Coping with Islamophobia: The effects of religious stigma on Muslim minorities' identity formation

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ABSTRACT

Islamophobic sentiments in the Western world have gained scientific attention, particularly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. However, the effects of religious stigma on Muslim minorities' identity formation have rarely been studied. Using structural equation modeling, this cross-sectional study examined direct and indirect effects of different forms of religious stigma on the national affiliation of 210 Norwegian-Pakistani and 216 German-Turkish Muslims. Furthermore, the study examined the mediator role of religious identity. Our results suggest that being a Muslim in Norway is more reconcilable with affiliating with the nation than being a Muslim in Germany. However, across the samples, the results indicated that various forms of religious stigma affected Muslims' national identity and engagement in the public and private sphere in distinct ways. These effects were both positive and negative, differed between the two samples, and in Germany, were mediated by the participants' religious identity. The findings indicated that the ways in which religious stigma influences Muslims' national affiliation is context and culture bound.

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1. Introduction

Anti-Muslim and islamophobic sentiments in the Western world have gained increased scientific attention following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks (Sirin & Balsano, 2007). Although the identity formation of ethnic minorities in general has been a frequent topic of research, the effects of religious stigma on the identity formation of Muslims living in societies that are suspicious of Islamic beliefs have been a neglected topic. Accordingly, this study set out to explore the extent to which perceptions of an islamophobic society, experiences of religious discrimination and negative representations of Muslims in the media influence Muslims' religious identity, national identity and national engagement in a group of Norwegian-Pakistani and German-Turkish[1] Muslims.

1.1. Rise of Islamophobia in the western world

While the religious composition of many Western European countries have remained stable over long periods of time, increasing south-north migration in recent years is contributing to the development of multireligious societies (Simon, 2004). Many of the immigrants come from countries where Islam is the majority religion, and currently, between 13 and 14 million people living in Western Europe have Muslim backgrounds (Maréchal, 2002). The changing intranational religious

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[1] In order to reflect their hyphenated cultural backgrounds, the participants in the present study are referred to as Norwegian-Pakistanis and German-Turks.

composition of many European countries, however, is not embraced by everyone. As Poynting and Mason (2007) point out, there has been a shift "from anti-Asian and anti-Arab racism to anti-Muslim racism" (p. 61) and this has been heightened following the terror attacks of 9/11. Likewise, political debates have increasingly focused on questions regarding Muslim immigrants, who are often seen as difficult to integrate (Field, 2007), whereas right-wing political parties and individuals in many countries have promoted the idea of insurmountable cultural differences, creating an atmosphere of hostility (Betz & Meret, 2009).

The term 'Islamophobia', which was reportedly introduced at the end of the 1980s (Runnymede Trust Commission, 1997), has increasingly been used to describe this fear of Islam and of Muslims as a social group. Furthermore, various studies and reports have reported a rise of Islamophobia in many Western majority populations and in Western media (e.g., EUMC, 2006; Poynting & Mason, 2006; Saeed, 2007).

1.2. From anti-immigrant to anti-Muslim: the emergence of Islamophobia in Germany and Norway

In Germany, immigration has been the subject of highly charged and partly inflammatory political discourse over the last four decades (Thränhardt, 1995). Since the beginning of the 21st century, public discourse on immigration has increasingly focused on Muslims and Islam as a major challenge to "liberal democracy and Germany's political order" (Bauder & Semmelroggen, 2009, p. 20). A 2004 opinion poll in Germany indicated that a vast majority of the participants associated Islam with terror and with the oppression of women. Moreover, more than half of the respondents did not believe in the peaceful coexistence of Christianity and Islam (Noelle, 2004; PEW Research Center, 2006).

This development ultimately peaked in August 2010, when ThiloSarrazin, a representative of the German Social Democratic Party, in a bestselling book stated that migration from Islamic countries constitutes a major threat to the European cultural model and that Muslim migrants generally are uninterested in education, unwilling to integrate and a threat to the nation.

Although Sarrazin's views were spurned and criticized by some, they seemed to reflect the Zeitgeist. In recent representative opinion polls, about half of the German participants agreed with Sarrazin's statements, and nearly 20% indicated that they would vote for a political party with Sarrazin as a leader (Consumer field work, 2010; Silalahi, 2010). Moreover, an opinion poll published in 2010 showed that most participants agreed with the statement that "Muslims' religious practice in Germany should be substantially restricted" (Decker, Weißmann, Kiess, & Brähler, 2010). Finally, the recently appointed interior minister, Hans-Peter Friedrich, publicly asserted that "Islam does not belong to Germany" (Vitzthum, 2011).

In Norway, since the 1980s, negative attitudes against immigration have received increased public attention and support from the majority population (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1999; Blom, 2009). As in other Western countries, Muslims in Norway have received a lot of attention in the media following 9/11, reaching its climax in 2006, when the Norwegian magazine "Magazinet" reprinted the Danish caricatures of the prophet Mohammed, which caused Muslims all over the world to protest (Steien, 2008). As a result, questions related to the compatibility of Islam with basic Norwegian societal values have repeatedly been raised, specifically dealing with Muslim women's veiling practices, oppression of women, freedom of speech and democracy in general (ECRI, 2009). Not surprisingly, increasing numbers of Norwegians are skeptical to Muslim immigrants and immigration (IMDi, 2007). On the 22nd of July 2011, the terror attacks by Anders Behring Breivik, a self-declared Islam-hater and enemy of multiculturalism, tragically indicate that these sentiments also have become part of the Norwegian society in a radicalized form.

Norwegian-Pakistanis and German-Turks constitute the largest Muslim minority groups and the largest non-Western groups of labor immigrants in their respective countries. However, whereas nearly 55% of the Norwegian-Pakistanis possess a Norwegian passport (Statistics Norway, 2010), only about one fourth of the German-Turks have a German passport (German Federal Foreign Office, 2010), suggesting that the naturalization process of labor migrants to Europe has come a longer way in Norway.

Lastly, German-Turks and Norwegian-Pakistanis are often seen as unsuccessful minority groups compared to other ethnic minorities. Several reports have described both groups as poorly integrated in light of their high unemployment rates, low academic achievements and relatively poor proficiency in the national language (see, e.g., Daugstad, 2008; German Federal Statistical Office, 2007; also see Table 9 of Statistics Norway, 2009).

