

Public Support for a Ban on Headscarves: A Cross-National Perspective

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Public Support for a Ban on Headscarves: A Cross-National Perspective

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This paper compares a psychological explanation of support for a ban on headscarves in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the Netherlands. This study examines how perceptions of threat posed by Muslims and Islam and the overall attitude towards Muslims explain support for a ban on headscarves. In addition, cross-national comparisons are made to study how these relations are affected by contextual differences. Analyses are based on the 2005 survey on Islamic extremism by the Pew Research Center. Results show that the countries have a large influence on whether someone supports the ban on headscarves, indicating that contextual differences matter. In addition, having a negative attitude towards Muslims makes it more likely to support a ban on headscarves. In general, perceived threat contributes to stronger support, although there are slight differences in effect between the countries. Finally, perceived threat equally influences support for the ban on headscarves among prejudiced and non-prejudiced people.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion are core principles underlying democratic western societies, have been central in the development of the constitutions of many Western European countries, and have been valued within these societies for even longer. Rarely, however, have these countries been confronted with the arrival of a large number of immigrants who do not share the religious background of the majority population (Hunter 2002). The growing number of Muslims in Western Europe has generated renewed interest in the debate on freedom of religion and religious practices. This debate is not only limited to the individual and private practice of religion, but often revolves around questions of religious discrimination and the extent to which Muslims or minorities in general, can practise their faith within Western societies. The interplay between the private and public spheres of religion is, for instance, illustrated by controversies that have arisen throughout Europe concerning the wearing of headscarves by Muslim women. Restricting a minority group in their rights and liberties can cause tensions and conflicts between groups within a society, such as increased discrimination, marginalisation and social isolation of Muslims by non-Muslims. This, in turn, can result in stronger feelings

of social exclusion and radicalisation among Muslims. A deteriorating relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims would have a great impact on the political and social cohesion of western societies and it is important to identify the determinants of the willingness to limit the right of Muslims to practise their religion.

In this paper I examine psychological factors that may explain support for a ban on headscarves, emphasising the individual and the overall attitude towards Muslims, perceived threats posed by Islam and Muslims, and the interaction with cross-national differences.

My comparison is between the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the Netherlands. These countries have similar profiles with respect to the position of Muslims in their societies: Muslims arrived as immigrants from the 1950s mainly as guest workers (later joined by their families) or as post-colonial migrants, and Muslims are overrepresented in the lower socioeconomic segments of society. Unemployment rates of immigrants in general, and Muslims in particular are considerably higher than unemployment rates of the overall population. Furthermore, there are large income

differences between Muslims and the overall population in Western European countries (Buijs and Rath 2006; Pew Research Center 2007; EUMC 2006). Despite the similarities, the countries differ in other aspects such as the number of Muslims, countries of origin, and the way Muslim minorities and immigrants in general are dealt with, for instance with respect to citizenship requirements (Weldon 2006) and formal church-state arrangements (Fetzer and Soper 2005). Exact estimates of the Muslim population in Western Europe are difficult to arrive at because most countries do not record religious affiliations.

In *France* the number of Muslims is generally estimated to be between 6 and 9 percent of the population, most of whom have an Algerian or Moroccan background (Buijs and Rath 2006; Dassetto, Ferrari, and Maréchal 2007). French society is characterised by a strict version of secularism (*laïcité*) and a rigorous separation of state and church (Hunter 2002).

The *United Kingdom*, in contrast, officially recognizes distinct cultural and religious groups, which have equal status under the law (Borooah and Mangan 2009). Muslims in the United Kingdom mainly have an Asian background and come from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Muslims are generally estimated to make up less than 3 percent of the total population (Dassetto, Ferrari, and Maréchal 2007).

