

One of Us: Identity-Claims and Discursive Strategies of Dutch Party Leaders in Political Speech

Charlot E. Lugtigheid¹, Jacquélien van Stekelenburg¹, Hans J. C. J. Boutellier²

[1] *Department of Sociology, VU University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.* [2] *Department of Political Science & Public Administration, VU University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.*

Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 2025, Vol. 13(1), 100–115, <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.14837>

Received: 2024-06-11 • Accepted: 2024-12-11 • Published (VoR): 2025-05-16

Handling Editor: Sharon Coen, University of Salford, Salford, United Kingdom

Corresponding Author: Charlot E. Lugtigheid, Department of Sociology, De Boelelaan 1105 1081, 1081 HV, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. E-mail: c.e.lugtigheid@vu.nl

Abstract

This study investigates the identity-claims utilized by ten Dutch party leaders within a multi-party political system, explore whether and how identity-claims enable polarization and endanger democratic societies. We analyze the identity-claims of the party leaders during eight political events within a period of 18 months before and after the March 2021 Parliamentary election. Using insights from critical discourse analysis, the Five Step Social Identity Model of the Development of Collective Hate, and the theory of identity leadership, we illustrate in an analytical approach: how party leaders (1) use identity-claims to position themselves as “category prototypes”, (2) draw “category boundaries” by redefining who does and does not belong, and (3) strategically use social identities by means of discursive strategies to express their political viewpoints. These three steps help us to demonstrate how the identity-claims of diverse party leaders in combination with discursive strategies might enable polarization.

Keywords

polarizing processes, identity leadership, social identity, identity entrepreneurs, critical discourse analysis

We want to choose once more for the Netherlands. For our own country and our own people. (..). We can do all that if we stop all immigration, stop all those nonsensical climate-plans and stop subsidizing the extravagance of Southern Europe (Thierry Baudet, Forum for Democracy, radical-right, 2021).

The SP wants an honest government. The [previous] Cabinet has deliberately helped innocent families to be destroyed. (..) Our Renske [Leijten, SP politician] fought together with the victimized parents to uncover the truth (Lilian Marijnissen, Socialist Party, left, 2021).

In the run-up to the Dutch Parliamentary election of March 2021, party leader (PL) Baudet illustrates in a campaign video his political agenda, which focuses on the threats posed by external enemies. In contrast, PL Marijnissen, campaigns against an internal enemy: the government. These quotes illustrate how PLs try to shape and influence voters’ ideas about social issues such as migration and social services by framing others as a threat endangering the existence of the own group. In the examples, PL Baudet en Marijnissen do so by strategically referring to identity while creating an alignment between themselves and the group they seek to represent; following that, they create a boundary between “us” and “them”. By using pronouns such as “I”, “we”, “you”, “our”, “us”, “they”, “their”, and “them”, PLs invoke social identity, placing nationality, culture, and identity at the center of political struggles. In this study we question how the identity-claims of PLs within the political realm may relate to polarization within society. The research question of this study is: how might the identity-claims of PLs within a multi-party system enable antagonistic polarization?



Before zooming in on the main research question, we want to acknowledge that some polarization is inherent in the process by which societies develop democratic institutions and enrich democratic processes (Campbell, 2016; Carlin et al., 2015). Polarization is here understood as the tensions and confrontations between groups of people, articulated within the political realm to create transparent, fair, and decentralized power structures. In combination with strong party organizations, these differences can benefit democratic societies (LeBas, 2018). During political campaigns, such polarization is helpful for voters to simplify their choices and for leaders to mobilize followers. However, triggered by the quotes above we are interested in the potential consequences of political rhetoric in enabling disrupting polarizing processes. Polarizing processes which undermine liberal democracies by reducing the differences between groups into one single difference aligned under mutually exclusive identity camps are referred to as us versus them (McCoy et al., 2018).

Antagonistic polarization makes compromise, consensus, interaction, and tolerance between political actors extremely difficult and can result in declining support for the democratic system (McCoy et al., 2018; Mouffe, 2008). The literature on identity leadership (Haslam et al., 2020; Mols et al., 2023) shows that political leaders fuel societal and political oppositions between groups by strategically claiming social identities (Maskor et al., 2021). Although the literature rooted in the Social Identity Theory's (SIT) tradition gives insight into when the strategic use of (hate) speech may endanger democratic societies (Ntontis et al., 2024; Pettersson, 2019; Verkuyten, 2013), this is limited to the analysis of the rhetoric of populist radical-right politicians. In contrast, this study builds on the work of Uysal and colleagues (2022), who claim that populism should not be seen as a characteristic of specific PLs or parties, but as a discursive strategy applied by politicians from all over the political spectrum. In that light, this study analyzes how the strategic use of identity by diverse PLs might enable antagonistic polarization. We use the Dutch case, examining the strategic use of social identity within a multi-party political system in order to broaden the scope of the literature on this topic.

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, we analytically illustrate how left-, center, and right-wing PLs engage in promulgating identity claims that may enable antagonistic polarization. To do so, we apply elements of the critical discursive approach of Van Dijk (1998, 2006) alongside insights from the Five Step Social Identity Model of the Development of Collective Hate (Reicher et al., 2008), and the work of Haslam and colleagues (2020, 2022) on identity leadership and specifically on identity entrepreneurship. Second, we argue how a discursive approach can enrich the identity leadership theory as rooted in SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and social categorization theories (SCT, Turner et al., 1987). When combined, these steps provide an examination of (1) how PLs make themselves "category prototypes" by means of identity-claims, (2) how they draw "category boundaries" between us and them, and (3) in which ways PLs create systematic differences between groups in terms of we are good and they are bad by deploying discursive strategies (Haslam et al., 2022; Van Dijk, 2006). We apply the steps to the texts of eight political events of ten PLs in the Netherlands before and after the Parliamentary election in March 2021.

In contrast to the US's two-party political system where polarization is often studied, the Dutch democracy is politically fragmented and governed by multiple parties. In fact, after the 2021 elections, the number of center-right, radical-right, center-left, and left political parties in the Second Chamber expanded to 17 (Stichting KiezersOnderzoek Nederland, 2021). The Second Chamber is represented by the Cabinet (or coalition), which is led by an appointed prime-minister (PM) of (usually) the biggest party (Besamusca, 2010). Which parties form the coalition depends on the results of the national elections and the Cabinet negotiations. The election determines which 150 politicians comprise the Second Chamber; subsequently, an appointed negotiator constructs a coalition agreement among the parties who will govern the country. The governing parties must have more than 50% of the 150 parliamentary seats; therefore, smaller parties may also be included in the coalition. The parties outside the coalition are called the opposition (Arwine & Mayer, 2013).

In this article, we first outline a conceptual framework of the aforementioned concepts and then engage in a stepped analytical approach to assess how PLs across the political spectrum might enable antagonistic polarization while strategically making identity claims.