1.3. Identity formation of stigmatized minority groups with a migrational background

For immigrants in plural societies, the task of reconciling their cultural and ethnic heritage with a new national identity constitutes a central issue (Sam & Berry, 2010). The process of acquiring a national identity does not imply that immigrants abandon their cultural roots. Rather, according to Stepick and Stepick (2002), given that the new country encourages cultural variation, immigrants become part of the multicultural composition within the nation's territory. Thus, immigrants can maintain their cultural identity while adopting a new national identity.

In a settlement society where cultural diversity is not celebrated, immigrants may perceive their cultural identity as being derided and may experience discrimination, negative stereotypes and prejudice based on their group membership. In this regards, because individuals' self-concepts are based to a large extent on their social identities derived from various group memberships (see, e.g., Brown, 2000), individuals who perceive that they lack the resources to deal with being a target of stigma may experience threats to their selves (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002). When individuals face identity threats, they

employ diverse coping strategies. One strategy is to trivialize stigma-related events by simply diminishing the discriminatory value of a potential stressor (Major et al., 2002). Nevertheless, members of groups that are chronic targets of discrimination may be highly vigilant to stigma (Major et al., 2002) and may not be able to simply minimize the discriminatory value of an respective event. Conversely, they are likely to choose an "intropunitive or extropunitive focus" (Major et al., 2002, p. 257) by either attributing negative treatment to themselves or to external factors.

Another strategy to cope with identity threats may be to disengage from, and avoid identity-threatening domains (Major & O'Brien, 2005; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). However, research has also shown that individuals may choose the opposite approach. On the one hand, they may engage in counter-stereotypic behavior in an effort to appear as different from their stigmatized group (Steele et al., 2002). On the other hand, they may choose to further increase their engagement in threatening domains, developing innovative strategies to circumvent obstacles and to achieve positive outcomes (Miller & Major, 2003).

Yet another possible way of coping with identity threats is to alter one's identification with the stigmatized group. Although there is no consensus about the causal relation between individuals' group identification and the experience of stigma, altered group identification may result from, rather than predict identity threats (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). In this situation, individuals with a low group identity may further reduce their in-group identification when faced with stigma, whereas persons with a high group identity may increase their identification (Major & O'Brien, 2005).

In multicultural societies, the experience of stigma may crucially affect the formation of minorities' identities (Mähönen, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Liebkind, 2011). Two models have attempted to explain the consequences of stigma for minorities' identity formation. According to the rejection-identification model (RIM) developed by Branscombe et al. (1999), minority group members increase their group identity as a response to stigma. In contrast, in their rejection-disidentification model (RDIM), Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, and Solheim (2009) suggest that individuals decrease their national identification as a coping strategy. However, while the RIM model does not include multiple in-group identities and has only gained partial support in replication studies (see, e.g., Leach, Mosquera, Vliek, & Hirt, 2010), the RDIM was developed only recently and has not yet been tested in other studies to the best of our knowledge. Thus, the distinct effects of stigma on minorities' identity formation remain an area for future research.

Considering that many ethnic minorities are also members of religious minority groups, it is striking how little this emerging field has paid attention to religious identity. According to Foner and Alba (2008), religion can act as a mediator by helping minorities to cope with acculturative stress and social isolation, thereby easing their adaption to the society. Consequently, members of religious minority groups may strengthen their religious identity in order to cope with stigma-related experiences (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010).

1.4. Aim of the study and hypotheses

Given the societal climate and the aforementioned theoretical framework, Muslims may experience stigma based on their religious group membership, which, in turn, may affect their affiliation with the dominant society and with their religious group. To our knowledge, only Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007) and Sirin et al. (2008) have estimated these relations to date. In the Verkuyten and Yildiz study, religious identity negatively impacted the national identification of the Dutch-Turkish participants. Furthermore, perceived group rejection was found to be a positive predictor of religious identity, whereas it negatively predicted national identity. However, Sirin et al.'s study focused on U.S. Muslims from various ethnic backgrounds and their results indicated that the participants' religious identity was positively correlated with their national identity.

In short, the studies conducted so far do not provide an unambiguous finding of the influence of stigma on Muslim minorities' identity formation. Moreover, the studies have not explicitly distinguished between different mechanisms of stigma, which may vary in their strength of impact on different constructs measuring Muslims' national affiliation.

Against this background, the present study seeks a better understanding of how religious identity and religious stigma might influence Muslims' national identification and engagement. For religious stigma, we distinguished between religious meta-stereotypes, specifically perceived Islamophobia, religious discrimination and negative collective representations of Muslims in media. To investigate the degree to which these relations are universal or dependent on cultural and contextual factors, the study explicitly compared the experiences of the two largest Muslim minorities in two Western European countries, namely German-Turks and Norwegian-Pakistanis.

Specifically, we examine the following hypotheses:

1. Religious identity will be inversely related to national identification and engagement. Given the opinion climate in Norway and Germany, where being a Muslim is frequently presented as irreconcilable with being a member of the nation, we expected that participants would cope with a religious identity threat by decreasing their involvement in, and identification with their nation of residence.
2. The three stigma constructs (i.e., perceived Islamophobia, negative representations in media and religious discrimination) were expected to have *direct* negative effects on the participants' national identity and engagement. In other words, the various forms of religious stigma were expected to induce a religious identity threat, to which the participants would respond with national disengagement and disidentification.
3. All stigma constructs were expected to also have *indirect* negative effects on the outcome variables that are mediated by religious identity. When coping with a religious identity threat resulting from religious stigma, the respondents were

Table 1
General characteristics of the population.

Characteristic	Norway ($n = 210$)	Germany ($n = 216$)
Age, M (SD)[a]	25.1 (7.4)	23.7 (4.3)
Gender in female %	66.5	56.9
Civil status as single %	56.1	64.8
Socioeconomy, M (SD)[b]	4.5 (1.4)	4.2 (1.1)
Religious group		
Sunni	92.0	86.1
Others	8.0	13.9
Religiously visible[c] in %		
Female	41.7	24.4
Male	31.0	14.0
Host nationality in %[d]	92.9	44.4
2nd Generation immigrants	71.9	88.4
Reason for migration in %		
Work	71.9	76.4
Family reunion	19.5	10.2
Studies	1.0	5.6
Politics	1.0	1.4
Occupation in %		
Student	48.6	57.4
Employed	39.1	29.2
Apprentice	1.0	10.2
Unemployed/retired	8.6	1.9

Note. Missing percentage corresponds to "other".