The Netherlands and Germany can be placed between France and the United Kingdom. In both countries the number of Muslims is estimated at approximately 5 percent of the population. *German* Muslims have predominantly a Turkish background. Immigrants were long perceived as temporary and encouraged to maintain their own culture, customs and language. With the liberalisation of citizenship policies in the 1990s, the emphasis shifted towards similarities, rather than differences (Brubaker 2001). Integration policies in *the Netherlands* were also aimed at empowering different ethnic groups and supported, for instance, teaching and broadcasting in minority languages, and the establishment of religious schools. In contrast to Germany, the Dutch aim was to integrate ethnic minorities into society, facilitated by a relatively easy naturalisation process, granting local voting rights to foreigners and anti-discrimination

legislation that ensured their ability to maintain their own culture (Michalowski 2005). In recent years, the focus has shifted more towards assimilation, meaning that minorities are expected to adopt the majority's culture rather than maintaining their own.

1. The Headscarf Debate in Western Europe

The wearing of headscarves by Muslim women has become one of the central issues in the debate over the position of Muslims in Western Europe. This is a complex and multifaceted debate and although many Muslim women voluntarily choose to wear a headscarf for religious or cultural reasons (Bouw et al. 2003; Shadid and Van Koningsveld 2005), non-Muslims often interpret the headscarf as a symbol of oppression of women, patriarchy, and rejection of gender equality (EUMC 2006; McGoldrick 2006). Opponents of the headscarf often argue that Muslim women wear a headscarf because they are forced to do so by their parents, brothers, husbands or religious leaders (Shadid and Van Koningsveld 2005; Saharso and Lettinga 2008). The headscarf debate also touches on other concerns related to Muslim minorities; there is for instance discussion on whether the headscarf is really a requirement of the Islamic religion. Given that this is not entirely clear, the wearing of the headscarf is perceived as a symbol of Islamic fundamentalism, which, in turn, is associated with terrorism and violence (Shadid and Van Koningsveld 2005; McGoldrick 2006). More generally, the headscarf is perceived as a sign of immigrants' unwillingness to integrate into western societies and as a rejection of western values (McGoldrick 2006).

Several European countries have recently implemented laws concerning the wearing of headscarves in public places (Dassetto, Ferrari, and Maréchal 2007; McGoldrick 2006; Saroglou et al. 2009). The best-known example is probably the *French* law of 2004, prohibiting pupils in public schools from wearing any ostensible religious signs (Law no. 228, March 15, 2004). The main argument for this prohibition was that religious symbols, and thus the headscarf, would conflict with the secular and neutral character of the republican state (McGoldrick 2006). The French Republic and its *laïcité* emerged through intense fights against the Catholic Church, especially, and the hard-won separation of reli-

gion and public schooling remains a sensitive issue (Gunn 2004). Similar legislation has been proposed in Belgium and Denmark, but has been rejected (Dassetto, Ferrari, and Maréchal 2007).

In contrast to France, the *United Kingdom* has a very liberal approach to the wearing of religious symbols. In most teaching institutions the Islamic headscarf is accepted and if conflicts arise, they are generally resolved within the institution. There is no general legislation that prohibits women from wearing headscarves, but there are other provisions that regulate the issue, for instance, that pupils' headscarves should comply with the school uniform (McGoldrick 2006; Molokotos-Liederman 2000).

In *Germany*, regulations on the wearing of headscarves in public places such as schools are laid down at the level of the federal states, which has led to a variety of approaches for teachers and other civil servants. Three states (Berlin, Bremen and Lower Saxony) follow a secular approach and have implemented legislation that prohibits teachers and other civil servants from wearing any visible religious symbols and clothes. Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia and Saarland implemented a more conservative Christian approach and only prohibited teachers and civil servants from wearing a headscarf, whereas Christian crucifixes, nuns' habits and the Jewish kippah are allowed. The remaining states have not passed explicit regulations on religious clothing. School and university students in Germany are generally not restricted in the wearing of headscarves (Berghahn 2008; Faas 2010).