Conceptual Framework

Polarization has the potential to weaken the governability, social cohesion, and democratic processes within societies worldwide (McCoy et al., 2018). Fortunately, not all polarization does. Political polarization, the polarization on political issues and the ideological distance between political parties, is largely considered to be beneficial for democracies (Campbell, 2016). To identify when polarization endangers or weakens democratic systems, we need to look beyond political polarization and conceptualize polarization as both a political and a relational process rooted in affect and identity (Iyengar et al., 2019). When polarization extends beyond the political realm and the animosity enters other aspects of social relations, causing citizens to increasingly dislike and distrust those with other political preferences, affective polarization is evident (Iyengar et al., 2019; McCoy et al., 2018). Affective polarization intertwines identity, interests, and attitudes with political viewpoints (McCoy & Somer, 2019).

Nevertheless, not all affective polarization endangers democratic societies; like Mouffe (2016), we differentiate between “agonistic” (struggle among adversaries) and “antagonistic” (struggle among enemies) affective polarization. The difference lies in how the “other” is referenced. Adversaries are defined in political terms as opponents within the democratic system; enemies are defined in moral terms as foes threatening our existence (Mouffe, 2008, 2016). The latter may enable antagonistic polarization, a series of processes by which the normal multiplicity of variances in societies are boiled down to a single dimension and make “people increasingly perceive and describe politics and society in terms of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’” (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 18).

In our view, leadership plays a crucial role in the development of these processes. Therefore, we argue, based on identity leadership (Haslam et al., 2022) and the social identity approach to leadership (Van Knippenberg, 2023), that leaders use social identity as a political tool to convince followers they are part of the group they seek to represent and to create opposition between us and them. Reicher and colleagues' Five Step Model (2008) explains that social identity is crucial in understanding why, how, and when groups display hostility towards each other, as it plays a key role in forming and spreading outgroup hatred. The model shows how for the benefit of their in-group, people are prepared to commit inhumane acts (Reicher et al., 2008).

According to the Five Step Model, the development of collective hate starts with (1) the identification with an in-group. As SIT shows, this entails the positive self-definition of people in terms of group-membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A shared social identification, an individual's sense of internalized group-membership, and an associated feeling of “we-ness” makes people feel they belong to an in-group (Tajfel, 1972). Next, (2) is the exclusion of targets outside the in-group. Creating an in-group also means placing others outside the group. SCT explains this as defining category boundaries, group-distinctiveness, and formulating who does and does not belong to the in-group (Hornsey, 2008). Collective hatred comes into being when (3) the out-group is framed as a threat endangering the existence of the in-group. Importantly, out-group hatred is actively constructed in each situation and can be seen as a way to simplify and organize the differences between us and them (Reicher et al., 2008). Furthermore, to enhance the moral self-esteem of groups (4) the differences between the in- and out-group are portrayed in terms of us as (inherently) good and them as bad (Van Stekelenburg, 2014). Lastly, the development of collective hate is complete when (5) groups celebrate the defeat of the out-group. This means that immoral collective acts can be celebrated, because the good in-group needs to be defended against the dangerous out-group (Reicher et al., 2008).

Using insights from the Five Step Model and the theory of identity leadership in the context of affective polarization, we theorize that political leaders use identity-claims to convince people they belong to the same in-group and that they are the best politicians to represent that group, and to portray others as outsiders undermining our identities. They do so by using pronouns such as we and us and phrases as “us Dutch people”, “our country”, and “we Social Democrats” (Mols et al., 2023). In order to be accepted as the identity leaders of specific social groups, political leaders need to be (1) “identity prototypes”, who need to be seen as one of us, (2) “identity champions” who are doing it for us, (3) “identity entrepreneurs”, who rhetorically refine and shape who we are, and (4) “identity impresarios”, who make us matter by performatively and creatively organizing local events to exemplify who they are to the world (Haslam et al., 2020).

How to Study Polarizing Political Rhetoric

The present study contributes to the research on political rhetoric and the discursive construction of us and others by proposing a stepped approach to analyze how Dutch PLs from across the political spectrum deploy discursive strategies which might enable antagonistic polarization. The research combines a critical discursive approach rooted in the sociocognitive approach to context (Van Dijk, 2009) with identity leadership derived from of the SIT and SCT traditions. Within the sociocognitive approach to context social identities are approached as something one “gradually adopts, grows into, etc., but also something one must ‘learn’, that is, social knowledge” (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 72). Within this view, social identities are understood as gradually constructed by the interaction and discourse surrounding social actors (Van Dijk, 2009). By combining the approaches, we clarify how diverse PLs construe not only their identity leadership (identity claims) but also shed light on the ways (discursive strategies) they define group distinction and enable antagonistic polarization.

We subject the speeches of ten PLs at eight different moments to three analytical steps based on their acts of identity entrepreneurship deriving out of identity leadership. We do so to examine the political rhetoric of politicians; the way PLs refine and shape the shared social identity of their followers (Haslam et al., 2022). Acts of identity entrepreneurship comprise the ways in which PLs describe who we are and by whom we are threatened, depersonalize others, and present themselves as collaborative partners in changing social reality (Choi et al., 2022; Mols et al., 2023; Reicher et al., 2005). We examine the following steps in the process: (1) the use of identity-claims by PLs making themselves indispensable category prototypes for the group; (2) how PLs draw category boundaries between us and them; and (3) the discursive ways in which PLs communicate the identity-claims that their political points appear to be those of “the people” (Haslam et al., 2020; Mols et al., 2023; Van Knippenberg, 2023).

Once the identity-claims of the PLs are identified in Step 1, Step 2 tackles the question how to differentiate the rhetoric strategies upon which they draw category boundaries between us and them. Which words are used to indicate the other as adversary or as enemy? Here we enter uncharted territory. Literature defining antagonistic rhetoric without reference to populism or radical-right is elusive. As mentioned, we examine how political leaders across the political spectrum produce antagonistic rhetoric as part of the political game. In general, antagonistic rhetoric is used to emphasize irreconcilable differences among groups of people (Braun, 2002). Antagonistic rhetoric can be found in the form of personal and political insults, sarcasm, and rhetorical figures such as hyperbole, labelling, and oxymorons (Gonawela et al., 2018). In this study, we define identity-claims as antagonistic when references to irreconcilable differences among groups of people are intended to maintain or replace the existing social configuration in society by ideas on mutually exclusive identity camps (Braun, 2002). In other words, while agonistic identity-claims leave room for discussion and acceptance of the different views of the other, antagonistic identity-claims undermine this democratic principle by portraying others as those who put the in-group’s identity into question, thereby threatening the existence of the in-group (Mouffe, 2016).