[a] $t(333.29) = 2.49$, $p < .01$, $\Delta M = 1.46$, 95% CI [.31, 2.62], est $\eta^2 = .01$.
[b] $t(395.99) = 2.16$, $p < .05$, $\Delta M = 0.27$, 95% CI [.02, .51], est $\eta^2 = .01$.
[c] Female: Hijab, Niqāb, Burka, Chaddor or other. Male: Beard, Turban, Hat or other.
[d] The samples differed significantly in regard of the percentage of participants holding the host nation's nationality χ^2 (1, $N = 426$) = 88.45, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .46$.

expected to strengthen their religious identity. In line with the first hypothesis, this was expected to impinge negatively on their national identity and engagement.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

A total of 426 respondents completed the survey, of whom 210 were Norwegian-Pakistanis and 216 German-Turks. The majority of participants in both samples were young adults, most of whom were female, Sunni Muslims and belonged to the second-generation of immigrants (see Table 1). Most of the Norwegian-Pakistani participants had naturalized as Norwegian nationals, whereas only about half of the German-Turkish participants were naturalized German nationals.

2.2. Procedure

The data were obtained through online surveys conducted in 2010 in Norway and Germany from the end of August until the end of September. Bilingual teams translated the survey into the countries' official languages, as well as the widely spoken minority languages.

The 426 participants who completed the surveys were mainly recruited through religious or cultural organizations, personal contacts and online social networks. As an incentive to fill out the survey, each participant had the possibility to win a voucher of 500 Norwegian Kroner or 50 Euro.

All respondents were informed about the purpose of the study in advance and received information regarding its confidentiality. Moreover, the participants were reminded about their right to withdraw from participation at any time.

2.3. Measurement

Unless stated, the scales had 6-point Likert-type response categories: endpoints "totally disagree" and "totally agree". All the scales had acceptable internal consistency (ranging from .67 to .97 for both study samples). See Table 2 for the exact reliability of the different scales for the two groups.

2.3.1. National identity
This 9-item scale of which four items were negatively worded was developed specifically for this study to measure participants' national identification. A sample item from the scale was "Actually, it is unimportant for me to be German/Norwegian" (reversed). Across both samples, the exploratory maximum likelihood factor analyses supported a one-factor solution.

Table 2
Psychometric properties of the major study variables.

Variable	M	SD	α	Skew	t	df	est η^2
National identity					9.07[***]	424	.16
Norway	4.31	0.97	.84	−0.18			
Germany	3.41	1.07	.89	0.25			
National engagement, private					−1.60	424	–
Norway	3.98	0.77	.67	−0.58			
Germany	4.11	0.84	.78	−0.31			
National engagement, public					−4.20[***]	424	.04
Norway	4.67	0.69	.68	−0.42			
Germany	4.93	0.66	.78	−0.90			
Religious identity					4.67[***]	408.56	.05
Norway	4.85	1.00	.95	−1.68			
Germany	4.34	1.26	.97	−0.81			
Religious discrimination					−4.44[***]	416.70	.04
Norway	1.86	0.69	.92	1.23			
Germany	2.19	0.81	.93	0.69			
Negative representations media					2.20[*]	424	.01
Norway	4.06	0.81	.83	−0.92			
Germany	3.88	0.91	.83	−0.79			
Perceived Islamophobia					−3.50[**]	424	.03
Norway	4.05	0.86	.90	0.01			
Germany	4.34	0.84	.86	−0.43			

Note. Norway: $n = 210$, Germany: $n = 216$.

[*] $p < .05$.
[**] $p < .01$.
[***] $p < .001$.

2.3.2. National engagement

Fifteen items based on Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2007) assessed acculturative attitudes (e.g., "I find it unimportant to follow Norwegian/German politics.") and behavior (e.g., "How often do you inform yourself about Norwegian/German politics?"). These items evaluated the degree to which the participants valued the national majority culture and integrated it into their daily lives. Half of the items were reversed. The scale distinguished between public and private life domains (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004). Private domains included communication in the majority language at home, socialization with friends belonging to the majority group and national cultural habits. Public domains included communication in the majority language in public settings, socialization with, for instance, colleagues or fellow students belonging to the majority group, use of national media and interest in national politics.

The factor analyses of the items did not support the distinction between public and private domains proposed by Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2004). Because the factor structure did not provide grounds for alternative interpretations, two sum scores representing national engagement in the private and public spheres were computed on theoretical grounds.

2.3.3. Religious identity

The religious identity scale by Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007) was used to assess participants' religious identification. Two of the three original subscales, namely "religious identity importance" and "religious behavioral involvement", were included in this study, whereas the third subscale "Muslim political organization" was deemed irrelevant. In all, thirteen items (e.g., "Being a Muslim is a very important part of how I see myself") were used to measure participants' religious identity. In contrast to the scale's multidimensional structure observed by Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007), factor analyses supported a one-factor solution in both the Norwegian and the German samples.

2.3.4. Experienced religious discrimination

To identify the forms and settings in which the participants perceived both blatant and subtle forms of religious discrimination, questions were asked based on the brief community version of the perceived ethnic discrimination questionnaire (Brondolo et al., 2005). A total of 17 items scored on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (*never happened*) to 5 (*happened very often*), such as "How often have you been treated unfairly by coworkers or classmates?", measured the frequency of discrimination experienced across various settings. Two additional items assessing discrimination at airports and on the Internet were added. Unlike the original scale, each question assessed religious instead of ethnic discrimination.

