

Western Anti-Muslim Prejudice: Value Conflict or Discrimination of Persons Too?

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Do Western anti-Muslim attitudes reflect Islamophobia as a general, ethnoreligious prejudice that does not distinguish between persons and ideas, values, or behavior, or are they limited to issues perceived to be in conflict with Western liberal values? In two experiments, we measured discrimination as decreased willingness to help a Muslim versus non-Muslim to undertake an action that was either neutral or possibly in conflict with Western liberal values. As opposed to general discrimination, the participants displayed conditional, anti-Muslim discrimination: The two targets were treated equally when the cause was neutral, but there was less willingness to help the Muslim when the cause was conflicting (protesting against the headscarf ban and against gay rights). However, participants did demonstrate subtle discrimination by showing less willingness to help the protesting Muslim compared to the protesting non-Muslim target. Individual differences moderated these effects with multiculturalism predicting conditional outgroup prosociality, ethnocentrism predicting global outgroup discrimination, and proatheism attitudes predicting both conditional outgroup prosociality and unprejudiced rejection of value-conflicting behavior.

KEY WORDS: anti-Muslim prejudice, Islamophobia, value conflict, prosociality, discrimination

There is an increased awareness of prejudice and discrimination faced by Muslim citizens in current Western societies. The phenomenon is often referred to as “Islamophobia,” although there is some debate on the appropriateness of the term as well as the extent and motives of the underlying reality (Bleich, 2011; Halliday, 1999; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006; Love, 2009; Van der Noll & Dekker, 2010). Terrorist attacks perpetrated by Muslim individuals may, for example, fuel anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination. These developments can be detrimental to intergroup relations, as misunderstanding, prejudice, and discrimination may lead to further stigmatization, social isolation, and radicalization of Muslims in Western societies (Lyons-Padilla, Gelfand, Mirahmadi, Farooq, &

van Egmond, 2015). As such, it is important to understand the grounds of Westerners' unease and sometimes hostility towards Muslims and Islam.

One central question in the related societal and political debates across Western countries is whether anti-Muslim attitudes, prejudice, and discriminatory behavior reflect typical ethnoreligious prejudice ("Islamophobia") and xenophobic attitudes, or, alternatively, reflect a need to defend Western values, which are perceived to be threatened by some practices and values seen as representative of Islamic culture. Some empirical studies have begun to investigate this question. This article contributes to this line of research and aims to take a significant step ahead by asking the critical question of whether Westerners are able to distinguish between Muslim *persons*—to respect and not to discriminate—and some (perceived) Muslim *practices and ideas* that could be seen to be at odds with Western values—to be questioned and potentially condemned. Below, we shall review the relevant research, develop our rationale, and present and justify our research questions and hypotheses.

Anti-Muslim Attitudes and Behavior: Ethnoreligious Prejudice or Value Conflict?

Recent research attests that Western anti-Muslim attitudes are explained by typical prejudice-related predictors such as xenophobic attitudes and low multiculturalism and universalism, high right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance, and the fear of economic competition as well as adherence to conservative and self-enhancement-oriented values (Kalkan & Uslander, 2012; Van der Noll, Poppe, & Verkuyten, 2010; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). These kinds of prejudice-related predictors explain general anti-Muslim attitudes but also hostility toward specific Muslim practices and symbols like women's headscarves or men's turbans (Saroglou, Lamkaddem, Pachterbeke, & Buxant, 2009; Unkelbach, Schneider, Gode, & Senft, 2010).

However, the general idea that Western anti-Muslim attitudes and discriminatory behavior simply reflect xenophobic and racism-like feelings and attitudes is typically contested in the social sphere. It has frequently been argued that these attitudes reflect a conflict between patriarchal values and practices perceived to be representative of Islam—as a religion or culture—and values and norms perceived as representative of the West such as gender equality, individual autonomy, and secularism in the social and political spheres (Alexander & Welzel, 2011; Field, 2012; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007; Zick & Küpper, 2009).

Research indeed shows that when people support a ban on face-covering veils in public, object to the building of minarets, and discuss the acceptance of halal slaughtering, they explicitly refuse prejudice-like explanations and justify it as reflecting their opposition to (some aspects of) Islam as a belief system and as a defense of Western values (Elver, 2012; Fetzer & Soper, 2012; Field, 2012; Verkuyten, 2013). Furthermore, studies show that prejudice-related variables are not the only underlying constructs for Western anti-Muslim attitudes. For example, opposition to the Islamic veil is also related to general value orientations and antireligious attitudes, which are partly independent from xenophobic and ethnoreligious prejudice (Saroglou et al., 2009; Van der Noll, 2014). Similarly, Imhoff and Recker (2012) found that behind the negative opinions towards Islam one can find those reflecting typical anti-Islam prejudice and those reflecting a secular, laic, critique of Islamic practices; the former, but not the latter, was related to an implicit measure of prejudice.

Finally, some recent studies suggest, at least on the basis of explicit, self-report measures, that mere xenophobia and prejudice directed at Muslims may differ from the evaluation of presumably Muslim practices. For instance, members of the Dutch majority reported that they have nothing against Muslim minorities per se, but they reject Muslim minorities' attitudes towards women and the way they raise their children (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). Other studies suggest that the impact of multiculturalism on tolerance of Muslim practices depends on what respondents are asked to tolerate: headscarves, separate Islamic schools, and the refusal of a female Muslim teacher to shake hands

with men are tolerated by multiculturalists, but an Imam's speech in which he calls homosexuals inferior is not (Gieling, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2010). In other words, some opposition to alleged Islamic ideas and practices seems to be driven by moral concerns.

The Present Research

Anti-Muslim/Islam attitudes and behavior may thus not be exclusively explained by typical ethno-religious prejudice and xenophobic feelings but also by moral concerns and the ideal of secularism. Yet, the question remains as to whether we can rely on people's affirmations that their opposition to some allegedly Islamic values and practices is based on moral concerns and the need to protect Western values. Or, even when these moral justifications are authentic, whether opposing some ethno-religious outgroups' values and practices on the basis of "our" values fuels more generalized prejudice.

Several arguments are in favor of the idea that these questions are important and need to be addressed. First, even for Islamic practices like the wearing of headscarves, for which the majority of the non-Muslim European population justifies their opposition based on gender equality and respect of individual autonomy, research has shown that xenophobic and ethno-religious prejudice-related factors constitute an important explanation (Saroglou et al., 2009; Van der Noll, 2014). Second, a strong research tradition in social psychology has established the role of perceived symbolic threat, that is, a perceived threat to the ingroup's values, in explaining common prejudice and discrimination, including racism (see Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006 for a review). Third, theory and research from social and political psychology has shown that value conflict can be taken as a justification of the expression of prejudice and its public legitimation (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Sears & Henry, 2003); the same may be the case for anti-Islam attitudes (Verkuyten, 2013).