Lastly, in *the Netherlands* there is a broad ability to live according to particular group identities and traditions, including in the public sphere. The Dutch Equal Treatment Commission generally rules in favour of women who want to wear the headscarf, ruling that it is an expression of their religious identity, and as such protected by the right to freedom of religion. Distinctions are, however, made between institutional contexts; for reasons of neutrality, religious symbols (including the headscarf) are prohibited in courtrooms and the police force, but teachers and pupils are allowed to wear headscarves in schools (Saharso and Lettinga 2008).

Although there are differences depending on institutional settings and traditions, there seems to be a cross-national consensus that face-veiling is undesirable (McGoldrick 2006; Berghahn 2008). The French parliament recently approved a law that prohibits Muslim women from wearing veils that cover their face, like the burqa or the niqab, in public. According to President Nicolas Sarkozy, the law is intended to protect women from being forced to wear the veil (NOS 2010). The lower chamber of the Belgium parliament has also voted in favour of a similar ban on face-covering veils, but this law still has to be approved by the senate. In addition to reasons of morality and the oppressed position of women, Belgian supporters of this ban focus on reasons of public safety; people who cover their face pose a security risk (Cendrowicz 2010).

2. Perceived Threat as an Explanation for Support for a Ban on Headscarves

Studies identify the perception of threat as one of the main predictors of the strength of support for the rights and liberties of others (Gibson 2006; McIntosh et al. 1995; Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002; Sullivan and Transue 1999). Integrated Threat Theory suggests four basic types of threat that can result in negative attitudes towards out-groups: *realistic threats*, *symbolic threats*, *intergroup anxiety* and *negative stereotypes* (Stephan et al. 1998, 559). *Realistic threat* refers to economic and physical threats, such as competition over material and economic resources and safety concerns. Despite the label "realistic", these threats do not have to be "real"; the mere perception of threat can also result in a negative attitude. Nor does the label imply that other forms of threat would not be "realistic". *Symbolic threat* is conceptualised in terms of differences between norms, values and belief systems (Riek, Mania, and Gaertner 2006). Perceptions, for instance, that Islam and democracy are incompatible, or that values Muslims adhere to substantially deviate from what is valued in the West contribute to feelings that Islam and Muslims pose a threat to the values and belief systems of western societies. *Intergroup anxiety* refers to the fear of being treated negatively in interactions with the out-group. *Negative stereotypes* refer to characteristics of an out-group that may be perceived as threatening for the individual's well-being (Stephan et al. 1998). Support for the rights and liberties of others is a societal issue, rather

than a personal one; it is about how society should react to minorities who practice their own (religious) customs.

Public discourse concerning Islam and Muslims in Europe has been dominated by associations with violence and terrorism. The Iranian Revolution in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa against Salman Rushdie in 1989, the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, and the murder of Theo van Gogh by a Muslim fundamentalist in the Netherlands in November 2004 have contributed to a perception of Islam posing a security threat to western societies (Volpp 2002; Oswald 2005; Cashin 2010). In addition, debates about Islam and Muslims increasingly focus on whether the world views and ways of life of Muslims are compatible with that what is valued within western societies. Majorities in France (50 percent), the United Kingdom (61 percent), the Netherlands (61 percent) and Germany (84 percent) disagreed with the statement that the culture of Muslims fits well into their country. Conflicting values are perceived in terms of gender relations. One widely shared opinion (more than 75 percent of the population in West European countries) is that the attitude of Muslims towards women contradicts western values (Zick and Küpper 2009).

The Islamic headscarf is often said to stand for Islamic extremism and terrorism, rejection of western societies and their values, and a general failure of integration (Shadid and Van Koningsveld 2005; McGoldrick 2006; Saharso and Lettinga 2008). My first hypothesis is that people who perceive Islam and Muslims as a greater security threat will be more likely to support a ban on headscarves. The second hypothesis is that people who perceive Muslims as preferring to remain distinct from the larger society will be more likely to support a ban on headscarves. However, individual attitudes and beliefs and the relations between them need to be considered in the context in which they are expressed. Prevailing ideologies and existing policies on how to deal with diversity and historical arrangements between religions and the state influence people's notions on what should and should not be supported (Fetzer and Soper 2005; Coenders et al. 2008). It is expected that in France, which has a strict separation of church and state, support for a ban on headscarves will be more widespread, even where

people have low levels of perceived threat. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent in the Netherlands and Germany, there is a tradition of multiculturalism and religious groups are encouraged to follow their own practices. I expect that in these countries there will be more opposition towards such a ban, despite possibly higher levels of perceived threat.