2.3.5. Experienced negative representations in the media

Four items assessed the respondents' experiences of negative representations of Muslims in media. Similar to the instrument above, a sample item was "How often have you seen newspapers or magazines that make Muslims look bad?" and were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never happened*) to 5 (*happened very often*).
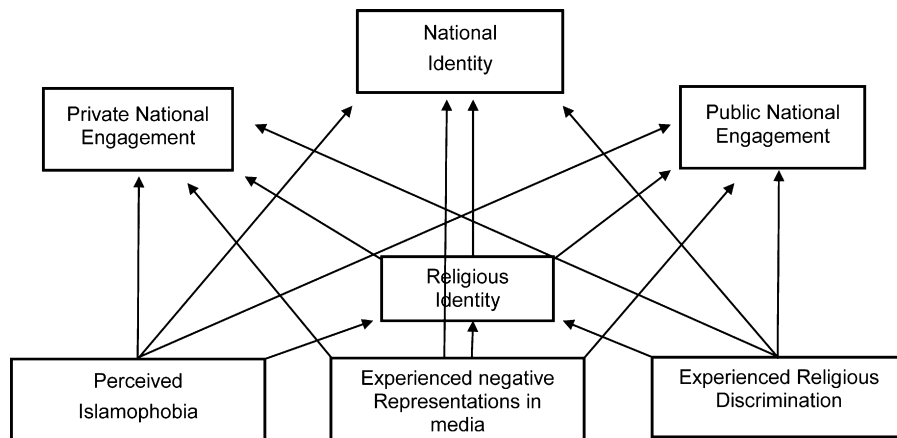
Fig. 1. Hypothetical structural equation model.

2.3.6. Perceived Islamophobia

Twelve items, (e.g., "Many Norwegians consider Islam to be an evil ideology"), designed specifically for this study, were used to measure the degree to which the respondents perceived the society and inhabitants of Norway or Germany as islamophobic. Half of the items were reversed. Analyses of the scale's factor structure supported a uni-dimensional scale. To improve on the reliability, one item was deleted in both samples.

2.4. Analysis of data

To test the hypotheses, path analysis with a structural equation model using full information maximum likelihood estimation was conducted with AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) version 18.

All hypotheses were tested through the model shown in Fig. 1. Due to the generally weak correlations between the main and the demographic variables and to keep the model as parsimonious as possible, demographic variables were not included.

Diverse goodness-of-fit estimates were used to evaluate the adequacy of the model. Furthermore, to check for differences in the results between the two samples, differences in parameter values were tested by comparing the fit of the unconstrained path model with the fit of a constrained path model.

3. Results

3.1. Differences between the samples on the different measures

Before testing our hypothetical model, we compared the German-Turks with their Norwegian counterparts (Norwegian-Pakistanis) on the main instruments. With the exception of National engagement at the private level, the two groups differed on all the scales. Sometimes the difference was in favor of the Norwegian sample, and sometimes in favor of the German sample. The effect sizes also varied from small to large. A summary of these differences can be found in Table 2.

3.1.1. National identity

In the Norwegian sample, second-generation respondents reported significantly higher national identification ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.96$), compared to first-generation respondents ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .92$), $t(208) = -3.05$, $p < .01$; $\Delta M = -.45$, 95% CI [$-.73$, $-.16$], est $\eta^2 = .04$. In the German sample, naturalized participants reported higher national identification ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.14$) than those without the German nationality ($M = 3.22$, $SD = .96$), $t(211.21) = -2.53$, $p < .01$; $\Delta M = -.36$, 95% CI [$-.64$, $-.08$]; est $\eta^2 = .03$.

3.1.2. National engagement in the private and the public sphere.

In the German sample, non-German nationals significantly displayed lower private national engagement compared to the naturalized German-Turks (non-nationals: $M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.84$; naturalized: $M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.84$), $t(214) = -2.16$, $p < .05$; $\Delta M = -.25$, 95% CI [$-.47$, $-.02$], est $\eta^2 = .02$. Furthermore, religiously nonvisible German females reported higher private national engagement than their religiously visible counterparts (nonvisible: $M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.85$; visible: $M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.83$), $t(121) = 1.99$, $p < .05$; $\Delta M = .35$, 95% CI [.00, .70], est $\eta^2 = .03$.

Table 3
Correlations between major study variables for the Norwegian and German sample.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. National identity	–	.52	.37	−.36	−.24	−.16	−.10
2. Private national engagement	.51	–	.70	−.39	−.13	−.12	−.07
3. Public national engagement	.43	.61	–	−.25	−.00	−.04	.01
4. Religious identity	−.08	−.20	−.03	–	.24	.26	−.01
5. Experienced religious discrimination	−.07	−.10	.02	−.03	–	.50	.37
6. Negative media representations	.12	.10	.29	−.02	.37	–	.43
7. Perceived Islamophobia	−.12	−.17	.01	−.02	.43	.43	–

Note. Standardized coefficients are presented. For the Norwegian sample (non-italic values), correlations of .17 or more are significant at $p < .05$. Correlations of .29 or more are significant at $p < .01$. Correlations of .37 or more are significant at $p < .001$. For the German sample (italic values), Correlations of .16 or more are significant at $p < .05$. Correlations of .24 or more are significant at $p < .001$.

3.1.3. Religious identity

Contrary to Verkuyten and Yildiz' (2007) finding where half of the Dutch-Turkish participants obtained the highest possible score on the instrument, none of the German-Turkish and only 1% of the Norwegian-Pakistani participants in this study obtained the maximum score. The scale was nevertheless moderately and negatively skewed in both samples.

3.1.4. Experienced religious discrimination

All participants, with the exception of one person, had experienced some kind of religious discrimination. Still, the mean value was below the midpoint of the scale in both samples. Across the samples, religiously visible females (Norway: $M = 1.94$, $SD = 0.67$; Germany: $M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.73$) reported higher degrees of religious discrimination than their nonvisible counterparts did (Norway: $M = 1.72$, $SD = 0.57$; Germany: $M = 1.91$, $SD = 0.68$). Although the difference was significant in both samples (Norway: $t(137) = −2.07$, $p < .05$; Germany: $t(121) = −4.80$, $p < .001$), the effect size was large in the German sample ($\Delta M = −.70$, 95% CI [$−.98$, $−.41$]; est $\eta^2 = .16$) but remained small in the Norwegian sample ($\Delta M = −.22$, 95% CI [$−.43$, $−.01$]; est $\eta^2 = .03$).