We approach this issue by distinguishing *persons* from *acts and ideas*. If the criticism of the outgroup's ideas, practices, and values is intrinsically and authentically motivated by the defense of some values of the ingroup, and not by prejudice, then people should be able to distinguish between persons and their practices, ideas, and values. This question is at the heart of the contemporary social, political, and legal debates in the West—see, for instance the defense of caricature and blasphemy in the West and the heated debate on the appropriateness of the concept of Islamophobia. Departing from previous indicative evidence based on explicit, self-reported measures, we opted for an experimental design and a behavioral measure of discrimination. In two studies with participants from a typical secular Western European country (Belgium), we aimed to investigate whether anti-Muslim discrimination, measured as decreased prosociality, exists only as an aversive reaction to the Muslim's behavior that can be perceived as conflicting with Western values (Experiment 1: protesting the ban on headscarves; Experiment 2: protesting same-sex marriage) or whether it extends to Muslims in general, including morally neutral, if not positive, behavior (Experiment 1: making copies as student; Experiment 2: visiting a relative abroad). Intergroup biases become evident in the context of intergroup and interpersonal helping: People are more likely to provide help to members of an ingroup, compared to outgroup members. Therefore, reduced prosociality towards outgroup members is typically interpreted as a behavioral indicator for outgroup discrimination (Fiske & North, 2015).

Our research question and design were inspired by Batson, Floyd, Meyer, and Winner's (1999) study on religiosity's incapacity to distinguish between "disliking the sin" and "liking the sinner." In that study, the authors found that intrinsically religious participants were less willing to help a gay student, compared to a nongay student, not only when the behavior of this student could—from the participants' perspective—be perceived as immoral (attending a Pride parade), but also when the behavior was neutral (visiting a grandmother). Thus, religious people, although typically endorsing the importance of distinguishing between persons (to respect) and acts (perceived as needing to be condemned), seem unable to apply this distinction when it comes to interaction with a gay target.

Based on this design and the existing theory and previous mixed research presented above, we investigated three possible outcomes:

H1 (general anti-Muslim prejudice hypothesis): People discriminate against a Muslim compared to a non-Muslim by showing less prosociality towards the Muslim, regardless of the cause.

H2 (value-conflict hypothesis): People do not discriminate against a person but rather his or her ideas and acts by showing less prosociality when the cause can be perceived as conflicting with Western values, regardless of whether the person is Muslim or non-Muslim.

H3 (subtle anti-Muslim prejudice hypothesis): People discriminate against a Muslim compared to a non-Muslim only in a value-conflicting scenario, but not in a neutral scenario.

Individual Differences as Moderators

Based on previous research demonstrating the significant role of key individual differences in the context of prejudice, xenophobia, and Western anti-Muslim attitudes, we formulated additional hypotheses regarding the role of individual differences as possible moderators. We examined the role of (1) openness to diversity (multiculturalism, universalism, and intergroup contact), (2) ethnocentrism (identification with local entities), and (3) religious attitudes (religiosity, proatheism, antireligious critique):

H4 (conditional support for diversity hypothesis): Attitudes which typically promote openness to diversity, that is, endorsement of multiculturalism and universalism as well as intergroup contact, were expected to moderate prosociality depending on whether the cause reflects a potential value conflict.

This would imply an increased willingness to help a Muslim when the planned behavior is neutral but not necessarily when the planned behavior is possibly perceived to conflict with Western liberal values. As stated earlier, research by Gieling et al. (2010) showed that although generally related to acceptance of cultural diversity, multiculturalism does not imply unconditional support for diverse lifestyles, practices, and beliefs. Similarly, the positive effect of intergroup contact on prejudice reduction has been well established (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), with more positive contact with outgroup members typically fostering more positive attitudes toward this outgroup (Thomsen, 2012; Velasco González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008) but has not yet been applied in the context of potential value conflicts.

Ethnocentrism, operationalized here as identification with one's own local (i.e., regional or national) identity could also be a moderator. People with a broader conception of their ingroup (e.g., cosmopolitanism—Haubert & Fussell, 2006; identification with all humanity—McFarland, Webb, & Brown, 2012), or those who are less loyal to their nation (e.g., Flanagan & Lee, 2003), tend to express lower levels of prejudice and are more open to different lifestyles. With respect to Islam-related attitudes among non-Muslim Belgians, it was found that identification as citizen of the world, but not as Belgian, related to low hostility toward the Muslim headscarf (Saroglou et al., 2009) In contrast, stronger identification with the national ingroup has been found to foster more negative outgroup attitudes (e.g., Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001). More generally, ethnic/national and religious identities are often interconnected and may predict both ethnic and religious prejudice (see Saroglou & Cohen, 2013 for a review). We thus propose the following:

H5 (unconditional discrimination hypothesis): Participants who identify strongly with their national or regional unit are less likely to support the Muslim compared to the non-Muslim, regardless of the intended behavior.

Finally, we investigated the possible moderating role of religiosity, positive attitudes toward atheism, and critical antireligious sentiments. This was mostly for exploratory reasons. Previous research shows that there is no general, systematic prejudice against Muslims and Islam in Europe as a function of general religiosity; across studies, results depend on the religious denomination, the form of religiosity, and the geographical area (see Saroglou & Cohen, 2013). As far as hostility toward Muslim symbols is concerned, there is some evidence indicating the role of both orthodox (traditional) religiosity of Catholics and strong antireligious sentiments of nonbelievers (Saroglou et al., 2009). Nevertheless, atheists often argue in favor of the need to distinguish between nondiscrimination of Muslims as persons and as ethnic groups, and the right, if not moral obligation, to oppose illiberal religious ideas and practices (Imhoff & Recker, 2012).

Experiment 1

The main goal of Experiment 1 was to offer a primary insight into Hypothesis 2 (the value-conflict hypothesis). We expected Belgian non-Muslim participants to show less prosociality toward a Muslim only when the cause could be in conflict with Western liberal values and not when the cause is neutral. If, however, we were to find lower prosociality towards the Muslim regardless of the cause, in comparison to the non-Muslim, this would support Hypothesis 1 (the general anti-Muslim prejudice hypothesis).

We focused on the Muslim's cause to protest against the headscarf ban in schools as a value-conflicting behavior. As in several other Western European countries, the Belgian majority has a negative overall perception of the Islamic headscarf, considering it to reflect gender inequality and women's submission to religious and cultural male authorities, and supports its banning from schools (Saroglou et al., 2009). We included multiculturalism, interreligious and interethnic contact, local versus transnational identities, and religiosity as possible moderators.

Method

Participants

One hundred seventy adults (65% women) living in the French-speaking part of Belgium participated in this online study. Participants were recruited through social media and snowball sampling. An additional 24 participants started the questionnaire but did not fulfill the task designed as the dependent variable and were therefore excluded from the analyses. Furthermore, three participants were excluded from the analyses because one participant's mother was Moroccan and two participants were under 17 years old. The mean age was 33 ($SD = 15$), and the ages included ranged from 17 to 70 years old. Most participants had completed or were pursuing higher education: 38% at nonacademic and 47% at university level. Almost half of the participants (44%) identified as Catholic, and 34% identified as having no religious affiliation. The remaining participants identified themselves as Buddhist (6%), Protestant (1%), or "other" (8%). Almost all participants were born in Belgium (90%) or another European country (7%).