In step 3, to analyze how PLs strategically communicate their identity-claims, we turn to a critical discursive approach. This approach helps in understanding the world through language and the daily use and reproduction of ideologies (Van Dijk, 2006; Wetherell, 1998). Ideologies can be seen as the organizing principle to divide people and society in antagonistic terms (Van Dijk, 1998). As previous research on populist and radical-right discourse of politicians shows, there are multiple discursive strategies politicians deploy to construct inside (elites, political opponents) and outside (ethnic or religious minorities) enemies (Burns & Stevenson, 2013; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016; Verkuyten, 2013). In doing so, they often portray their enemies as being different, deviant, and posing a threat for the in-group (Van Dijk, 1993). Moreover, discursive strategies such as “reversal of victim-perpetrator positions”, scapegoating”, “conspiracy theories”, and “collective memory and nostalgia” enable these leaders to claim they represent the “ordinary people” while constructing a positive image of themselves acting on behalf of the people (Sakki & Pettersson, 2016). In this study, we analyze how PLs across the political spectrum deploy diverse discursive strategies to mark the difference between us and them.

Method

Material

We collected the political texts of ten PLs of right-, center, and left-wing parties of both coalition and opposition from eight political events prior to and following the March 2021 Parliamentary election. These ten parties all played a significant role in the electoral campaign by participating in (national) debates and hold more than one seat in the Second Chamber, both pre and post-election. See [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Information PLs and Parties

Party leaders (PLs)	Political party	Position	Election result (seats)
Esther Ouwehand (EO)	Party for the Animals (PvdD)	Left	Opposition (6)
Farid Azarkan (FA)	Political movement Denk (Denk)	Center-left	Opposition (3)
Geert Wilders (GW)	Party for Freedom (PVV)	Radical-right	Opposition (17)
Jesse Klaver (JK)	GreenLeft (GL)	Left	Opposition (8)
Lilian Marijnissen (LM)	Socialist Party (SP)	Left	Opposition (9)
Lilianne Ploumen (LP)	Labor Party (PvdA)	Left	Opposition (9)
Mark Rutte (MR) (Prime Minister)	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)	Center-right	Coalition (34)
Sigrid Kaag (SK)	Democrats 1966 (D66)	Center-left	Coalition (24)
Thierry Baudet (TB)	Forum for Democracy (FvD)	Radical-right	Opposition (8)
Wopke Hoekstra (WH)	Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)	Center-right	Coalition (15)

The data analyzed come from a variety of sources, including written statements on official party websites, speeches during debates in the Second Chamber, and spoken messages of PLs on social media platforms ([Table 2](#)). For each political event we analyzed similar texts per PL. All spoken texts were transcribed in Dutch and the analysis was conducted by the first author on the original Dutch-language speeches and statements. Afterwards, we translated the extracts highlighted in this study from Dutch to English. The length of the extracts varied for each political moment and per PL. The campaign video (Event 1) is the shortest entry, consisting of a couple of sentences, and the longest entry examined was a speech for the own followers (Event 7).

Table 2

Political Events

Political Event	Source	Date
1. Campaign	Campaign video	Pre election
2. Resignation of the Dutch government	Reaction on camera or statement party website	January 15, 2021
3. Reaction election results	Live reaction on camera	March 17, 2021
4. Position Omtzigt, job elsewhere	Fragment of debate House of Representatives	April 2, 2021
5. D66 leader Kaag lifts the blockade on ChristenUnie	Live reaction or spoken statement on own social media platforms (e.g. Youtube, Facebook)	September 30, 2021
6. Coalition agreement	Coalition: oral presentation Opposition: reaction in House of Representatives.	December 15, 2021
7. Speech for party followers	Video political congress or video for party followers	During 2021
8. Cabinet leaves Parliament in protest	Speech during General Political Reflections	September 21, 2022

These political events were chosen because they are illustrative of Dutch politics in 2021 and 2022. Our aim was to include moments before and after the March 2021 election. The first three events were obvious: our starting point was (1) analyze the texts of the campaign videos of the parties for the election. Shortly after the start of the campaign, there was (2) the Dutch political moment most discussed in domestic and foreign press in 2021: the resignation of the government due to the Dutch childcare benefits scandal. The discriminatory application of algorithms caused thousands of parents to be falsely accused of fraud by the Dutch tax authorities (European Parliament, 2022); this resulted in the fall of the Dutch Parliament. We included the reactions of the PLs as political texts. Another logical event to include (3) was the live reaction of the PLs on the election results.

The political events following the 2021 election were chosen from a selection of 20 key political moments in the Netherlands, as identified by nearly 25.000 people in the EenVandaag Opiniepanel. This is a political barometer in which a selection of 80.000 people across the Netherlands give their opinion on sociopolitical issues (EenVandaag, n.d.). The selection of the five events included in this study was based on the amount of media coverage and determined by the availability of texts of all PLs or their representatives. Based on these two steps we included, (4) the event called “position Omtzigt, job elsewhere” which comprises the unintentional disclosure of a sensitive political negotiation document during the coalition-negotiation. Chief negotiator Ollongren was photographed by the press while she (Ollongren) was carrying a document with the following words clearly visible: position Omtzigt, job elsewhere. Though Prime Minister Rutte denied having stated a desire to replace politician Omtzigt, later it became clear that he had done so (Valk, 2021). As a result and in accordance with the Dutch political process, the opposition brought a no-confidence motion against Rutte and accused him of lying in public (EenVandaag, n.d.).

Next, we included political event (5) in which Democrats 1966 (center-left) leader Kaag lifts the blockade on coalition-formation with a Christian party. Kaag instituted the blockade during the coalition-negotiations because of fundamental disagreements on medical-ethical issues such as abortion and euthanasia and stated that she wanted to govern “over left” with left-wing parties such as GreenLeft and the Labor Party (Meijer, 2021). Because of this decision, a majority could not be reached. This blockade was in place for several months; eventually she lifted the blockade in September 2021 and the coalition could be formed. A logical next political event was (6) the presentation of the coalition-agreement by the coalition parties and reaction of the opposition parties.

Because this study focusses on social identity, we also added (7) a text of a political event such as a congress or a video made in 2021 for the own party followers. Finally, we included (8) the most impactful political event of 2022, according to a poll of the EenVandaag Opiniepanel, “Cabinet leaves Parliament in protest”. Nearly 30.000 people participated in the 2022 poll. This event entails the first time in Dutch history the entire Cabinet walked out of the debate in the House of Representatives. The walk-out was triggered by TB’s (Forum for Democracy, radical-right) accusations that SK (Democrats 1966, center-left) had studied at a spy (Oxford) college (Den Dool & de Witt Wijnen, 2022).