3.1.5. Experienced negative representations in the media

All participants except one in both samples had experienced negative portrayals of Muslims in the media. In both samples the mean was above the midpoint of the scale. In the Norwegian sample, second-generation participants had experienced more negative representations of their religious group in media compared to first-generation participants (first generation: $M = 3.74$, $SD = .99$; second generation: $M = 4.19$, $SD = .69$), $t(81.34) = −3.18$, $p < .01$, $\Delta M = −.45$, 95% CI [$−.73$, $−.17$]; est $\eta^2 = .05$.

3.1.6. Perceived Islamophobia

In both samples, the mean values were above the neutral midpoint of the scale and all participants perceived some degree of Islamophobia. Second-generation Norwegian-Pakistani participants, on average, reported a higher degree of perceived Islamophobia than their first-generation counterparts (second-generation: $M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.82$; first-generation: $M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.93$), $t(208) = −2.45$, $p < .05$. However, the effect size of this difference was small, $\Delta M = −.32$, 95% CI [$−.58$, $−.06$]; est $\eta^2 = .03$.

3.2. Structural equation model

Table 3 displays the correlations between the major variables for each sample. One model was estimated based upon both samples. In the initial stage of constructing the model, all possible paths between the outcome, independent and mediating variables, as displayed in Fig. 1, were drawn. Several paths were deleted as they turned out to be insignificant in both samples.

The hypothetical model showed a good fit across the fit indices (see Table 4). The chi-square value indicated a well-fitting model, χ^2 (8, N = 426) = 11.71, $p = .165$. Based on the RMSEA, the model demonstrated a close fit, with the lower boundary of the confidence interval even indicating an exact fit, RMSEA = .033, 90% CI [.000, .071].

Testing for differences in results between the two samples, a fully constrained version of the model was compared with the corresponding unconstrained version. The unconstrained version performed better across all indices (see Table 4). Thus,

Table 4
Fit indices for unconstrained and constrained structural equation models across groups (Norway and Germany).

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	AIC	$\Delta \chi^2$	Δdf
Unconstrained	11.71	8	.995	.033	107.71		
Constrained	57.46	25	.952	.055	119.46		
Difference between models						45.75[*]	17

Note. CFI: Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; AIC: Akaike Information Criterion.
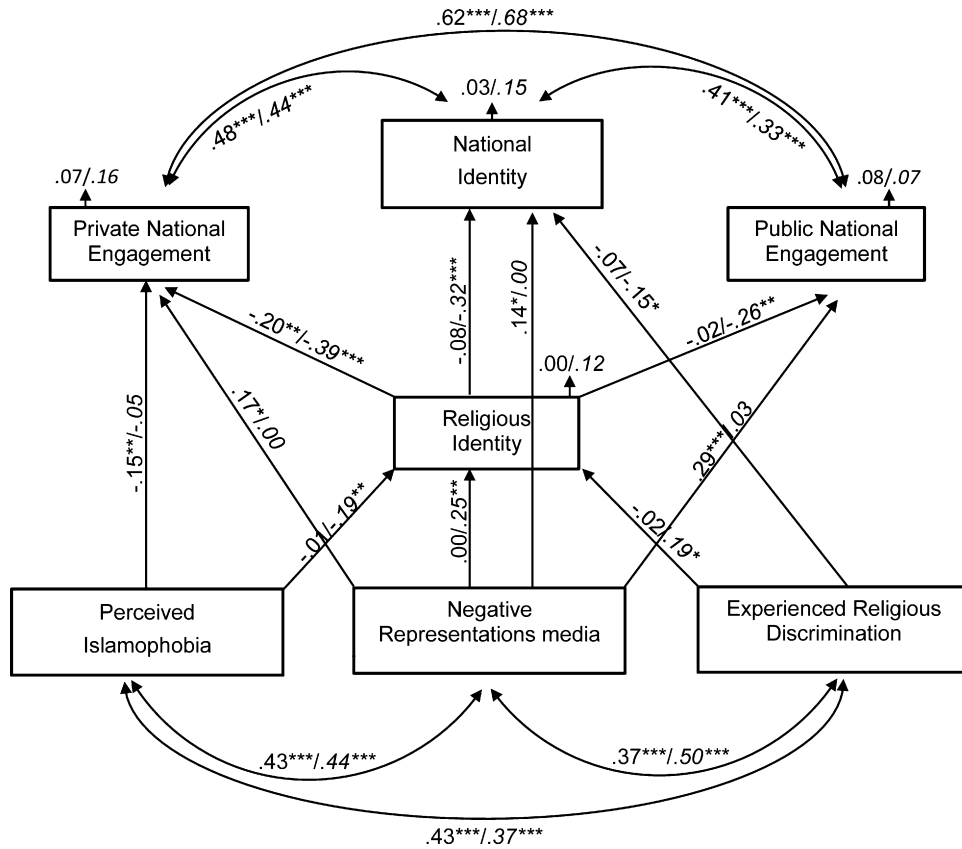[*] $p < .001$.

Fig. 2. Estimated model for Norwegian (non-italic values) and German sample (italic-values). Results from SEM analysis. Standardized coefficients presented. Only paths significant in at least one sample are displayed. $^*p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

the relationships between the variables in the model differed between the two samples, suggesting that the model is not generalizable across the samples. Consequently, the model was separately estimated for the two samples (see Fig. 2).

3.2.1. Norwegian results

The estimated direct, indirect and total effects for the Norwegian sample can be found in Table 5.

3.2.1.1. Hypothesis 1.

We hypothesized participants' religious identity to be negatively related to both national identification and national engagement. The correlation matrix partly supported the hypothesis. Although religious identity neither had an effect on national identity nor on national engagement in the public sphere, the fact that it had a significant negative impact on private national engagement ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .01$) gave some support for the first hypothesis.

3.2.1.2. Hypothesis 2.

The prediction here was that the religious stigma variables (i.e., perceived Islamophobia, negative representations of Muslims in media and religious discrimination) would have a *direct* negative effect on the participants'

Table 5
Standardized direct, indirect and total effects of the predictor variables on the dependent variables in the structural equation model for the Norwegian sample.

Predictor and outcome variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Perceived Islamophobia			
National engagement, private	−.15[**]	−	−.15
Negative representations in media			
National identity	.14[*]	−	.14
National engagement, private	.17[*]	−	.17
National engagement, public	.29[***]	−	.29

[*] $p < .05$.
[**] $p < .01$.
[***] $p < .001$.