Procedure

The design of the study was adapted from Batson et al.'s (1999) study on prosociality of Christians as a function of a target's sexual orientation and his or her cause being in conflict with Christian values or not. It was adapted here in terms of (1) the target, that is, Muslim versus non-Muslim, (2) the nature of the target's cause, that is, potentially perceived as conflicting with Western values versus a neutral one, and (3) use in an online survey.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (1) Muslim/Protest, (2) Muslim/Neutral, and (3) non-Muslim/Neutral (respective n s = 62, 45, and 63). In all conditions, participants were told they would get to read a note, allegedly written by a student, before they had to work on a numeric task through which they could help that student to win credit for the local copy shop. The first part of the note manipulated the target being Muslim versus non-Muslim. The second part of the note manipulated the target's planned activity, that is, possibly in conflict with Western values versus not. The participant and the "student" were matched on gender (same sex).

Manipulation of the target. The first part of the note presented a self-description of a student who was asked to introduce herself/himself and the things she or he likes and dislikes briefly. In the non-Muslim condition, the note was as follows:

"Well, my name is Louisa [or Louis, if the participant was male], I am 23 years old, and I am in the first year of my Master's studies at the faculty of Economics and Social, Political, and Communication Sciences. More specifically, my Master's is in Sociology and Anthropology. The course I like the most is Anthropological History and Theories. The course I like least is Urban Sociology. I took that course because the description was attractive, but the professor teaches so badly that, honestly, it is not interesting. Regarding my family, I still have my two parents, an older brother, and a younger sister. I like sports such as climbing and badminton; I like hiking and visiting cities. When it comes to food, I love pizza and I hate fish. For music, I like the French songs in the style of Renaud or even Manau. I would add that I like history, books, historical movies, and documentaries a lot."

In the Muslim condition, the text was exactly the same, except that the student did not have a typical French-Belgian name, but a Muslim name ("Salima" or "Salim," depending on gender), and the sentence about the liking of pizza was extended to "I love pizza (without ham, as I am Muslim)."

Manipulation of the cause. After reading the note, participants were informed that they would be requested to accomplish a series of numeric tasks for which they should select the correct answers from either the left or the right column of the screen. Each correct answer selected in the left column would provide the author of the note with a voucher of 10 pages free to be copied or printed in the students' copy shop ("Fac Copy"). Each correct response chosen in the right column would imply the same voucher but offered to a different student, to be chosen randomly (so an "unknown" student).

After this explanation and before fulfilling the task, participants read the second part of the note describing the cause for which the student would use any credits received. In the Muslim/Protest condition, the note read:

"To conclude, it would be really great if I could win this voucher from the Fac Copy so that I can print the flyers for a petition for lifting the ban on headscarves in schools. The extra pocket money I make with my student job is limited. So, this contribution would be a non-negligible boost for me."

On the basis of previous research showing the negative perceptions of the headscarf by the majority of native Belgians (Saroglou et al., 2009), it was assumed that protesting against the ban of headscarves (as a Muslim) could be considered to be at odds with gender equality. In the two other conditions, the cause for which the voucher would be used was a neutral one: "I can print my course syllabus."

Dependent variable: Prosociality. After reading the second part of the note, participants were presented with 15 short numeric tasks (e.g., $45 + 23$) for which, as earlier announced, they had to select the correct answer from either the left (benefiting the "familiar" student) or the right (benefiting the "unknown" student) column, choosing between four answers (e.g., 22, 68, 52, or 78) provided both in the left and the right columns. The number of correct answers given in the left column relative to the total number of correct responses to the numeric tasks was our measure of prosociality.

After resolving the numeric problems, participants were asked why they decided to divide their answers as they did. They could choose between "I wanted to support the student," "I did not want to support the student," "I wanted to divide the answers more or less equally," or they could give their own reasons. The open answers given were similar to the three pre-given answers.

Postexperimental measures. Following a distraction task consisting of finding six words in a word grid, participants were presented with the measures of possible moderators (all but the last one used 5-point Likert scales). *Multiculturalism* was measured via eight items from the Multicultural Ideology Scale (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003) tapping society's (here, Belgium's) support for multicultural diversity ($\alpha = .74$). A sample item is "Belgians should recognize that the Belgian society consists of groups with different cultural backgrounds."

Contact with ethnic and religious outgroups was measured through two series of questions. The first series concerned the *frequency* of contact, from *never* to *daily*, with members of the following groups: (1) Jews, (2) Muslims, (3) North Africans, (4) Africans, and (5) Asians ($\alpha = .80$). The second concerned the *quality* of contact, from *very negative* to *very positive*, with members of these five groups. Two additional items addressed frequency and quality of contact with Catholics but were not included in the analyses as they refer to some extent to the ingroup. Frequency and quality of contact were weakly interrelated, $r = .17, p = .048$.

Local and transnational identity was measured by asking participants to what extent they identified as (1) "Walloon" (regional), (2) "Belgian," (3) "European," (4) "world citizen," and (5) "other—to be specified" (see Saroglou & Galand, 2004; Saroglou & Mathijssen, 2007). On the basis of an exploratory factor analysis, we combined the regional and national identity into a "local" identity ($\alpha = .65$), and identification as European and world citizen into a "transnational" identity ($\alpha = .48$). The two were weakly interrelated, $r = .18, p = .031$.

Finally, we measured personal *religiosity* through a widely used three-item index of (1) importance of God in life, (2) importance of religion in life (both on a 7-point scale), and (3) frequency of prayer (5-point scale). The index ($\alpha = .92$) reflects intrinsic religiosity (Saroglou & Mathijssen, 2007). We also included a short measure of Schwartz's values orientation (Boer, 2013), but analyses at the two axes and the four poles did not provide results, probably because of the character of these two levels being too abstract.

Results

Main Effects

A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of the condition on prosociality towards the "familiar" student, that is, the author of the note, $F(2, 170) = 8.06, p < .001, \eta^2 = .088$. Comparisons between the three conditions (see also Figure 1) showed that participants were less prone to help a

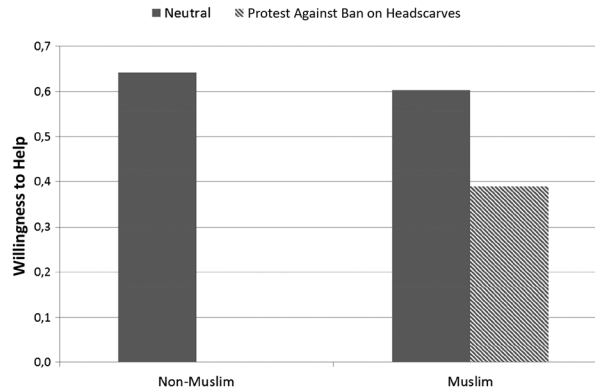


Figure 1. Prosociality as a function of target (Muslim vs. non-Muslim) and cause (protest against the ban on headscarves vs. neutral) (Experiment 1).

Muslim protesting against the ban on headscarves, $M = 0.39$, $SD = 0.39$, compared to a student who wanted to print a study syllabus, be it a Muslim, $M = 0.60$, $SD = 0.37$, or a non-Muslim, $M = 0.64$, $SD = 0.34$, respectively $t(105) = 2.81$, $p = .006$, and $t(123) = 3.80$, $p < .001$. There was no difference between the two latter conditions, participants being equally prone to help a Muslim or non-Muslim printing a syllabus.