Atlas.ti was used to structure the analysis of the 80 texts. All texts were labeled with the initials of the PLs and numbered according to the event (see Table 2). We labeled the quotes accordingly, using the abbreviation of the PLs, the political party, and political position. For example, “LM6 (Socialist Party, left)” refers to the text of Lilian Marijnissen during event six (the coalition agreement). There are two important exceptions: during event six there was no statement from TB (Forum for Democracy, radical-right) and during the scope of data collection, the PLs of three political parties (Labor Party/left, Democrats 1966/center-left, Christian Democratic Appeal/center-right) changed between event seven and eight. Therefore, the texts of the new PL or a representative of the party were analyzed using the same abbreviation.

Analytical Steps

As mentioned, all texts were subjected to three analytical steps inspired by the concept of identity entrepreneurship. In the first step, we specified the identity-claims, that is how PLs make themselves category prototypes by using pronouns such as we, referring to collective self-understanding of people (Mols et al., 2023). The texts were searched for personal pronouns used by PLs to address social identities. This step was executed by thoroughly reading and searching the texts for pronouns and references to social identities using terms such as I in combination with we, you, our, us, they, their, and them and exploring whether these words were followed by rhetoric to address social identities. In other words,

we collected personal pronouns followed by phrases and text passages referring to the collective self-understanding. In addition, the texts were searched for words and phrases which indicate that PLs claim to represent a specific group as in the following examples: (1) “.. and – I say as a young parent..” (SK8, Democrats 1966, center-left), (2) “... our country is only being destroyed further.” (GW6, Party for Freedom, radical-right), and (3) “...I understand what is going on in the Netherlands, in the villages and in the cities and I will stand up for you..” (LP1, Labor Party, left).

In the second step, we zoomed in on how PLs draw category boundaries by redefining followers’ shared idea of who does or does not belong to us (Haslam et al., 2020). We did so by coding the identity-claims following Mouffe’s distinction between agonistic rhetoric in which others are considered opponents, and antagonistic rhetoric in which others are considered enemies. The latter happens when the others’ right to defend their ideas is questioned and when the sentiment that those others threaten our collective self-identity arises (Mouffe, 2008). Additionally, identity-claims are often made in implied, hidden, denied, or assumed ways. To understand this layering within agonistic and antagonistic identity-claims, we differentiated between explicit and implicit claims. For an identity-claim to be called explicit, a PL clearly mentions the opponent or enemy in the text. If this is not the case, it is an implicit identity-claim. This results in four categories: (1) explicit antagonistic, (2) explicit agonistic, (3) implicit antagonistic, and (4) implicit agonistic.

In the third step, we examined how PLs strategically use social identities by identifying which discursive strategies they deployed while constructing a positive image of us and a negative image of them (Mols et al., 2023). We did so by labelling the discursive strategies used to express identity-claims as political and rhetoric tools, as “discursive patterns or ‘ways of talking’ about the ‘other’” (Augoustinos & Every, 2007, p. 124). These strategies can undermine the position of the political opponent or outline the own moral position. Our aim here was to identify how the discourse of the other was constructed by the politicians and whether this construction might enable antagonistic polarization.

Results

Step 1: Identifying Identity Claims Which Create Category Prototypes

We found 249 unique identity-claims in the examined data. That is to say, 249 pronouns such as I in combination with you, we, us, they, them, our people, our nation followed by phrases and text passages in which PLs refer to the collective self-understanding of people and present themselves as prototypical for their followers (Mols et al., 2023). As expected, from an identity leadership perspective all ten PLs voice identity-claims to connect with their own followers via social identity. For example, JK (GreenLeft, left) makes the apparent claim of being “one of us” in a response to the resignation of the government due to the Dutch childcare benefits scandal when he discusses being a father:

(..) I am a father of 3 children myself. (..) the most important thing in my life are my children. And what touches me most in all the stories I have heard is the effect this has had on children, families that have fallen apart, children who have suffered (..) (JK2).

In contrast, FA (Political Movement Denk, center-left) aligns himself with all Dutch people struggling to pay high gas bills due to the war in Ukraine:

My mother single-handedly raised seven children (..) We were not well off. As a child you didn't really notice that, but I did see how my mother made a pot of soup and put some old bread in it to fill it up a bit, so that everyone had enough (FA8)

Of the 249 claims, nine could not be assigned since they are not made in opposition to others. They include phrases such as “(..) we are here not for ourselves, but for the Netherlands. For Dutch people” (MR4, People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, center-right). The remaining 240 identity-claims are subjected to further analysis.

Step 2: Draw Category Boundaries

In the second step, the 240 identity-claims are assigned to the following categories: explicit antagonistic (70), explicit agonistic (79), implicit antagonistic (5), and implicit agonistic (86). These claims illustrate how PLs draw category

boundaries between us and them whereby they redefine the shared self-understanding of who we are (Haslam et al., 2022).

Explicit Agonistic and Antagonistic Identity-Claims

An identity-claim is called explicit when the PL clearly mentions the opponent or enemy in the text. We talk about agonistic claims when others are seen as opponents whose ideas need to be (politically) resisted, but the others' right to defend their ideas is not questioned. Identity-claims are called antagonistic when others are not only treated as enemies who need to be defeated but also as the ones who question the in-group's identity and endanger its existence. Emphasizing the danger posed by the out-group to the in-group poisons the relationship between the groups to such an extent that an antagonistic situation is created (Mouffe, 2016). An example of the agonistic category can be found in a statement of LM7 (Socialist Party, left). She represents "ordinary people" by saying "we know people and know their problems" and promotes honest politics against the "Hague clique", the term by which she refers to the other political parties. The same category is applicable to the identity-claim of LP (Labor Party, left), who states during a debate in the House of Representatives that we [the Dutch people] deserve more than the current political leadership demonstrates:

(..) Our country, we deserve better. As leader of the largest party, Prime Minister Rutte has taken the lead in the formation (..) but it has degenerated into untruths and chaos" (LP4).

In contrast, we assign the antagonistic category to the claim of GW (Party for Freedom, radical-right), representing the inhabitants of the Netherlands by talking about "everything that is dear to us". He states that the four PLs of the coalition are responsible for "the destruction of the Netherlands" and that they are the cause of "multiple types of crises":

(..) Four PLs who are responsible for the destruction of the Netherlands, for giving away everything that is dear to us: our culture, our money, our houses, our care. They have gifted the Netherlands with multiple types of crises (..) (GW6).

This example illustrates antagonistic claims, as the coalition is blamed for the in-group's situation and threatens our existence. With this claim, GW presents himself as a category prototype of the people. The content of his message appears not to be his personal agenda, but the voice of the ordinary people (Pettersson, 2019). In another example, TB (Forum for Democracy, radical-right) represents "real people" by talking about us and stands up for our rights against the whims of the inside-enemy "the elite". The elite is the coalition whom he blames for the circumstances in the Netherlands. TB emphasizes how the hatred of freedom by the coalition motivates them to limit the individual freedom of the real people:

According to the deepest conviction of the elites who rule us, human freedom is a danger and human nature is a danger. (..) They believe in humanity 2.0. Inextricably linked to this, these people hate existing individual freedom. They hate humanity 1.0. That is, real people (TB8).