Table 6
Standardized direct, indirect and total effects of the predictor variables on the dependent variables in the structural equation model for the German sample.

Predictor and outcome variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect[a]	Total effect
Perceived Islamophobia			
National identity	–	.08*	.08
National engagement, private	–	.08*	.08
National engagement, public	–	.04*	.04
Perceived religious discrimination			
National identity	−.15*	−.08**	−.23
National engagement, private	–	−.08**	−.08
National engagement, public	–	−.04**	−.04
Negative representations in media			
National identity	–	−.05**	−.05
National engagement, private	–	−.09**	−.09
National engagement, public	–	−.10**	−.10

[a] Two sided bias-corrected confidence intervals using bootstrap, *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

national identity and national engagement. The coefficients of the effects indicated only partial support to this hypothesis. As hypothesized, perceived Islamophobia predicted a lower degree of private national engagement ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .01$).

However, contrary to the hypothesis, negative representations of Muslims in the media had a direct positive effect on all of our outcome variables. To start with, negative media representations positively related to the participants' public ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$) and private national engagement ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$). In addition to affecting national engagement in both spheres, negative representations in the media also positively predicted the national identity of the Norwegian-Pakistanis ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$).

3.2.1.3. Hypothesis 3. With respect to this hypothesis, we expected different forms of religious stigma to have an *indirect* negative effect on national identity and engagement mediated by religious identity. No evidence to support this hypothesis was obtained. As the model did not reveal any indirect effects, we can conclude that religious identity did not mediate the effects of the independent variables on the outcome variables.

3.2.2. German results
   The estimated direct, indirect and total effects are displayed in Table 6.

3.2.2.1. Hypothesis 1. Clear support was found for the first hypothesis. Religious identity negatively affected national identity ($\beta = -.32$, $p < .001$) and private ($\beta = -.39$, $p < .001$) and public ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .01$) national engagement.

3.2.2.2. Hypothesis 2. Regarding the second hypothesis, only one path (i.e., religious discrimination) supported the hypothesized effect of religious stigma as a direct negative predictor of the outcome variables. Religious discrimination had a weak direct negative impact on national identity ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$).

3.2.2.3. Hypothesis 3. The results to the third hypothesis were more complex. In accordance with the hypothesis, religious identity mediated all indirect effects between the stigma constructs and the outcome variables (i.e., national identity, private national engagement and public national engagement). Furthermore, the coefficients for two of the stigma constructs supported the hypothesis. Negative media representations had a negative indirect impact on the participants' national identity ($\beta = -.05$, $p < .01$), private national engagement ($\beta = -.09$, $p < .01$) and public national engagement ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .01$), mediated by religious identity. Similarly, religious discrimination was a negative indirect predictor of the German-Turkish respondents' national identity ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .01$), private national engagement ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .01$) and public national engagement ($\beta = -.04$, $p < .01$).

   The effects of perceived Islamophobia on the outcome variables, however, were not as hypothesized. Perceived Islamophobia negatively predicted religious identity ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .01$), and had a positive indirect effect on national identity ($\beta = .08$, $p < .01$), private national engagement ($\beta = .08$, $p < .01$) and public national engagement ($\beta = .04$, $p < .01$). In other words, although these findings supported the hypothesized role of religious identity acting as a mediator, they undermined the hypothesized negative indirect effect of perceived Islamophobia on the outcome variables.

4. Discussion

   The goal of the present study was to investigate how Muslims, as a stigmatized minority group, negotiate their national affiliation in contemporary Western European societies. Our results suggest that religious stigma indeed plays an important role. The results also suggest that religious identity does not only influence Muslim minorities' national identification and engagement, but also mediates the influence of religious stigma. While all our hypotheses were partially supported, a number of the observed relations were contrary to our expectations.

Considering a wide range of underlying cultural and contextual variables, while at the same time comparing results and drawing more general conclusions as is common in cross-cultural research, is a major challenge (see Berry et al., 2011; Berry & Sabatier, 2010). Due to the large divergence between the results for the two samples, the findings for each hypothesis will first be discussed separately for each sample before taking a more comparative approach.

4.1. Discussion of the Norwegian results

4.1.1. Hypothesis 1

Results from the Norwegian portion of the study suggest that Norwegian-Pakistanis experience no conflict in identifying both as a Muslim and as a Norwegian national. Earlier reports indicated that believing in a religion and belonging to the nation are quite unrelated in Norway (European Commission, 2005; Gallup International, 2005). It appears that despite constitutionally being a Christian country, Norway, at the grassroots level, is a highly secularized state. Accordingly, because most of the Norwegian-Pakistani participants in our study were born and raised in Norway, they may have internalized this secular understanding and consequently consider their religious group affiliation as separate from their national identification.

Nevertheless, the Norwegian results do not concur with the results of Sirin et al. (2008) in the US. However, the fact that religious identity in the present study was negatively related to the degree to which the national culture was integrated and appreciated in the Norwegian-Pakistani participants' private life sphere can be seen as supporting the findings of Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007). Research indicate that religious identity constitutes a central part of immigrants' private cultural identity and is supposed to be more resistant to change over time in the private than in the public sphere (see Navas et al., 2005). Furthermore, although Norway may be described as a secularized state, religion still seems to play a role in Norwegians' private lives (see Zahl, Furman, Benson, & Canda, 2007). Hence, an alteration of the respondents' religious identity seems to solely affect the inclusion of the national majority culture in their private life sphere.

4.1.2. Hypotheses 2 and 3

4.1.2.1. Perceived Islamophobia.
Perceived Islamophobia negatively predicted participants' private national engagement. We propose that for Norwegian-Pakistanis with a high religious identification, an increased perception of a society where Muslims and Islam are viewed as dangerous very likely triggers religious identity threats, reducing national engagement in the private sphere.

This finding seems to be in line with a recent longitudinal study, which indicated that experiences of group rejection may "discourage immigrants from identifying with the superordinate national in-group and result in a tendency to disengage from it" (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009, p. 109). Furthermore, our findings seem to support the results of a study conducted with Muslims in Spain (Chryssochoou & Lyons, 2011). Applied to the present study, the participants may have reduced their private national engagement because they belong to a group that they perceive as rejected by the broader society.