The justifications provided for how participants divided their answers of the numeric task were in line with the above results. In all conditions, most participants—47% in the two Muslim conditions, 43% in the non-Muslim condition—stated that they divided their answers more or less equally between the familiar and the unknown student. However, in the value-conflicting condition, 26% of participants explicitly indicated that they did not want to support the protesting Muslim, and 20% said the contrary, that is, they did want to support that student. In contrast, in the other two neutral conditions, only 4.4% (Muslim) and 3.2% (non-Muslim) stated they did not want to support the familiar student; and 40% (Muslim) and 48% (non-Muslim) explicitly said they wanted to support the familiar student.

Moderators

One-way ANOVAs showed that postexperimentally measured potential moderators did not differ between conditions, $F_s < 2.22$, ns . In a subsequent step, we examined the correlations between the hypothesized moderators and the prosocial intentions toward the student, distinctly by condition (see Table 1). Participants with a positive orientation towards cultural diversity, that is, having strong transnational identities, positively evaluating contact with ethnic and religious outgroups, and—albeit not significant—endorsing multiculturalism, were more prone to support the student in the two neutral conditions (printing the syllabus), regardless whether the student was Muslim or non-Muslim. However, they were not necessarily inclined to do so when the Muslim intended to protest (printing flyers) against the ban on headscarves. In contrast, participants who strongly identified with their local identity tended to be prosocial toward the familiar student only when this was an ingroup member, that is, non-Muslim, but not when the student was Muslim, regardless of whether the cause was neutral or possibly in conflict with Western values. The association between prosociality and the participants' own religiosity or the frequency of contact did not vary across the conditions.

To clarify whether the above-mentioned differences between conditions were significant, we computed two moderated regression analyses of prosociality. The first focused on the moderation effect of having a positive orientation towards cultural diversity—as multiculturalism, transnational identities, and positive outgroup contact showed the same anticipated pattern, we combined

Table 1. Correlations Between Prosociality Towards the Familiar Target and Individual Differences, by Condition (Experiment 1)

	Muslim Target	
	Non-Muslim Target	Protest Against Headscarves Ban
	Neutral Cause	Neutral Cause
Cultural Diversity Orientation	.36**	.48**
Multiculturalism	.22	.22
Transnational Identities	.27*	.37*
Intergroup Contact: Quality	.42**	.59***
Intergroup Contact: Frequency	-.03	-.06
Local Identity	.45**	.09
Religiosity	.10	.18

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

these three variables into one indicator ($\alpha = .63$) and averaged it into one variable of openness to cultural diversity. The second moderated regression analysis focused on the role of local identification. Due to the small sample size, we did not include the two moderators simultaneously in the same analysis; nevertheless, such analysis showed similar results. Both analyses included the condition, as a categorical variable with three categories, the moderator, the interaction between condition and the moderator, and the control variables age and gender as predictors. Since it is substantially meaningful to know the effect of the moderator within a condition, we report the marginal effects per condition in Table 2 (Brambor, Clark, & Golder, 2006). Interaction coefficients, which reflect how the effect of the moderator differs between the conditions, are reported in the table’s footnote.

Table 2. Moderated Regression Analyses of Prosociality on Condition, Relevant Individual Differences and Their Interactions (Experiment 1)

	<i>b</i>	(SE)	Wald χ^2	<i>b</i>	(SE)	Wald χ^2
Gender (<i>ref.: male</i>)	0.07	(.03)	5.56*	0.09	(.03)	9.01*
Age ^a	0.25	(.10)	5.88*	0.24	(.10)	5.34*
<i>Condition</i>						
Non-Muslim/Neutral (<i>ref.</i>)						
Muslim/Neutral	-0.08	(.07)	1.47	-0.09	(.07)	1.60
Muslim/Protest	0.27	(.06)	18.19***	-0.26	(.07)	15.85***
<i>Openness to Cultural Diversity^{a, b}</i>						
Non-Muslim/Neutral	0.55	(.32)	2.94 [†]			
Muslim/Neutral	1.19	(.36)	10.92**			
Muslim/Protest	0.17	(.32)	0.28			
<i>Local Identity^{a, c}</i>						
Non-Muslim/Neutral				0.59	(.21)	7.82**
Muslim/Neutral				0.14	(.24)	0.34
Muslim/Protest				-0.07	(.17)	0.16

^aContinuous variables are centralized ($M = 0$).

^bDisplayed coefficients are the marginal effects of openness to cultural diversity (OCD) per condition. The impact of OCD differs significantly between the Muslim/Protest condition and the Muslim/Neutral condition: $b = 1.02$ (.48), $\chi^2 = 4.50$, $p = .034$. The impact of OCD on prosociality in the non-Muslim/Neutral condition did not differ from the other two conditions.

^cDisplayed coefficients are the marginal effects of local identification (LI) per condition. The impact of LI differs significantly between the non-Muslim/Neutral condition and the Muslim/Protest condition, $b = -0.66$ (.27), $\chi^2 = 5.94$, $p = .015$. The impact of LI on prosociality in the Muslim/Neutral condition did not differ from the other two conditions.

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

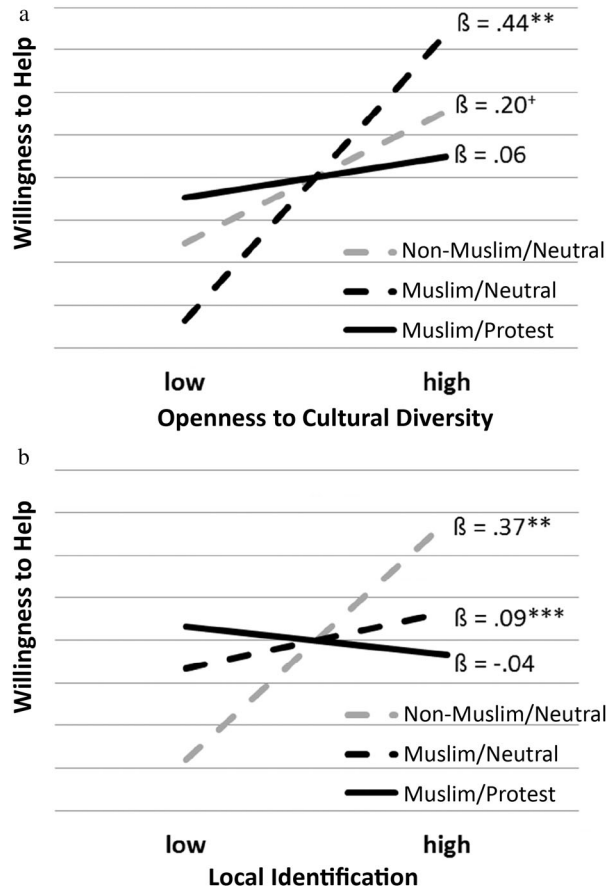


Figure 2. Willingness to help as a function of openness to cultural diversity (a) and local identity (b), graphed at 1 *SD* below and above the mean of identification (by condition) (Experiment 1). [†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Results showed that openness toward cultural diversity predicted prosociality in the neutral conditions but not in the Muslim/Protest condition. This difference between conditions was significant (Table 2, see also Figure 2a). We also found identification with Belgium and Wallonia to predict prosociality in the non-Muslim/Neutral condition, $b = 0.59$, $p = .005$, but not in the conditions involving a Muslim. However, the difference in impact of local identification on prosociality between the two neutral conditions was not significant (see also Figure 2b).