The citations illustrate the difference between explicit agonistic and antagonistic claims. Additionally, claims are also promulgated in implicit; implied, hidden, or presupposed ways.

Implicit Agonistic and Antagonistic Identity-Claims

An identity-claim is called implicit because of two reasons. First, PLs represent us in an indirect way. For example, GW2 (Party for Freedom, radical-right) indirectly represents the "people at home" during the resignation of the Cabinet by blaming the latter for the miserable political situation of the Netherlands after "destroying the lives of thousands of people" in the childcare benefits scandal. The representation is implicit because GW places himself as aligned with the people by saying that he thinks the people at home will not understand it if the Cabinet does not resign. An identity-claim is implicitly antagonistic when the PLs implicitly refer to us and utilize words and phrases with strong negative connotations such as the "breakdown" of the Netherlands (JK2, Green Left, left) or "destroy", "dark", or "hatred".

Second, a claim is called implicit when PLs do not clearly indicate who they consider as their political opponents or enemies. This is especially unclear in the identity-claims of the coalition leaders. For example, these leaders are critical about past policy but remain rather vague as to whom they hold responsible for the situation, even though they themselves have been members of the previous Cabinet. SK (Democrats 1966, center-left) indirectly criticizes the old coalition and suggests that she can do better for our country:

(..) We can continue to do what we have been doing, but my prediction is that we will get an even worse result. (..) The real choice is to choose for a future in which our country becomes generous, fair, just, and equal again (SK7).

Below, FA (Political Movement Denk, center-left) blames the right-wing parties for the harsh (discriminatory) climate in the Netherlands and he implicitly represents the left-wing parties who strive for inclusion:

The Netherlands is becoming increasingly right-wing. That harsh climate, (..), how those parties consider people with a migration background, refugees, but also strive against social services in our country; that's painful. (..) And we will continue to fight against that inequality (FA3).

The implicitness in these claims is expressed by framing expectations, “you expect from such an agreement it contains a fundamental vision about the future of work, about the security of income for the Dutch” (LP6, Labor Party, left) or asking questions, “how can those who caused the problems also be the solution?” (LM5, Socialist Party, left). Outlining the differences between not only agonistic and antagonistic claims, but also between explicit and implicit claims helps us to see how hidden or implied descriptions equally manifest specific ideological ideas, attitudes, morals, and antagonism about us and them. This nuance enables us to dive deeper into the structures of the texts and create a more complete image of the ways PLs negotiate their role and the social identities they reference. Overlooking this subtle language-use impedes us from considering the whole scope of antagonistic rhetoric voiced by politicians.

Step 3: Identifying Discursive Strategies

Just as analyzing pronouns alone is insufficient to assess whether an identity-claim is agonistic or antagonistic (Step 1), assigning identity-claims to categories of claims (Step 2) does not indicate whether claims might enable antagonistic polarization. For that, we need to consider the discursive strategies of PLs (Step 3). Discursive strategies are understood as acts of identity entrepreneurship which help to shape and redefine the shared self-understanding of followers (Mols et al., 2023). Based on the theory of identity leadership, we understand leadership as a mutual process produced by interactions among followers and leaders (Haslam et al., 2020). We analyze this relationship by using a critical discursive analysis (CDA) to argue that social identities are not only gradually constructed by leaders and followers but are also based on acquired social knowledge (Van Dijk, 2009). This knowledge is obtained by experience and discourse on social identities.

Discursive Strategies

Firstly, we subjected the identity-claims to CDA. We discovered 23 different discursive strategies proposed by Van Dijk (2006) which address in- and out-groups. Of those 23 strategies, 12 were deployed more than ten times by different PLs. For illustrative purposes, the four most frequently used strategies by PLs from across the political spectrum are outlined in this study. See Table 3.

Confirming Van Dijk's work on radical-right politicians such as GW (Party for Freedom) and TB (Forum for Democracy), we see that these PLs, in comparison to moderate PLs, more frequently choose strategies that cast people in a victimized role and dramatize the circumstances of the in-group. According to their words, the Dutch are being abandoned and discriminated against. In contrast, left-wing PLs such as LP (Labour Party) and LM (Socialist Party) apply strategies which set explicit norm-statements about what we should or not should do, defend human rights, criticize those who do not, and emphasize the positive in-group characteristics. We see that PLs from the political opposition are more often inclined to use strategies that dramatize the circumstances of the in-group (54 vs 0) however, both opposition and coalition PLs highlight positive in-group characteristics (49 vs 33).

Table 3*Discursive Strategies*

Identity claims	Discursive strategies			
	Victimization	Populism	Norm-expression	Positive self-presentation
Explicit antagonistic	Radical-right: 11 Center-left: 1 Left: 2	Radical-right: 14 Center-left: 1 Left: 1	Center-left: 3 Left: 2	Center-left: 1 Left: 2
Implicit antagonistic		Radical-right: 1		
Explicit agonistic	Radical-right: 1 Left: 2	Radical-right: 3 Left: 13	Center-right: 1 Center-left: 4 Left: 8	Center-left: 2 Left: 12
Implicit agonistic		Radical-right: 2 Left: 2	Radical-right: 2 Center-right: 5 Center-left: 7 Left: 7	Center-right: 9 Center-left: 5 Left: 9
Identity claims			Center-right: 3	
Total	17	37	42	40

Below we elaborate the discursive strategies “victimization”, “populism”, “norm-expression”, and “positive self-presentation”.

Victimization

Victimization relies heavily on the presentation of others in a negative and threatening way; at the same time, the in-group is portrayed as a victim. This is usually done by using “standard” or “ready-made” arguments called topoi, such as “immigration is destroying the country” (Van Dijk, 2006). PLs use different discursive formulations to portray insiders and outsiders in ways that problematize and marginalize them (Augoustinos & Every, 2007). Within this strategy, the ideological content of the message may mostly be tacitly presupposed. This means that only part of the actual meaning of the message is expressed and that followers can interpret the unspoken text of the message because they belong to the same in-group (Van Dijk, 2006). What we see is that this does not mean the claims are made in implicit ways; on the contrary, all 17 claims we found are explicitly agonistic and antagonistic. The following example is by TB (Forum for Democracy, radical-right):

(..) For years I have seen how our society is being destroyed. And for years I have been fighting that destruction. I fight against mass immigration, which is distorting our societies and causing crime, insecurity, disruption of our social system and a disastrous housing crisis (TB8).