Traditionally, research on support for rights and liberties of others focuses only on those who indicate a negative attitude towards others. More general value orientations such as universalism or an overall orientation towards civil liberties and cultural diversity can lead prejudiced people to positive tolerance positions (Sullivan and Transue 1999). The assumption in tolerance research is that the question of tolerating activities of others is only relevant for those with a negative attitude towards the out-group and would not apply to those with a favourable attitude (Marcus et al. 1995; Vogt 1997). A few studies have shown, however, that even when people have a positive attitude towards an out-group, they can also be reluctant to support its rights and liberties (Saroglou et al. 2009; McIntosh et al. 1995; Van der Noll, Poppe, and Verkuyten 2010). Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007) show that emphasizing national identity can elicit exclusionary reactions among unprejudiced people. In addition, a comparison between prejudiced and non-prejudiced adolescents in the Netherlands showed that the perception of symbolic threat influenced the level of tolerance among prejudiced and non-prejudiced respondents alike (Van der Noll, Poppe, and Verkuyten 2010). This finding suggests that perceptions of threat are important for making tolerance judgements – for people with a positive attitude as well as for those with a negative attitude. In light of these studies, I expect no differences between people with positive or negative attitudes towards Muslims in the relationship between perceived threat and support for a ban on headscarves.

3. Methods

The analyses presented here are based on the 2005 survey on Islamic extremism, which was part of the Pew Global Attitudes project (Pew Research Center 2005). The Pew Research Center is a non-partisan "fact-tank" that provides information on issues, attitudes and trends that are important for America and the world. The Pew Global

Attitudes Project measures attitudes towards globalisation, democracy, terrorism and the United States in all regions of the world (Pew Research Center 2005, 9). The 2005 survey on Islamic extremism covers seventeen nations, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the Netherlands. The original sample from each country consisted of approximately 750 respondents aged 18 and above. Respondents who indicated that they were Muslim and those who did not answer whether they would support a ban on headscarves were excluded from the analyses. This resulted in sample sizes of 668 (United Kingdom), 722 (France), 710 (Germany) and 738 (the Netherlands). Data was collected via telephone interviews in April and May 2005.¹

3.1. Measures

The dependent variable is support for a ban on headscarves worn by Muslim women. The question was worded as follows: “Some countries have decided to ban the wearing of headscarves by Muslim women in public places including schools. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?” The variable is dichotomous, with the answer possibilities “good idea” (1) and “bad idea” (0).

Overall attitude towards Muslims was measured by the question: “Please tell me if you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable opinion of Muslims?” Answers were rated on a four-point scale, recoded into a scale in which 0 represents a very favourable opinion, .33 a favourable opinion, .67 an unfavourable opinion and 1 a very unfavourable opinion of Muslims. With this measurement of the overall opinion of Muslims, I follow the one-dimensional conceptualisation of an attitude as an overall favourable or unfavourable evaluation (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). An unfavourable overall attitude reflects prejudice towards Muslims. Although this item could be sensitive to social desirability, it is the only possibility offered by the questionnaire, and the results show that respondents did not refrain from indicating a negative opinion of Muslims.