Discussion

Experiment 1 suggests that negative reactions to Muslims may not be the outcome of general anti-Muslim prejudice. Instead, participants tended to help the Muslim less only when the latter was depicted as fighting the ban on headscarves, a behavior purportedly conflicting with Western values, compared to a Muslim or non-Muslim who engaged in neutral behavior. Thus, Experiment 1 provided no evidence in favor of general anti-Muslim discrimination, that is, less willingness to help a Muslim in need, compared to a non-Muslim, when the cause was neutral (here: making copies as a student). The results clearly show differentiated reactions depending on the cause when deciding whether or not to help a Muslim (support for H2 or the value-conflict hypothesis).

The results regarding the role of hypothesized moderators further indicate that support for cultural diversity does not imply an unconditional acceptance of diversity: Compared to the Muslim anticipating neutral behavior, we found a weaker impact of openness to cultural diversity on the willingness to help the Muslim when there was a potential value conflict (supporting H4, that is, the conditional support for diversity hypothesis). In contrast, and in line with Hypothesis 5 (the unconditional discrimination hypothesis), participants with strong local identities turned out to be generally prejudiced and discriminated more against the Muslim compared to the non-Muslim, regardless of the nature of the cause. Finally, general religiosity failed to moderate the main effects, possibly because the measure was too global, with regard to our specific outcomes, which are rather a function of specific religious attitudes (Saroglou & Cohen, 2013).

Although these results are informative, the design of the study did not fully allow disentangling of the effects of the target (Muslim versus non-Muslim) from the effects of the cause (potentially conflicting versus neutral). Specifically, without having a condition in which a non-Muslim infringes upon the participants' values, we cannot fully test Hypothesis 2 (value-conflicting behavior is rejected to the same degree when the target is Muslim or non-Muslim) against the alternative Hypothesis 3 (the subtle anti-Muslim prejudice hypothesis: When engaged in nonnormative behavior, a Muslim will be less helped than a non-Muslim). Furthermore, the ban on headscarves in itself is a controversial issue. Whereas most Europeans have a negative perception of the headscarf (Statham, 2015; Van der Noll, 2010), many members of the Western majority who endorse liberal, secular, and universalistic values tend to oppose the ban of headscarves in schools in order to protect public expression of religion and personal autonomy (Gustavsson, Van der Noll, & Sundberg, 2016; Saroglou et al., 2009). Therefore, our participants may not have perceived the Muslim's protest against the ban of headscarves as conflicting with Western values.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2 differed from Experiment 1 in a number of ways. First, it focused on opposing gay rights as an indicator of presumed conflict between Islamic beliefs and Western European (secular) values instead of focusing on opposing the headscarf ban. Acceptance of homosexuality is well-established in EU legislation (Gerhards, 2010). Although prejudice towards gay men and women has not disappeared and cross-national differences exist, there is a consensus in Western Europe regarding the acceptance of homosexuality and defense of equal rights for same-sex couples, including acceptance of gay marriage and adoption (Hooghe & Meeusen, 2013). Belgium in particular ranks very highly on tolerance of homosexuality-related issues, with disapproval of homosexuality being lower ($M = 0.90$, on a 0–4 scale) than the European average ($M = 1.22$) (Van den Akker, Ploeg, & Scheepers, 2013). Protecting equality in people's—here same-sex couples'—rights and personal autonomy is thus less controversial than prohibiting the wearing of headscarves.

Secondly, Experiment 2 included a fourth condition, that is, a non-Muslim described as engaging in the same behavior as the Muslim. Experiment 2 thus adopted a full 2 (target) \times 2 (cause) design. We anticipated participants to be less willing to support the Muslim protesting same-sex marriages compared to the Muslim engaging in nonconflicting behavior (H2). Moreover, we investigated whether the decreased willingness to help a cause that may conflict with Western values would be stronger for the Muslim than for the non-Muslim (H3).

Finally, as in Experiment 1, we included postexperimental measures of universalism, multiculturalism, and religiosity. Additionally, we included measures of (1) attitudes towards Muslims and Islam, (2) antireligious critique, and (3) attitudes towards atheists and atheism. We expected universalism, multiculturalism, and positive attitude towards Muslims and Islam to correspond, as in Experiment 1, to Hypothesis 4 (prosociality towards the Muslim but not for conflicting behavior); and antireligious

critique and proatheist attitudes, known typically to predict low antigay and low ethnic prejudice (Streib & Klein, 2013; Zuckerman, 2009), to predict helping the antigay rights target less than the neutral one, independently of its religious background (H2).

Method

Participants

Two hundred seventy adults (72% women) living in the French- (57%) or Dutch-speaking (43%) part of Belgium participated in the online study. Participants were recruited through social networks and snowball sampling. An additional 97 participants began the questionnaire but did not fulfill the numeric task designed to measure the dependent variable and were therefore excluded from the analyses. We also excluded participants who identified as Muslim ($n = 3$), had origins in a country where Islam is the dominant religion ($n = 8$), or explicitly questioned the credibility of the story ($n = 4$). The age of the remaining participants ranged from 17 to 59 ($M = 25$ years old, $SD = 8$). Eighty percent of the participants had, or were pursuing, a university education. Most participants identified as having no religious affiliation (52%) or as Catholic (32%). Six percent identified as belonging to another Christian denomination or a different religion. Almost all participants were of European origin (96%).

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: (1) Muslim/Protest, (2) Muslim/Neutral, (3) non-Muslim/Protest, and (4) non-Muslim/Neutral (respective n s = 55, 74, 74, and 67). Afterwards, with a few amendments, we applied the same procedure as in Experiment 1: Participants (1) read two parts of a note reportedly written by a student, (2) were instructed to solve the numeric tasks designed to measure prosociality towards the “familiar” student compared to an unknown student, and (3) completed postexperimental measures of individual differences (potential moderators) after a distraction task. The specifics of the design of Experiment 2, compared to Experiment 1, are outlined below.

Experimental material. The content of the note manipulating the target and the cause was slightly different. The first part of the note read:

“Hi, my name is [Fatma or Mehmed, in the Muslim conditions; Marie or Thomas, in the non-Muslim conditions], I’m 22 years old, [Muslim, added in the Muslim conditions] and a student in Economics. I have been asked to tell you something personal, something I wouldn’t tell somebody unless I knew them well. Even though I was excited about going to university, one thing that worried me was that it seemed so huge. I was afraid I would just get lost in the crowd and wouldn’t be able to get to know anyone well. I was pretty lonely at first, maybe because I was so scared. I didn’t make many friends. After a couple of weeks though, I started feeling more at ease. Now I really like it here. I’ve met a couple of cool people and have some really good friends.”