The words that are left unspoken but ideologically implied in the message of TB are how foreigners as outside enemies are given more benefits than Dutch people. The Dutch people are the victims of immigration because they are denied housing, pay taxes for the benefit of the others, and are left with a society in which criminality is prevalent. In addition, GW (Party for Freedom, radical-right) points to the inside enemy by saying, at the commencement of the Ukraine-war in 2022, how the Cabinet is destroying the lives of the ordinary Dutch people:

Now, in 2022, the misery comes from within, because there, in section C [Cabinet], they are: those who are now desperately plunging the Netherlands into deep misery and leaving the people

helpless. Because the Netherlands is bleeding. Our country is in decline. We are being completely destroyed (GW8).

Populism

Populism as discursive strategy constitutes the outings of PLs who claim to represent “the people” or “everybody” against the elite. As [Uysal and colleagues \(2022\)](#) outline, and in accordance with the current thinking about identity leadership, populism is here approached as a political rhetorical strategy which can be adopted by any PL at any moment, rather than viewed as a characteristic of a specific leader or party. From this perspective, all PLs can deploy populism as a strategy by explicating the difference between the people as the good versus the elite as the bad. Often, this strategy thrives on encouraging antagonism between camps and usually the people are portrayed as victims of, for example, bad policy. However, in contrast to victimization, the analysis shows how populism employs terms such as ordinary people combined with the suffering of the in-group imposed by the elite:

(..) The real problems such as immigration, asylum, Islamization and care are not addressed. The cowardice will govern again and we as PVV will not accept that the ordinary Dutchman will once again be the victim of all these terrible plans (GW6).

Words such as “ordinary Dutchman”, the people, “the Dutchman” and phrases such as “I know what is going on in the Netherlands and I will stand up for you” (LP1, Labor Party, left) are used to underscore populist strategies. Additionally, this strategy often goes hand in hand with the idea that the ordinary people support the argument the PL expresses ([Van Dijk, 2006](#)). For example:

The Dutchman asks us as a Chamber to provide solutions to problems and challenges. (..). Because Rutte has lied, we cannot talk about the tens of thousands of victims and how they can be compensated as quickly as possible. (..). (FA4, Political Movement Denk, center-left).

Though victimization and populism are more often deployed by right-wing PLs, the data confirms that both strategies are also adopted by left-wing politicians (32 vs 22). This suggests that victimization and populism need to be approached as strategies rather than leadership characteristics. Our data shows that right- and left-wing PLs employ these strategies to explicitly point out the negative behaviour of the other but in different ways. Of the 32 times radical-right PLs applied the strategies, 25 times they did so to promulgate explicit antagonistic claims (78%). Of the 22 times left-wing PLs used these strategies, 15 times they did so to promulgate explicit agonistic claims (68%). Furthermore, what we do see is that once claims are made antagonistically, other PLs will also do so.

For example, the term “doctrine” evolved from a rather neutral term in a report of the childcare benefit scandal of the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee in December 2020 to a claim about how the current government victimizes the Dutch people. Primarily, the term is used to address MR’s (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, center-right) vision that not all internal discussions between civil servants and ministers should be shared with the House of Representatives ([Parlementaire ondervragingscommissie Kinderopvangtoeslag, 2020](#)). Shortly after, the term was picked up by TB2 (Forum for Democracy, radical-right), and surfaces in the antagonistic claims of LM4 (Labor Party, left), and FA4 (Political Movement Denk, center-left) to clarify how MR and his party are no good for the country and represent a “dark doctrine” in which “the government treats her citizens as enemy” (EO2, Party for the Animals, left).

Norm-Expression

Norm-expression is the use of normative statements about what an in-group should or should not do in comparison to others. It is a way of connecting in-group norms, morals, and values to representative in-group behaviour to create mutual solidarity and collective out-group negativity ([Reicher et al., 2005](#)). While setting the norm for the in-group, PLs critique others. LP (Labor Party, left), illustrates how it is all about what “we of the Labor Party find decent to do in comparison to the coalition parties who will continue on their disastrous path”:

(..) The good thing is that with our plans there will be more jobs, purchasing power will increase, and the economy will grow. (..). That is fair and decent (..). If [the current leadership] gets a majority, they will continue on their disastrous path (..) (LP1).

In another example, norm-expression is used to highlight which behavior should not be accepted. EO (Party for Animals, left) talks about “the respect parties should have for the rule of law and that lying is unacceptable”:

(..) we can only form a new government with parties that respect the rule of law. (..) The actions of MR give very little confidence, they simply cannot participate. Lying is unacceptable (EO4).

This strategy is used to highlight the negative behaviour of the other (e.g. lying), the misunderstandings of the Cabinet, and the lack of trust in the other. The norm rejects the behaviour of the other and sets the norm for the behaviour the in-group follows or should follow. The PL is presented as the reasonable and reliable partner who lacks any blame for the country’s political situation; simultaneously, the PL is portrayed as the person who knows what is best for the country and can identify the incorrect moral behaviour of others.

Positive Self-Presentation

Positive self-presentation is another strategy by which PLs actively shape a positive collective self-understanding of the in-group by praising their own leadership, the party they represent, or Dutch people in general (Van Dijk, 2006). PLs emphasize the positive characteristics of their own party or country to define and defend the group they represent. It is often accompanied by negative other-presentation. For example, SK (Democrats 1966, center-left) states that D66 is the only real education party and the only progressive party taking responsibility (SK7) and LP (Labor Party, left) declares how the Labour Party is “the only party choosing for change, for unity, and they know how that is done”:

(..). We choose for cooperation. We do not just stand together because we can offer hope to all those people who yearn for change. (..). Social Democrats know things have to change and together we can do that (LP7).

As Van Dijk (2006) illustrates, positive self-presentation is essentially ideological because it defines what we stand for, which is done in multiple ways. For example, with an emphasis on honesty, “we also made mistakes”, (JK2 Greenleft, left), justice, “these people earn the least, so their wages need to rise”, (LM7, Socialist Party, left), support of human rights, “DENK (..) works together against institutional racism and discrimination” (FA7, Political Movement Denk, center-left), empathy with the people, “a country in which you have more certainties for our middle class, (..) the backbone of our country”, (WH7, Christian Democratic Appeal, center-right), setting the right example “we do it differently, we choose for cooperation”, (LP7, Labor Party, left), and an emphasis on the exceptional position of the party, “we are the biggest party (..) the second oldest party of the Netherlands”, (MR7, People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, center-right).

What we see is that identity-claims expressed by norm-expression and positive self-presentation appeal to a positive collective self-image of the group. The strategies help leaders to shape and redefine the group’s moral ideologies and aim to label their own behaviour as exceptional and morally desirable. These strategies are almost only deployed by left-wing PLs (80) but also applied by right-wing PLs (2). Of the 82 times these strategies were applied, 44 times the strategies have been used to promulgate implicit agonistic claims; 42 of these 44 claims derive from left, center-left, and center-right and two from radical-right PLs. In contrast to victimization and populism, which are often used by radical-right PLs to express antagonistic claims, left, center-left, and center-right PLs often use norm-expression and positive self-presentation to express agonistic identity-claims (69) rather than antagonistic claims (8).