Still, contrary to what we expected, the Norwegian-Pakistani participants, probably facing a religious identity threat, responded by neither increasing their religious identity nor decreasing their national identity or their national engagement in the public sphere. As suggested by Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. (2009), the participants' religious identity may have remained unaffected because, given high religious identification, "few benefits may result from the minor-increases in in-group identification that are possible in a group one already identifies very strongly with" (p. 122). Moreover, it may be disadvantageous to further increase one's already high religious identity because it may be perceived as a shift towards radicalism in light of the ongoing public discourse.

Last but not least, the national identification of the respondents was not influenced by perceived Islamophobia. Most of the Norwegian-Pakistanis reported a high national identity, suggesting that they highly value belonging to the Norwegian nation. Respondents may therefore not have considered national disidentification as an option.

4.1.2.2. Negative media representations.
The variable assessing negative representations of Muslims in the media affected all of the outcome variables and was the strongest predictor of the Norwegian-Pakistanis' national affiliation. On the basis of the suggested causal relations in the model and contrary to our expectations, the variable had a direct positive effect on participants' national identification and their public and private national engagement. Stereotypically, Norwegian Muslims have been portrayed as reluctant to integrate and to adopt Norwegian cultural values while simultaneously being accused of creating and living in parallel societies. Frequent exposures to negative portrayals of Muslims in the media may therefore lead participants to question their sense of national belonging. When their national identity is threatened, they may pursue counter-stereotypic behavior and attitudes to "contest and challenge (. . .) labels and ascriptions" (Ehrkamp, 2006, p. 1676) assigned to them in the media and public discourse.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that our suggested causal relations can be explained differently by reversing the direction of the paths. Participants high on national identity and national engagement may have simply informed themselves more often through national media and are therefore exposed to more negative content about Muslims in the media.

4.1.2.3. Religious discrimination.
We found no support for religious discrimination having either direct or indirect effects on the mediating and outcome variables. Bearing in mind that the respondents' average experienced religious discrimination was low, these experiences may not have been detrimental enough to cause either a religious or a national identity threat.

Furthermore, we assume that the participants attributed personal experiences of religious discrimination differently than they attributed experiences of stigma assessed by the other two constructs. Although the participants may have ascribed perceived Islamophobia and negative media representations to sentiments prevalent in the society as a whole, we believe that they may have imputed experiences of religious discrimination to attitudes of specific individuals, for instance, their supervisor or colleague (see Branscombe et al., 1999).

4.2. Discussion of the German results

4.2.1. Hypothesis 1

The structural equation model gave support to a negative effect of religious identity on the participants' national identification and their private and public national engagement. In a nutshell, for the German-Turks, identifying as a Muslim seems to be quite incompatible with identifying with, and engaging in the German nation. These findings, while in line with the results of Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007), are inconsistent with that of Sirin et al. (2008). Cultural characteristics related to immigration to the respective continents may explain these differences in results. Sirin et al.'s study was conducted in a traditional immigration country, or a 'settler society'. However, the data of the present study were, like those of Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007), gathered from a European nation state where immigration is a recent phenomenon, and stems largely from the middle of the last century. Although immigration to the U.S. has long been considered an essential building block of the nation, the naturalization of immigrants has faced marked resistance in Western European countries (Brubaker, 1992). Consistently, cultural pluralism has often been met with skepticism and rejection, and integration has increasingly been placed on equal terms with cultural assimilation (Brubaker, 1992; Bryant, 1997; Ersanilli & Koopmans, 2009; Fekete, 2004, 2008).

Societies have often demanded that Muslims tone down their religious identity in order to facilitate their integration (Decker et al., 2010; Fekete, 2008). In this regard, Fekete (2008) emphasizes that, in Germany, "whenever there is a talk about values, the politicians and the churches stress the Christian aspect of German culture" (p. 15), which makes it difficult for Muslims "to find a place in society" (p. 15; also see Ehrkamp, 2006). As a consequence, the participants in the present study might have felt forced to choose between their identities and might have attenuated their national affiliation in favor of their religious identity. A previous study with Muslims in Germany support this assumption, as it shows that most participants preferred their Muslim identity when they had to choose between their religious and national identities (PEW Research Center, 2006).

4.2.2. Hypotheses 2 and 3

4.2.2.1. Perceived Islamophobia.
Contrary to the rationale of the second hypothesis, perceived Islamophobia had no direct effects on the outcome variables. Moreover, contrary to the third hypothesis, the indirect effects (mediated by religious identity) were positive.

Given the high pressure for cultural assimilation of immigrants in Germany and, in particular, the strong negative views of Muslim minorities during the data collection, perceptions of Islamophobia may have led the participants to decrease their religious identity in order to achieve national acceptance; they probably considered their religious identity as a barrier to becoming a member of the German nation.

4.2.2.2. Negative media representations.
The structural equation model revealed that negative representations of Muslims in the media were negatively related to national identity and public as well as private national engagement. We contend that experiences of negative depictions of Muslims in the media not only made the respondents particularly aware of their collective identity, but also triggered solidarity with Muslims in general. This in turn resulted in an increased religious identity, indirectly leading to lower degrees of national identification and engagement.

4.2.2.3. Religious discrimination.
Experiences of religious discrimination across various settings constituted the only stigma construct with a direct as well as several indirect negative effects on the outcome variables. We argue that, due to the public opinion climate in Germany, the German-Turks, in contrast to the Norwegian-Pakistanis, may have interpreted their experiences of discrimination as a reflection of the entire German society instead of single individuals. Subsequently, we believe that the extent of discrimination may have been sufficient to cause national disidentification (see Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009).

Furthermore, in accordance with Branscombe et al. (1999), the participants increased their religious identification, which indirectly led to lower national identification and national engagement. Repeated experiences of rejection are considered to have detrimental effects on individuals' well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999). To maintain a positive self-concept and to protect their well-being, German-Turks probably enhance their religious group membership.

4.3. General discussion

The present study suggests that stigma affects Muslims' identity formation, but its effects may not be consistent across different cultural groups and nations. When considering the results of the samples separately, the findings were multifaceted and did not point in the same directions. A number of inferences can, however, be drawn.