Perceptions of threat were measured with several questions. First of all, to account for the perception that Muslims reject western societies and its values (symbolic threat), respondents were asked: “Do you think most Muslims coming to our country today want to adopt [survey country’s] customs and way of life, or do you think that they want to be distinct from the larger [survey country] society?” This is a dichotomous variable with “adopt our ways” (0) and “want to be distinct” (1) as answer categories. Strictly speaking, this item does not ask about threat; people can perceive that Muslims want to remain distinct and have no problem with it, or even encourage it. Because the debate on headscarves is often associated with a perceived rejection of western societies and values by Muslims and thus the desire of Muslims to be distinct from the larger society, I expect that this variable will function as a proxy for perceived symbolic threat. To measure perceived security threat, a question elicited concerns related to Islamic extremism: “How concerned, if at all, are you about the rise of Islamic extremism in our country these days? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?” The original four-point scale was reduced to a three-point scale ranging from 0 to 1, collapsing the “not too concerned” and “not at all concerned” categories. A higher score indicates more concern. A dummy variable was created indicating whether respondents perceived Islam as more violent than other religions. Respondents were asked to choose between the statements “Some religions are more prone to violence than others” or “All religions are about the same when it comes to violence”. Respondents who agreed with the first statement were subsequently asked which religion they perceived as most violent, choosing between Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. Respondents who indicated that “all religions are the same when it comes to violence” (45 percent) and who indicated a religion other than Islam to be most violent (12.5 percent of those who stated that some religions are more prone to violence) were the reference category (coded 0) compared to those who perceived Islam to be more violent (coded 1).

¹ The dataset is available from the website of the Pew Global Attitudes project <http://pewglobal.org/category/data-sets/> under May 2005 Survey Data.

Background characteristics like gender, age, education and income were also collected. These background variables are often found to relate to prejudice. A common finding is that women, younger people and people with a higher level of education and income have generally less negative attitudes towards minorities (Chandler and Tsai 2001). The country-specific scales for education were reduced to one scale of low, middle and high level of education. A four-point scale was created for income by dividing the country-specific income scales into quartiles.

3.2. Analyses

In the first step of analysis, differences in levels of support for a ban on headscarves, attitude towards Muslims and threat perceptions across countries were identified by analysis of variance with Scheffé's post-hoc comparisons. Analysis of variance is preferred in this situation because general mean comparisons between the countries would inflate the risk of falsely rejecting the null hypothesis (Type I error). Scheffé's post-hoc comparison is among the more conservative methods and was used to reveal which countries differed from each other. The second step was to examine the bivariate correlations (Spearman's rho) of support for a ban on headscarves and the various predictors and to compare these across countries. Lastly, to test whether support for a ban on headscarves could be explained by

attitude towards Muslims and perceptions of threat, logistic regression analysis was conducted. To test whether there were structural differences in the explanatory model across countries, dummy variables were included for the countries, and interactions between the countries and the predictor variables were tested for their significance. Missing values were excluded from the analyses via list-wise deletion.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptives

A majority of respondents in France, Germany and the Netherlands favoured a ban on headscarves in public places (Table 1). In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, a majority of 68 percent perceived such a ban to be a bad idea. The analysis of variance showed that the level of support differed significantly between the four countries, with the French respondents being most supportive, followed by the German and Dutch, and the British respondents being the least supportive ($F(3, 2838) = 122.6, p < .001, \eta^2 = .11$). These results correspond with the expectations based on traditional relations between church and state: in France there is broad support for a neutral and secular public sphere, whereas in the United Kingdom there is broad support for the presence of different religious and cultural identities in the public sphere; Germany and the Netherlands fall between these two extremes.

Table 1: Frequency distributions of dependent and independent variables, by country

		UK		France		Germany		Netherlands	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Support for ban on headscarves	Yes	213	32	572	79	425	60	380	51
	No	455	68	150	21	285	40	358	49
	Total	668	100	725	100	740	100	752	100
Opinion of Muslims (overall attitude)	Very positive	117	20	58	8	28	4	33	5
	Positive	365	63	415	59	289	46	306	43
	Negative	61	11	158	22	248	40	268	37
	Very negative	37	6	78	11	65	10	109	15
	Total	580	100	709	100	630	100	716	100
Muslims want to remain distinct (symbolic threat)	Yes	411	76	413	60	611	89	483	68
	No	127	24	274	40	73	11	230	32
	Total	538	100	687	100	684	100	713	100
Concern about extremism (security threat)	No	201	30	175	24	178	25	170	23
	Somewhat	242	37	322	45	306	44	335	45
	Very	216	33	224	31	221	31	232	32
	Total	659	100	721	100	705	100	737	100
Islam more prone to violence (security threat)	Yes	200	30	303	42	301	42	393	53
	No	468	70	419	58	409	58	345	47
	Total	668	100	722	100	710	100	738	100