After reading this note, participants were requested to fill out a short impression questionnaire of how (1) *confident*, (2) *trustworthy*, (3) *competent*, and (4) *sincere* they found the student, (5) how *much they liked* the student and (6) *how similar* they perceived the student to be to themselves (7-point Likert scales). Subsequently, participants were informed about their task through which we aimed to measure their willingness to help the student. In this study, the task would provide the author of the note

with a chance to win a Eurostar (the high-speed train running between London and Brussels) voucher worth 50 euros.

The second part of the note, manipulating the cause (protest same-sex marriage versus neutral), was as follows in the protest conditions:

“I was hoping that at least one of your tasks would be beneficial to me, because I could really use those 50 euros right now. I have been saving for weeks to try to get enough money to take a trip to London. There will be a demonstration against same-sex marriage, and I really would like to attend. I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to save enough to go, but 50 euros would sure help me out a lot! I really want to go; the money would be great!”

The note was signed with the name of the student. In the neutral conditions, the sentence referring to the reason for the London trip was replaced by “My brother recently moved there and I would really like to visit him.”

Finally, participants accomplished the same numeric tasks, as in Experiment 1, designed to measure prosociality towards the student. Afterwards, as in Experiment 1, participants were asked why they divided their answers between the “familiar” student and the “unknown” other.

Postexperimental measures. After a distraction task consisting of counting the number of triangles and squares in a figure, participants were administered measures of potential moderators. *Universalism* as a value orientation was measured through the three relevant items of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz, 1992), a 21-item measure of the 10 values as in Schwartz’s model. One sample item is: “Every person in the world should be treated equally” ($\alpha = .62$). *Multiculturalism* and *religiosity* were measured as in Experiment 1 (α s in the present data .81 and .88, respectively). Since universalism and multiculturalism are theoretically overlapping constructs and given their intercorrelation in the present data ($r = .40, p < .001$), we created a single indicator of multicultural diversity orientation by computing the average score of the 11 items ($\alpha = .80$).

Additionally, we measured *attitudes toward Muslims and Islam* and *attitudes toward atheists and atheism*. To do so, we averaged participants’ scores on two items, that is, evaluation of, respectively, Muslims and Islam, and atheists and atheism, on Likert scales ranging from 1 (*very negative*) to 7 (*very positive*) (respective α s = .77 and .87). Finally, as an indicator of *antireligious sentiments*, we used the External Critique (of religion) subscale (five items) of the Post-Critical Belief Scale (Duriez, Soenens, & Hutsebaut, 2005), a subscale that measures a negative perception of religion. A sample item is: “Faith turns out to be an illusion when one is confronted with the harshness of life” ($\alpha = .80$).

In order to check the participants’ *acceptance of homosexuality*, participants were also asked to indicate on a 7-point scale to what extent they disagree (1) or agree (7) with three items regarding homosexuality ($\alpha = .60$). Only 4.5% of participants disagreed (scored below 4 on the 7-point scale) that it is a good thing to allow marriage between two men or two women; only 6% reported feeling uncomfortable having a homosexual person as a neighbor (scored above 4); and 87% agreed (scored above 4), and 69% even strongly agreed (score of 7) that there is nothing wrong with homosexuality. Protesting against same-sex marriages—our operationalization of a value conflict—is thus indeed at odds with the beliefs of our research participants.

Results

Main Effects and Interaction

A 2 (Target) \times 2 (Cause) ANOVA revealed main effects of both the target, $F(1, 270) = 8.01, p = .005, \eta^2 = .03$, and the cause, $F(1, 270) = 40.99, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$. Specifically, participants

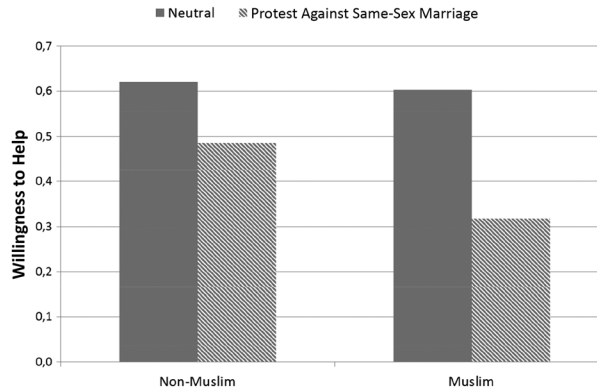


Figure 3. Prosociality as a function of target (Muslim vs. non-Muslim) and cause (protest against same-sex marriage vs. neutral) (Experiment 2). ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

were overall less likely to help a Muslim, $M = 0.48$, $SD = 0.31$, than a non-Muslim, $M = 0.55$, $SD = 0.27$, and less likely to help a student to protest against same-sex marriage, $M = 0.41$, $SD = 0.31$, than to visit a relative, $M = 0.61$, $SD = 0.23$. Furthermore, the critical target \times cause interaction was significant, $F(1, 270) = 5.21$, $p = .023$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (see also Figure 3). Post hoc comparisons revealed that, in the two neutral-cause conditions, participants did not discriminate between the Muslim and the non-Muslim: They were equally willing to help them to visit a relative, $F(1, 141) = 0.21$, *ns*. However, when the cause posed a potential conflict with Western values, participants were less willing to help the Muslim compared to the non-Muslim, $F(1, 129) = 9.91$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .07$. In other words, the decreased willingness to help the protesting versus a neutral student was stronger for the Muslim, $F(1, 139) = 33.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$, than for the non-Muslim, $F(1, 141) = 9.62$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Importantly, these results did not change after controlling for participants' age, gender, level of education, and region (Dutch- or French-speaking part of Belgium).

In line with these results were the participants' reasons for dividing their answers to the numeric tasks as they did. Regarding the non-Muslim protesting against same-sex marriage, 23% of participants explicitly mentioned that they did not want to support this student. However, this percentage doubled in size, with almost half of the participants (47%) stating that they did not want to help, when the protesting student was Muslim. Moreover, participants in the Muslim/Protest condition who chose to elaborate on their reasons explicitly referred to not wanting to support behavior that goes against their values.

Moderators

A series of two-way ANOVAs indicated that none of the postexperimental measures was affected by the conditions, $F_s < 2.185$, *ns*. As a next step, we examined the bivariate associations between the possible moderators and prosociality, distinctly by condition (Table 3). Openness to cultural diversity tended to be positively associated with prosocial intentions in all conditions, except the condition with the protesting Muslim. Participants with more *positive attitudes toward Muslims and Islam* showed higher prosocial tendencies across all conditions (r across conditions = .22, $p = .001$). Having a *pro-atheist orientation* was negatively associated with prosociality towards the protesting student, independently of the students' ethnoreligious status. Furthermore, in the neutral conditions, a proatheist attitude was positively correlated to the willingness to help the Muslim, but not the non-Muslim. Interestingly, our other measurement of antireligious attitudes (i.e., *external critique of religion*) was

Table 3. Correlations Between Prosociality Towards the Familiar Target and Individual Differences, by Condition (Experiment 2)

	Non-Muslim Target		Muslim Target	
	Neutral Cause	Protest Against Same-Sex Marriage	Neutral Cause	Protest Against Same-Sex Marriage
Openness to Cultural Diversity	.12	.24*	.22 [†]	-.13
Pro-Islam Attitudes	.12	.20	.32**	.18
Religiosity	-.03	.18	.07	.12
Proatheism Attitudes	.01	-.21 [†]	.32*	-.34*
External Critique of Religion	-.11	-.22 [†]	-.17	-.23

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

associated with a general tendency of reduced prosociality (r across conditions = $-.153$, $p = .018$), while the strength of one’s own individual religiosity was not related to prosociality in any of the conditions.