First, identifying oneself as a Muslim seems to be more of an obstacle to identifying with Germany than with Norway as a nation. As Ethier and Deaux (1994) note, "new environments may challenge the meaning or value of an identity" (p. 244). Additionally, "crisis events", such as the particularly tense and almost inflammatory public discourse in Germany at the time of the data collection,[2] could have brought the respondents' religious identity to the fore in a dramatic fashion (see Peek, 2005). Accordingly, because their religious identity was extensively targeted in public discourse, the German-Turks might have counteracted the stigma directed towards their religious group by altering their national affiliation.

However, the results in the German sample do not imply that for Muslims in general, a low religious identity is a prerequisite for a pronounced national affiliation and vice versa. These findings underscore the importance of contextual variables in promoting the coexistence of religious and national identities. We consider these variables, which may contribute to an enhanced national commitment and sense of belongingness among Western European Muslims, to be less prevalent in Germany than in Norway. Clinging to the notion that German nationality, in essence, is determined by ethnicity (see Bryant, 1997), German politicians have been unwilling to support the naturalization of immigrants (Brubaker, 1992; Ehrkamp, 2006). Likewise, immigrants in Germany seem to view the process of naturalization as not only a "change in legal status, but change in nature, (. . .) a social transubstantiation that immigrants have difficulty imagining, let alone desiring" (Brubaker, 1992, p. 78). Thus, the German-Turkish participants in our study may have perceived that by affiliating with Germany they diminish or even eliminate the possibility to identify with their Turkish culture, including their religion.

Furthermore, the results in both samples indicate that belonging to a stigmatized group may not only be a defining part of Muslims' lives, but may also have crucial consequences for their orientation towards their society of settlement. The fact that the stigma constructs had positive as well as negative effects in both samples points to Muslim minorities' difficult position in society. As experiences of religious stigmatization reinforce their perceived discrepancy between being a Muslim and being a member of the nation, they seem to be torn between their willingness to become integrated members of the nation and their wish to maintain their religious affiliation. Keeping in mind the profound negative effects of stigma on well-being, we suggest that encouraging, rather than discouraging religious diversity may be the primary foundation for strengthening Muslims' bonds with the nation.

Strikingly, religious identity only mediated the effects of religious stigma on the participants' national affiliation in the German sample. A possible explanation for the mediating effects of religious identity in the German sample may be that in Germany the islamophobic environment was severe enough to make the participants question their religious identity when facing religious stigmatization (see Ethier & Deaux, 1994). Furthermore, the German-Turks may have adapted to and internalized the notion that identifying as a Muslim composes the main barrier to successful integration into German society.

4.4. Strengths and limitations

Our study has both strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, our model showed good fitness to the data across both study samples. Several paths in our model were significant, and portions of the variances of all outcome variables could be accounted for in both samples. The explained variance, however, remained small. While several tendencies could be observed, other unobserved variables, such as ethnic identity, probably had an important role in the participants' identity formation.

Most instruments in the present study seemed to be equally reliable in both samples. However, because our study investigated two groups only, we did not extensively investigate the structural and measurement equivalence across the samples (see Byrne & van de Vijver, 2010, for a discussion).

Notably, the instruments measuring national engagement achieved only acceptable Cronbach's alpha values in the Norwegian sample. Because the scales were adapted from acculturation instruments, low alpha values are common and could be expected (see Matsudaira, 2006). Nevertheless, one major critique is that acculturation scales do not assess phenomena that are uniform across cultures and maybe highly dependent on distinct cultural characteristics of the investigated population (Matsudaira, 2006). In addition, our scales only assessed national engagement in a limited number of domains, which may not be equally important for the two populations (see Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001 for a discussion). Finally, we found no support for a distinction between the private and public life domains in either of the sample, as proposed by Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2004). Thus, whether it makes sense to statistically distinguish between these two domains remains a topic for future research.

Although the two ethnic groups for this study were comparable along several dimensions, we should have ideally used samples of the same ethnic background in both countries to increase the comparability of the results and to control for cultural variables. However, considering the intrasample homogeneity of each sample, the fact that the vast majority of each sample shared the same heritage, religious and ethnic backgrounds and place of residence might increase the generalizability of the results to the broader respective populations. Still, it is questionable to which extent the findings in this study can be generalized to Muslims in general or to Muslim minorities with a different ethnic background or immigration history. As

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[2] In particular, we are referring to the public discourse caused by the politician Thilo Sarrazin.

an example, one could expect that for Muslims, who left their heritage country for reasons other than work (e.g., refugees), the development of a national affiliation may be quite different from Muslim minorities who are descendants of labor immigrants. Furthermore, as most of the participants were female, the findings may be more representative of them than of male Muslims.

The data collection process is another possible limitation of the study. The fact that the study involved filling out an online questionnaire most likely resulted in recruiting individuals with easy access to the Internet, who may be better off economically, and at a different stage of structural integration than those who had no such easy access. In essence, the study possibly excluded individuals who did not have such easy Internet access.

It is important to add that societies are constantly changing and the collection of data and how participants respond to questions will be influenced by prevailing societal events. As such, the need for longitudinal designs to help capturing the impacts of such events in future research on the topic cannot be overemphasized.

5. Conclusion

To recap, politicians and nationals of many Western societies have frequently expressed concerns about an apparent lack of integration of Muslim minorities. In public discourse, the main responsibility for this situation has been given to Muslims themselves, whereas little attention has been paid to societal circumstances. However, our study suggests that religious stigma constitutes a major obstacle to Muslims' national affiliation. In order to achieve a common national cohesiveness and commitment among all cultural groups in multicultural and multireligious societies, primary attention should therefore be paid to nurturing intercultural relations, rather than reinforcing religious prejudice. As fear causes avoidance, and avoidance prevents people from challenging their prejudgments and stereotypes, we consider political campaigns promoting contact between religious groups as a suitable and powerful tool to decrease religious intolerance. Despite the fact that many Western European countries are becoming increasingly multireligious, substantial parts of their populations still seem to be wary and suspicious of this development and tend to reject cultural diversity. Developing programs on the basis of the present study may be a useful approach to change the latter attitudes.

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