About half of the respondents in the Netherlands and Germany, 52 and 50 percent respectively, indicated that they had a negative opinion of Muslims. Significantly more positive were the British and French respondents, of whom 83 and 67 percent respectively reported a (very) favourable opinion of Muslims ($F(3, 2635) = 75.6, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$). The results indicate no clear relationship between the overall attitude towards Muslims and support for a ban on headscarves. In France and Germany, support for a ban on headscarves was more widespread than prejudice towards Muslims, whereas in the United Kingdom prejudice towards Muslims was more widespread. Bivariate correlations show that people with a negative attitude towards Muslims were more likely to support a ban on headscarves, but the associations were weak ($\rho < .30$, Table 2).

Table 2: Spearman's rho (ρ) correlation coefficients, with support for a ban on headscarves, by country

Variable		UK	France	Germany	Netherlands
Negative opinion of Muslims (overall attitude)	ρ	.29***	.19***	.18***	.29***
	<i>N</i>	580	709	630	716
Muslims want to remain distinct (symbolic threat)	ρ	.17***	.11**	.03	.22***
	<i>N</i>	538	687	684	713
Concern about extremism in country (security threat)	ρ	.19***	.10**	.17***	.14***
	<i>N</i>	659	721	705	737
Islam more prone to violence (security threat)	ρ	.11**	.10*	.12**	.17***
	<i>N</i>	668	722	710	738

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

A majority of respondents in all four countries had the opinion that most Muslims prefer to remain distinct from the larger society, rather than adopting the country's way of life. Nevertheless, analysis of variance showed that there were still medium-sized differences between all countries, with the German respondents most strongly endorsing this view (89 percent), followed by the British, the Dutch and finally the French (60 percent) ($F(3, 2710) = 62.0, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$). The perception that Muslims want to remain distinct from the larger society was weakly associated with support for a ban on headscarves in the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands ($\rho < .22$), while in Germany, this association was not found. This could be explained in terms of the German historical practice of treating immigrants as a separate community and encouraging them to maintain their own culture and habits. On the other hand, the lack of association might also have a technical reason because there is little variation among German respondents.

Around one third of the respondents in all four countries were very concerned about the rise of Islamic extremism in their country. Respondents in the United Kingdom were most divided in their opinion; here we found the highest percentage who were not concerned about extremism, as well as the highest percentage who were very concerned. However, the differences between the countries were marginal and not significant ($F(3, 2932) = .38, p = .769$). As expected, people who were more concerned about the rise of Islamic extremism were more likely to support a ban on headscarves, but the relation was very weak ($\rho < .19$). Lastly, more than half of the Dutch respondents had the opinion that Islam is more violent than other religions. In Germany and France 42 percent and in the United Kingdom three out of ten respondents indicated that Islam is more violent than other religions. The differences between the countries were small but significant ($F(3, 2886) = 28.5, p < .001, \eta^2 = .03$), except between Germany and France. People who perceived Islam as being more prone to violence were more likely to support a ban on headscarves, but the association was weak ($\rho < .17$).

Although all associations were in the expected directions, they differed in strength across countries. The association between the overall attitude towards Muslims and support for a ban was weakest in Germany and was significantly weaker

than the associations found in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Further significant differences were found, between Germany compared to the United Kingdom and to the Netherlands, in the strength of the association between the perception that Muslims want to remain distinct and support for a ban on headscarves. These findings strengthen the expectation that a psychological explanation of public support depends on contextual and cross-national differences.