As a next step, using the SPSS macro PROCESS (model 3; Hayes, 2013), we conducted two moderated regression analyses of prosociality, one focusing on the role of openness to cultural diversity and the other on the role of proatheist attitudes. Due to the small sample size, we did not include the two moderators simultaneously in the same analysis; nevertheless, such an analysis revealed similar results. The analyses included the two main effects of the conditions (target and cause), the moderator, the three-way interaction between the moderator, target, and cause, and all underlying two-way interactions as predictors. Both models controlled for age and gender (Table 4).

The analyses revealed a significant three-way interaction with openness to cultural diversity. Simple slope analyses (Figure 4a) revealed that openness to cultural diversity predicted higher prosociality for the Muslim in the neutral condition and for the non-Muslim in the protest condition but predicted lower prosociality for the Muslim in the protesting condition. We also found a significant three-way interaction effect with proatheist attitudes. Simple slope analyses (Figure 4b) showed that participants with a more positive attitude towards atheism and atheists were less likely to support protests against same-sex marriage, regardless of whether the protester was Muslim or non-Muslim. However, a more positive attitude towards atheists predicted an increased willingness to help the Muslim in the neutral condition, while no effect was found for the non-Muslim with the neutral cause.

Table 4. Moderated Regression Analyses (Experiment 2)

	<i>b</i>	(<i>SE</i>)	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	(<i>SE</i>)	<i>t</i>
Constant	.60	(.05)	11.68***	.58	(.05)	11.86***
Gender (women)	-.07	(.04)	-1.94 [†]	-.06	(.04)	-1.77 [†]
Age	.21	(.09)	2.44*	.23	(.08)	2.77**
Target: Muslim vs. Non-Muslim	-.05	(.02)	-2.77**	-.05	(.02)	-3.14**
Cause: Conflict vs. Neutral	-.10	(.02)	-6.25***	-.11	(.02)	-6.61***
Target × Cause	-.04	(.02)	-2.20*	-.04	(.02)	-2.63**
Openness to Cultural Diversity (OCD)	.13	(.12)	1.05			
OCD × Target	-.16	(.12)	-1.28			
OCD × Cause	-.07	(.12)	-0.53			
OCD × Target × Cause	-.27	(.12)	-2.20*			
Pro-Atheist Attitudes (PAA)				-.13	(.09)	-1.48
PAA × Target				.05	(.09)	0.51
PAA × Cause				-.32	(.09)	-3.51**
PAA × Target × Cause				-.19	(.09)	-2.12*

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

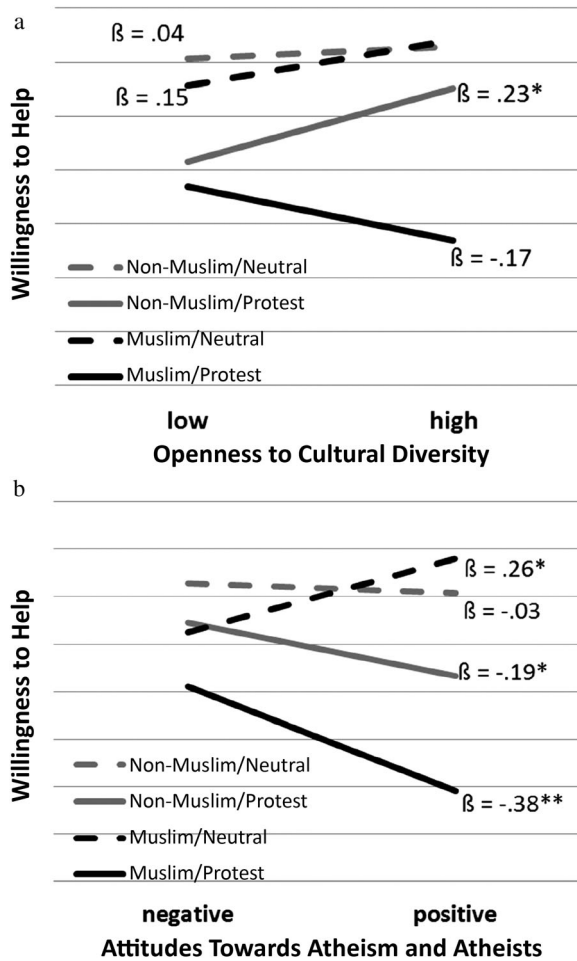


Figure 4. Willingness to help as a function of openness to cultural diversity (a) and attitudes towards atheism and atheists (b), graphed at 1 SD below and above the mean of identification (by condition) (Study 2). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Discussion

Experiment 2 replicates and qualifies the findings of Experiment 1. As in Experiment 1, prosociality towards a Muslim target was reduced only when the cause could be perceived as being in conflict with Western values (here: protesting against gay rights). This finding clearly rules out Hypothesis 1, the general anti-Muslim prejudice hypothesis. Furthermore, there was evidence in favor of Hypothesis 2, the value-conflict hypothesis: Both Muslim and non-Muslim targets received less help when the cause was potentially conflicting with Western values, compared to when it was neutral or perhaps even positive (visiting a relative abroad). However, Hypothesis 3, the subtle anti-Muslim prejudice hypothesis, was also confirmed: The protesting Muslim received less help than the protesting non-Muslim. This critical finding points to a subtle form of discrimination that appears when there seems to be a legitimate justification for prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995).

As far as the role of moderators is concerned, openness to cultural diversity, as in Experiment 1, did not imply an unconditional prosociality towards the outgroup. Instead, there was a significant shift from willingness to help the Muslim when the cause was neutral to unwillingness to help when the

cause posed a value conflict. Surprisingly, however, openness to cultural diversity did show increased willingness to help the protesting non-Muslim, a finding for which we currently do not have an explanation and which may be attributed to chance. Religiosity, as in Experiment 1, was perhaps a too general disposition to predict differentiated outcomes across conditions. However, pro-Muslim attitudes were generally related to an increased willingness to help. In contrast, antireligious critique, a disposition known to reflect both low empathy and low antigay prejudice (see Duriez, Dezutter, Neyrinck, & Hutsebaut, 2007 for a review), was related to reduced prosociality, in particular for antigay targets. Finally, having a positive disposition towards atheists and atheism turned out to predict reduced prosociality towards antigay rights students regardless of the student's religious identity. In addition, and contrary to the antireligious critique, it also predicted willingness to help a Muslim, but not necessarily a non-Muslim, when the cause was neutral. Thus, while resembling multiculturalism in predicting conditional support of diversity, proatheist attitudes seemed more consistent than multiculturalism in the shift to unwillingness to help anyone who actively promotes antigay prejudice.

