, D. J. M., & De Boeck, P. (2003). The appraisal basis of anger: Specificity, necessity and sufficiency of components. *Emotion*, 3, 254–269. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.3.3.254>
- Levin, S., Pratto, F., Matthews, M., Sidanius, J., & Kteily, N. (2013). A dual process approach to understanding prejudice toward Americans in Lebanon: An extension to intergroup threat perceptions and emotions. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 16, 139–158. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1368430212443866>
- Mackie, D. M., Devos, T., & Smith, E. R. (2000). Intergroup emotions: Explaining offensive action tendencies in an intergroup context. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 602–616. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.4.602>
- Maliepaard, M., & Gijsberts, M. (2012). *Moslims in Nederland 2012* [Muslim in the Netherlands 2012]. Den Haag, Nederland: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Maoz, I., & McCauley, C. (2008). Threat, dehumanization, and support for retaliatory aggressive policies in asymmetric conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 52, 93–116. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022002707308597>
- McLaren, L. M. (2003). Anti-immigrant prejudice in Europe: Contact, threat perception, and preferences for the exclusion of migrants. *Social Forces*, 81, 909–936. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/sof.2003.0038>
- Miller, W. I. (1997). *The anatomy of disgust*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (2010). *Mplus user's guide* (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Author.
- Nabi, R. L. (2002). The theoretical versus lay meaning of disgust: Implication for emotion research. *Cognition and Emotion*, 16, 695–703. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02699930143000437>
- Pereira, C., Vala, J., & Costa-Lopes, R. (2010). From prejudice to discrimination: The legitimizing role of perceived threat in discrimination against immigrants. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 1231–1250. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.718>
- Pettigrew, T. F., Christ, O., Wagner, U., Meertens, R. W., van Dick, R., & Zick, A. (2008). Relative deprivation and intergroup prejudice. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64, 385–401. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00567.x>
- Pettigrew, T. F., & Meertens, R. W. (1995). Subtle and blatant prejudice in western Europe. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 25, 57–75. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420250106>
- Riek, B. M., Mania, E. W., & Gaertner, S. L. (2006). Intergroup threat and outgroup attitudes: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10, 336–353. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1004_4
- Rozin, P., Haidt, J., & McCauley, C. R. (2000). Disgust. In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), *Handbook of emotions* (2nd ed., pp. 637–653). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Rozin, P., Lowery, L., Imada, S., & Haidt, J. (1999). The CAD triad hypothesis: A mapping between three moral emotions (contempt, anger, disgust) and three moral codes (community, autonomy, divinity). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 574–586. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.76.4.574>
- Rudolph, U., Roesch, S. C., Greitemeyer, T., & Weiner, B. (2004). A meta-analytic review of help giving and aggression from an attributional perspective: Contributions to a general theory of motivation. *Cognition and Emotion*, 18, 815–848. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02699930341000248>
- Sears, D. O., & Henry, P. J. (2003). The origins of symbolic racism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 259–275. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.2.259>
- Skitka, L. J. (2010). The psychology of moral conviction. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 4, 267–281. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00254.x>
- Skitka, L. J., Bauman, C. W., & Sargis, E. G. (2005). Moral conviction: Another contributor to attitude strength or something more? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88, 895–917. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.6.895>
- Smeeckes, A., & Verkuyten, M. (2014). When national culture is disrupted: Cultural continuity and resistance to Muslim immigrants. *Group Pro-*

- cesses & Intergroup Relations, 17, 45–66. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1368430213486208>
- Sniderman, P. M., Hagendoorn, L., & Prior, M. (2004). Predisposing factors and situational triggers: Exclusionary reactions to immigrant minorities. *The American Political Science Review*, 98, 35–49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S000305540400098X>
- Stangor, C., Sullivan, L. A., & Ford, T. E. (1991). Affective and cognitive determinants of prejudice. *Social Cognition*, 9, 359–380. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1521/soco.1991.9.4.359>
- Stephan, W. G., Boniecki, K. A., Ybarra, O., Bettencourt, A., Ervin, K. S., Jackson, L. A., . . . Renfro, C. L. (2002). The role of threats in the racial attitudes of blacks and whites. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 1242–1254. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/01461672022812009>
- Stephan, W. G., & Stephan, C. W. (1993). Cognition and affect in stereotyping: Parallel interactive networks. In D. M. Mackie & D. L. Hamilton (Eds.), *Affect, cognition and stereotyping: Interactive processes in group perception* (pp. 111–136). Orlando, FL: Academic. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-088579-7.50010-7>
- Stephan, W. G., & Stephan, C. W. (1996). Predicting prejudice. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 20, 409–426. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(96\)00026-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(96)00026-0)
- Stephan, W. G., Ybarra, O., & Bachman, G. (1999). Prejudice toward immigrants. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 29, 2221–2237. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1999.tb00107.x>
- van der Noll, J., Poppe, E., & Verkuyten, M. (2010). Political tolerance and prejudice: Differential reactions toward Muslims in The Netherlands. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 32, 46–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01973530903540067>
- Velasco González, K., Verkuyten, M., Weesie, J., & Poppe, E. (2008). Prejudice towards Muslims in The Netherlands: Testing integrated threat theory. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 47, 667–685. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1348/014466608X284443>