Altogether, we see that the analytical steps of (1) counting identity-claims, (2) appointing identity-claims, and (3) identifying discursive strategies shed light on the acts of identity entrepreneurship of PLs and on when the discursive use of social identities may enable antagonistic polarization.

The findings suggest that strategies involving the own group’s ideologies and morals produce more agonistic rhetoric. Strategies focused on the negative behaviour of others are often accompanied by assumed threats for the collective self-identity and produce more antagonistic rhetoric, which may enable antagonism. However, we cannot

definitively establish which PLs contribute to decreased or increased levels of polarization within society. Clearly, all PLs voice identity-claims but claims alone do not endanger liberal democracies. To determine whether the rhetoric of PLs might endanger liberal democracies, we need to consider the broad scope of identity-claims (implicit and explicit) and the political context in which rhetoric is voiced. The analysis confirms that PLs from across the political spectrum promulgate identity-claims and apply strategies which might enable antagonistic polarization. Interestingly, the position of the PLs on the political spectrum is correlated with the frequency of the use of these claims and strategies. The data shows that two radical-right PLs disseminate 26 antagonistic claims versus eight moderate PLs who promulgate 13 antagonistic claims. By combining the theory of identity leadership deriving out of the SIT and SCT traditions with a critical discursive approach, we see that the discursive functions of political rhetoric are crucial in order to analyze how all political leaders from time to time apply populist or antagonistic rhetoric. Therefore, we claim that all PLs may promulgate rhetoric which might enable antagonistic polarization within societies.

Discussion

This study sheds light on the Dutch political scene and illustrates the complexity of polarization in a multi-party political system. It makes an analytical contribution to the field on political rhetoric and the discursive construction of self and others by suggesting a three-step approach to examine how PLs across the political spectrum deploy discursive strategies which might enable antagonistic polarization. By combining insights from SIT and SCT in the form of the Five Step Model to Outgroup Hate (Reicher et al., 2008) and the work on identity leadership (Haslam et al., 2022) with a discursive approach (Van Dijk, 2006), our stepped analytical approach shows how social identities are employed by political leaders with acts of identity entrepreneurship (Step 1 and Step 2) in order to discursively instruct followers how to act and what to believe (Step 3).

First, we illustrated how PLs make themselves category prototypes by combining personal pronouns with phrases referring to collective self-understanding of groups. Second, we showed how category boundaries are drawn to describe who we are and by whom we are threatened by means of implicit, explicit, agonistic, and antagonistic identity-claims. An identity-claim is antagonistic when the other is considered as an enemy who threatens our identity and whose right to defend the own ideas is questioned (Mouffe, 2008). We named an identity-claim agonistic when the opponent is treated as a political ally whose ideas are accepted as a political alternative. In addition, the differentiation between explicit and implicit claims makes it possible to highlight how nuanced and implied language-use can also be called antagonistic and how PLs from across the political spectrum promulgate such claims.

Third, we identified how PLs within a multi-party system strategically deploy identity-claims by zooming in on four discursive strategies. Examining these strategies closely, we see that radical-right-wing PLs have a preference for strategies aimed at blaming the other for the precarious in-group situation, and moderate PLs of left, center-left, and center-right parties have a preference for strategies aimed at creating a positive and moral superior position of the self. The first appears to go hand in hand with more antagonistic identity-claims, while the latter goes hand in hand with agonistic claims.

By combining insights on acts of identity entrepreneurship from the identity leadership literature with a discursive approach, the present study shows some interesting nuances. In accordance with Uysal and colleagues (2022), the analysis shows that political rhetoric can be better understood as strategies or acts used by groups and leaders rather than as characteristics of leaders in the form of populist or antagonistic leadership. We see that PLs from across the political spectrum refine and shape the shared social reality of their followers by voicing antagonistic identity-claims although we cannot yet prove they actually cause antagonistic polarization in society. Additionally, it seems that PLs from the opposition are inclined to promulgate identity-claims with more accusatory strategies such as victimization and populism in comparison with coalition leaders. A logical explanation for this is that the coalition leaders are politically accountable for the situation of the country. Furthermore, the analysis shows how acts of identity entrepreneurship determine the content of the message (the what: identity-claim) and the manner of speaking (the how: discursive strategy), which combined makes it possible to grasp how implicit language can be labelled as antagonistic.

On the whole, the study illustrates how polarization is part of the political game and that antagonistic rhetoric is produced, reproduced, and legitimized by nuanced and implied language-use of PLs from across the political spectrum through the discursive structures they and their parties produce within a particular type of political system.

Shortcomings and Future Research

As mentioned, the analysis shown in this study shows four discursive strategies. These four strategies illustrate how social identities are strategically applied and how the strategic use of identities is multidimensional. We acknowledge that the identity-claims found in this study are the result of subjective interpretations as to what qualifies as an identity-claim. We have attempted to transparently and clearly explain our methods and requirements for statements to be defined as identity-claims, but we understand that especially the implicit identity-claims can be called into question by others. Furthermore, this study does not give insight into the ways in which the identity-claims and discursive strategies are received by society. We do not know whether these claims and strategies indeed change the social realities of people, let alone if the claims lead to decreased or increased levels of polarization. We invite future research on this issue.

Future research directions can include an examination of who are being influenced by the discursive strategies of political leaders, and in which ways that occurs. It is crucial to discover which part of the message appeals to which groups and how people act upon the claims they hear. An additional thought-provoking line of research is to identify how the rhetoric of political leaders resonates in the identities of young people in their formative years. We assume that such claims influence the way they develop their identities, however, how and in which ways is unknown. How do political leaders discursively influence the identity formation of young people in such polarized times? Are young people cognizant of the ways in which they are being influenced and what does this mean for in-group and out-group dynamics within societies?

Funding: This work was supported by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) under grant number 023.017.006.

Acknowledgments: The authors have no additional (i.e., non-financial) support to report.

Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Preregistration: The research and analysis plan is not preregistered in an independent institutional registry.

Data Availability: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon request.

References

- Arwine, A., & Mayer, L. (2013). *The changing basis of political conflict in advanced Western democracies: The politics of identity in the United States, the Netherlands, and Belgium*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137306654>
- Augoustinos, M., & Every, D. (2007). The language of “race” and prejudice: A discourse of denial, reason, and liberal-practical politics. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 26*(2), 123–141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X07300075>
- Besamusca, E. (2010). Citizens, coalitions and the crown. In E. Besamusca & J. Verheul (Eds.), *Discovering the Dutch: On culture and society of the Netherlands* (pp. 19-30). Amsterdam University Press.
- Braun, M. (2002). *Sovereignty, democracy, and the political economy of logos: A defense of antagonistic rhetoric* [Doctoral thesis, University of Arizona]. UA Campus Repository. <https://repository.arizona.edu/handle/10150/280036>
- Burns, M., & Stevenson, C. (2013). Deconstructing national leadership: Politicians’ accounts of electoral success and failure in the Irish Lisbon Treaty referenda. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 52*(1), 122–139. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02060.x>
- Campbell, J. E. (2016). *Polarized: Making sense of a divided America*. Princeton University Press.
- Carlin, R. E., Singer, M. M., & Zechmeister, E. J. (Eds.). (2015). *The Latin American voter: Pursuing representation and accountability in challenging contexts*. University of Michigan Press.