General Discussion

Our aim was to disentangle general anti-Muslim prejudice and opposition towards allegedly illiberal beliefs or practices in explaining negative attitudes, here in terms of decreased prosociality, toward a Muslim target. We operationalized the potential value conflict by the target's intention to protest against the ban on headscarves (Experiment 1) and protest against same-sex marriage (Experiment 2). We expected Belgian non-Muslim participants to show less prosociality when a target presented a potential value conflict compared to the neutral conditions (H2). We also investigated possible subtle discrimination of Muslims, in terms of a stronger decreased prosociality towards a Muslim compared to a non-Muslim, when presenting a potential value conflict (H3).

The results of both studies indeed revealed that participants' prosociality towards a Muslim depended on whether she or he intended to engage in potentially value-conflicting behavior or not. This suggests that people may indeed express negative attitudes towards Muslims only when they perceive Muslims' beliefs and behavior to be problematic with regard to Western values emphasizing equality and autonomy. When, on the contrary, the cause is neutral or positive (a student making copies or visiting a relative abroad), people seem equally willing to help a Muslim and a non-Muslim. In other words, our studies did not provide evidence for Hypothesis 1, the general anti-Muslim prejudice hypothesis. This may seem surprising, as prejudice towards Muslims in Western societies, including Belgium, has been widely reported (Spruyt & Van der Noll, 2016; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). One possible explanation could be that the manipulation of whether the student was a Muslim or not—signaled by the name of the author of the note and the mere mention that the author was Muslim—was not strong enough. Other studies, however, concluded that such a manipulation is sufficient to obtain increased prejudicial or discriminatory reactions to Muslims compared to non-Muslims (Kauff, Issmer, & Nau, 2013; Stürmer, Snyder, Kropp, & Siem, 2006). Another possible explanation could be that, whereas studies on prejudice toward Muslims refer to Muslims as a group, we asked the participants to help a particular person about whom they had just read some personal information. It may be that people are more likely to have favorable attitudes towards people who are more familiar to them. Indeed, in response to the question of why participants divided their answers to the numeric tasks as they did, some participants indicated that they preferred to help someone they "know" than a completely unknown person.

In line with the distinction based on the cause, the results regarding individual differences further indicate that support for cultural diversity does not imply an unconditional acceptance of diversity. Both studies show that support for cultural diversity had a positive impact on the prosociality toward the Muslim in the neutral condition, but not in the conditions where this Muslim defended a

presumably illiberal cause. This is in line with previous research showing that the positive impact of the endorsement of multiculturalism on tolerance of Muslim practices and beliefs is weaker when these practices and beliefs are considered to be problematic (Gielsing et al., 2010; Van der Noll, 2014). However, the results also show that not all people will always make such a nuanced evaluation of Muslims. The results of Experiment 1 suggested that participants who strongly identify with their local (regional, national) identities, which typically fuel prejudice, did not differentiate between an “illiberal” and a “neutral” Muslim and were less willing to help the Muslim irrespective of the nature of the planned behavior. This points to the relation between localism/ethnocentrism with religious identity and interethnic and interreligious prejudice (Saroglou & Cohen, 2013). Van Rijswijk, Hopkins, and Johnston (2009) showed that emphasizing the religious (Catholic) identity of (Polish) immigrants made Northern Irish Protestants less welcoming of these immigrants. Likewise, future research could examine the impact of the salience of the religious identity of Muslim minorities on attitudes towards Muslims and Islam.

Furthermore, additional findings from the present studies preclude us from concluding that people are well able to distinguish between (not) disliking Muslims as persons and disliking allegedly Muslim ideas, values, and practices. Experiment 2, which included an additional condition where a non-Muslim undertook the same potentially value-conflicting behavior (protesting against gay rights), presented evidence in favor of Hypothesis 3, the subtle anti-Muslim prejudice hypothesis. That is, although the willingness to help the protesting student, compared to the nonprotesting student, was reduced across conditions, it was so to a stronger degree when the protesting student was a Muslim. This difference reflects a subtle form of anti-Muslim discrimination that appears when there seems to be a legitimate justification to do so. The latter is indeed a typical case of prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Such justifications for discrimination are omnipresent in public discourse, for example by targeting the wearing of headscarves, burqas, and burkinis under the label of protecting women’s rights or by objecting to halal slaughtering for the sake of animal welfare (Elver, 2012; Field, 2012). Also, analyzing the political discourse of Geert Wilders, leader of the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, Verkuyten (2013) concluded that the distinction between Muslims, to be respected as persons, and Islam, to be criticized as a belief system, functions to ward off accusations of prejudice and discrimination.

Interestingly, participants with more positive attitudes towards atheism and atheists did not express this subtle discrimination, that is, they reacted the same to the protesting Muslim as they did to the non-Muslim and were thus better able to distinguish between persons and their behavior or beliefs. It is highly likely that this finding can be explained by a combination of both low sexual-orientation prejudice and low ethnoreligious prejudice among atheists (for reviews, see Streib & Klein, 2013; Zuckerman, 2009).

In sum, the two studies show first that, although for some persons—the ethnocentrists—general anti-Muslim prejudice is at play, we cannot exclude the possibility that people, to some extent, distinguish between Muslims as individuals to be respected and (perceived) Muslim ideas, values, and practices to be questioned and potentially condemned. However, this is only part of the story, as, second, we showed that people indeed discriminate against Muslims, compared to non-Muslims, when they feel more comfortable to do so, that is, when the targets defend causes perceived as contrary to Western values.

The current work has some limitations and leads to questions for further research. Whereas both Hypotheses 1 and 2 were successfully tested in both studies, involving two different issues related to (il)liberal values (gender equality and gay rights), Hypothesis 3 the subtle anti-Muslim prejudice hypothesis, was only tested in Experiment 2, thus involving only one issue (gay rights). Future studies should therefore aim to replicate this finding relating to different issues. Moreover, the “protest” dimension of the actions involved may have accentuated participants’ discomfort with a minority’s member protest behavior, independently of the potential illiberal content of the action. Furthermore,

the fact that people did not discriminate against a Muslim involved in a neutral cause (making copies for school; visiting a relative) was based on an implicit, but still self-reported measure. It is not excluded that more subtle measures, as well as behaviors that are not illiberal but still may be perceived as indirectly affecting participants' life (e.g., accepting a Muslim as a neighbor or married partner of the offspring), may show general anti-Muslim discrimination.

Beyond these limitations, the two studies presented here are the first to present experimental evidence that non-Muslim Westerners may, to some extent, differentiate between Muslims in general and presumably Muslim practices perceived to pose a threat to Western liberal and secular values, while at the same time still being prejudiced in discriminating against Muslims, compared to others, for this questionable behavior. As such, the present work contributes toward a better understanding of anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination in the West, in general but also as a function of key individual differences that are openness to cultural diversity, ethnocentrism, and religious attitudes. This is a nonnegligible step towards understanding contemporary political behavior of both citizens and leaders in relation to cultural diversity and its management.

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