4.2. Explaining Support for a Ban on Headscarves

Logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the extent to which attitudes towards Muslims and threat perceptions explain support for a ban on headscarves in the different countries. Evaluation of the model for the individual countries shows that the explanatory model was a good fit for the data for all countries (Table 3). However, the extent to which the predictors contributed to correct classification of supporters and opponents of a ban on headscarves varied across countries. Compared to the baseline model, in which no predictors were included, the ability of the model to predict whether a respondent supports or opposes a ban on headscarves increased by 14 percent for the Netherlands. The increase was, however, much lower in the other countries and at its minimum in France, where the predictors added not even one percent to the correct prediction of support of a ban on headscarves. This means that in France the psychological factors in this model did not explain why a person supports a ban on headscarves.

Table 3: Logistic regression of support for a ban on headscarves: Model evaluation by country and pooled sample

		UK	France	Germany	Netherlands	All
Likelihood ratio test	χ^2	63.1***	39.5***	53.5***	88.8***	447.3***
	<i>df</i>	12	12	12	12	30
	<i>N</i>	398	658	520	607	2174
Classification rate (percentages)	· Baseline	66.3	79.8	61.0	52.1	59.3
	· Countries					65.1
	· Predictors	72.2	80.2	66.9	65.9	70.1

*** $p < .001$

The differences in explanatory power between the countries can have different underlying causes. One possibility is that there are structural differences between countries in the effect that a predictor variable has on the dependent variable. For instance, the perception that most Muslims do not want to adopt the way of life of the country might be related to support for a ban on headscarves in some countries and not in others. To test this hypothesis, the country samples were pooled and dummy variables were included in the logistic regression analyses for the countries. Interactions between the countries and the predictor variables were included to test whether there were structural differences between the countries. The model had a good fit to the data (Table 3, last column) and results in a correct classification rate of 70 percent, meaning that for 70 percent of the respondents the model could rightly predict whether they supported or opposed a ban. This is an increase of 11 percent compared to the baseline model. A substantial part of the increase is due to the inclusion of the countries.

Table 4 shows that compared to the Dutch respondents, Germans are four times more likely to support a ban on headscarves, and the French nine times. The British were 1.5 times less likely than the Dutch to support a ban on headscarves, with an odds ratio of 0.63. The results shown for the predictor variables (Table 4, top rows) are the main effects for the Netherlands (reference country). The main effects for the other countries can be obtained by adding the interaction effects (displayed under the respective countries) to the main effect of the reference category.

The results are quite similar across countries. Among the psychological factors a negative attitude towards Muslims was the strongest predictor of support. In the Netherlands and France, a more negative attitude made it six times more likely that someone would support a ban on headscarves. In Germany and the United Kingdom, this effect was slightly weaker, but the differences between the countries were not significant. Significant differences did, however, exist with respect to the effect of the perception that Muslims prefer to remain distinct. This was the second most important predictor for support for a ban on headscarves in the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom; people who perceived that Muslims do not want to adopt the country's way of life were almost twice as likely to support such a ban as respondents

who did not have this opinion. This was different in Germany: Germans who perceived that Muslims want to remain distinct were only half as likely (odds ratio is 0.46) to support a ban as Dutch respondents with the same opinion. The perception that Muslims want to remain distinct did thus not have a significant impact on support for a ban on headscarves in the German sample. This might, again, be attributed to German national practices.

Dutch and German respondents who had the perception that Islam is more prone to violence than other religions were 1.5 times more likely to support a ban on headscarves. This effect seemed to be weaker in France and the United Kingdom (odds ratios 0.65 and 0.64 respectively), but the differences between the countries were not significant. The seemingly weaker effects in France and the United Kingdom are in line with the expectation that in countries with strong secularist or multicultural traditions, perceptions of threat (high or low) are less relevant.

Being "somewhat concerned" about the rise of Islamic extremism was chosen as the reference category for the logistic regression analysis. The question wording more or less stated that there has been a rise of Islamic extremism, and answering that one was not concerned might have been seen as inappropriate (even though, on average, one fourth of the respondents did indicate that they were not (or not at all) concerned about this). The results show that being very concerned or unconcerned about the rise of Islamic extremism did not contribute to the explanation of support for a ban on headscarves.