- Choi, S. Y., Liu, J. H., & Belgrave, M. (2022). Performing identity entrepreneurship during the colonisation of New Zealand: A rhetorical construction of 'loyal subjects of the empire'. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 10*(2), 760–776. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jsp.6477>
- Den Dool, P., & de Witt Wijnen, P. (2022, September 21). Beschouwingen zijn inhoudelijk... tot het incident met Baudet. *NRC*. <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2022/09/21/debat-is-inhoudelijk-tot-incident-a4142811>
- EenVandaag. (n.d.). *EenVandaag* Opiniepanel. <https://eenvandaag.avrotros.nl/panels/opiniepanel>
- European Parliament. (2022). *The Dutch childcare benefit scandal, institutional racism and algorithms*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/O-9-2022-000028_EN.html
- Gonawela, A., Pal, J., Thawani, U., van der Vlugt, E., Out, W., & Chandra, P. (2018). Speaking their mind: Populist style and antagonistic messaging in the tweets of Donald Trump, Narendra Modi, Nigel Farage, and Geert Wilders. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW), 27*(3-6), 293–326. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10606-018-9316-2>
- Haslam, S. A., Gaffney, A. M., Hogg, M. A., Rast, D. E., III, & Steffens, N. K. (2022). Reconciling identity leadership and leader identity: A dual-identity framework. *The Leadership Quarterly, 33*(4), Article 101620. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2022.101620>
- Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., & Platow, M. J. (2020). *The new psychology of leadership: Identity, influence and power* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351108232>
- Hornsey, M. J. (2008). Social identity theory and self-categorization theory: A historical review. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 2*(1), 204–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2007.00066.x>
- Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., & Westwood, S. J. (2019). The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science, 22*(1), 129–146. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051117-073034>
- LeBas, A. (2018). Can polarization be positive? Conflict and institutional development in Africa. *American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(1), 59–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218756923>
- Maskor, M., Steffens, N. K., & Haslam, S. A. (2021). The psychology of leadership destabilization: An analysis of the 2016 US Presidential Debates. *Political Psychology, 42*(2), 265–289. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12698>
- McCoy, J., Rahman, T., & Somer, M. (2018). Polarization and the global crisis of democracy: Common patterns, dynamics, and pernicious consequences for democratic polities. *The American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(1), 16–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218759576>
- McCoy, J., & Somer, M. (2019). Toward a theory of pernicious polarization and how it harms democracies: Comparative evidence and possible remedies. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 681*(1), 234–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218818782>
- Meijer, R. (2021, November 13). Kaag over formatie: 'We doen het goed of we doen het niet'. *deVolkskrant*. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/kaag-over-formatie-we-doen-het-goed-of-we-doen-het-niet-b9c95a29/>
- Mols, F., Haslam, S. A., Platow, M. J., Reicher, S. D., & Steffens, N. K. (2023). The social identity approach to political leadership. In L. Huddy, D. O. Sears, J. S. Levy, & J. Jerit (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 804–842). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197541302.013.21>
- Mouffe, C. (2008). Democratic politics and the dynamics of passion. In K. Palonen, T. Pulkkinen, & J. M. Rosales (Eds.), *The Ashgate research companion to the politics of democratization in Europe, concepts and histories* (pp. 89–100). Routledge.
- Mouffe, C. (2016). Democratic politics and conflict: An agonistic approach. *Política común, 9*. <https://doi.org/10.3998/pc.1232227.0009.011>
- Ntontis, E., Jurstakova, K., Neville, F., Haslam, S. A., & Reicher, S. (2024). A warrant for violence? An analysis of Donald Trump's speech before the US Capitol attack. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 63*(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12679>
- Parlementaire ondervragingscommissie Kinderopvangtoeslag. (2020). *Ongekend onrecht*. https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/20201217_eindverslag_parlementaire_ondervragingscommissie_kinderopvangtoeslag.pdf
- Pettersson, K. (2019). "Freedom of speech requires actions": Exploring the discourse of politicians convicted of hate-speech against Muslims. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 49*(5), 938–952. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2577>
- Reicher, S. D., Haslam, S. A., & Hopkins, N. (2005). Social identity and the dynamics of leadership: Leaders and followers as collaborative agents in the transformation of social reality. *The Leadership Quarterly, 16*(4), 547–568. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.06.007>

- Reicher, S., Haslam, S. A., & Rath, R. (2008). Making a virtue of evil: A five step social identity model of the development of collective hate. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(3), 1313–1344. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00113.x>
- Sakki, I., & Pettersson, K. (2016). Discursive constructions of otherness in populist radical right political blogs. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 46(2), 156–170. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2142>
- Stichting KiezersOnderzoek Nederland. (2021). *Versplinterde vertegenwoordiging*. <https://www.dpes.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NKO-2021-Versplinterde-vertegenwoordiging.pdf>
- Tajfel, H. (1972). La categorisation sociale [English trans.]. In S. Moscovici (Ed.), *Introduction à la psychologie sociale* (pp. 272-302). Larousse.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-47). Nelson-Hall.
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Blackwell.
- Uysal, M. S., Jurstakova, K., & Uluşahin, Y. (2022). An integrative social identity model of populist leadership. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 16(12), Article e12713. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12713>
- Valk, G. (2021, March 29). Onduidelijkheid over de ‘positie Omtzigt’-notitie blijft na brief van ex-verkeners. *NRC*. <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2021/03/29/onduidelijkheid-over-de-positie-omtzigt-notitie-blijft-na-brief-van-ex-verkeners-a4037662#handelsblad/2021/03/30/#102>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 249–283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. SAGE.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2006). *Ideology and discourse analysis*. Pompeu Fabra University.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2009). *Society and discourse: How social contexts influence text and talk*. Cambridge University Press.
- Van Knippenberg, D. (2023). Developing the social identity theory of leadership: Leader agency in leader group prototypicality. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 17(4), Article e12739. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12739>
- Van Stekelenburg, J. (2014). Going all the way: Politicizing, polarizing, and radicalizing identity offline and online. *Sociology Compass*, 8(5), 540–555. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12157>
- Verkuyten, M. (2013). Justifying discrimination of Muslim immigrants: Outgroup ideology and the five-step social identity model. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(2), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02081.x>
- Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and poststructuralism in dialogue. *Discourse & Society*, 9(3), 387–412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926598009003005>