I hypothesised that there would be no differences between people with a positive or negative attitude towards Muslims with respect to the effect of the indicators of perceived threat on support for a ban on headscarves. Interactions between attitude towards Muslims and the indicators of perceived threat were included, but were very weak and not significant. This supports the expectation that perceptions of threat affect prejudiced and unprejudiced people alike in their tolerance judgements.

The model was controlled for the effect of gender, age, education and income, none of which showed a significant effect in any of the countries.

Table 4: Logistic regression of support for the ban on headscarves, pooled sample (N= 2174).

	B	(SE)	Wald	df	Exp(B)
Constant	-0.21	(.34)	36.53	1	0.13***
Negative opinion of Muslims (<i>overall attitude</i>)	1.86	(.39)	23.48	1	6.45***
Muslims want to remain distinct (<i>symbolic threat</i>)	0.62	(.20)	9.86	1	1.87***
Concern about extremism (<i>security threat</i>)					
- not at all / not too concerned	0.01	(.22)	0.00	1	1.01
- somewhat concerned	-	-	3.24	2	
- very concerned	0.36	(.21)	2.91	1	1.43
Islam more prone to violence (<i>security threat</i>)	0.47	(.18)	6.69	1	1.59*
Netherlands (reference category)	-	-			
Germany	1.42	(.44)	10.43	1	4.15***
x negative opinion of Muslims (<i>overall attitude</i>)	-0.52	(.56)	0.85	1	0.60
x Muslims want to remain distinct (<i>symbolic threat</i>)	-0.78	(.36)	4.69	1	0.46*
x concern about extremism (<i>security threat</i>)					
x not at all / not too concerned	-0.39	(.33)	1.46	1	0.68
x somewhat concerned	-	-	1.48	2	
x very concerned	-0.08	(.31)	0.07	1	0.92
x Islam more prone to violence (<i>security threat</i>)	-0.07	(.27)	0.06	1	0.94
United Kingdom	-0.46	(.45)	1.09	1	0.63
x negative opinion of Muslims (<i>overall attitude</i>)	0.26	(.62)	0.18	1	1.30
x Muslims want to remain distinct (<i>symbolic threat</i>)	-0.05	(.37)	0.02	1	0.96
x concern about extremism (<i>security threat</i>)					
x not at all / not too concerned	-0.18	(.38)	0.22	1	0.84
x somewhat concerned	-	-	1.20	2	
x very concerned	0.25	(.34)	.54	1	1.29
x Islam more prone to violence (<i>security threat</i>)	-0.44	(.31)	2.03	1	0.64
France	2.20	(.36)	38.24	1	8.99***
x negative opinion of Muslims (<i>overall attitude</i>)	-0.01	(.60)	0.00	1	0.99
x Muslims want to remain distinct (<i>symbolic threat</i>)	-0.36	(.29)	1.57	1	0.70
x concern about extremism (<i>security threat</i>)					
x not at all / not too concerned	-0.34	(.33)	1.08	1	0.71
x somewhat concerned	-	-	1.54	2	
x very concerned	-0.32	(.33)	1.00	1	0.72
x Islam more prone to violence (<i>security threat</i>)	-0.44	(.28)	2.47	1	0.65

Note: Model is controlled for gender, age, education and income. None of the control variables had a significant effect.
 *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The results of this comparison of psychological explanations of public support for a ban on headscarves between the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the Netherlands show differences in the mean levels of support between the countries. In accordance with what was expected on the basis of national traditions, support for a ban on headscarves was most widespread in France, which has a strict separation between religion and the state. Least support was found in the United Kingdom, the country with the strongest multicultural tradition. Germany and the Netherlands fall between these extremes.

Explanations for the public support were based on the overall attitude towards Muslims, concern about Islamic extremism, the perception that Islam is a violent religion and the perception that Muslims prefer to remain distinct from the larger society, rather than adopting the customs and way of life of the country. The model proved to be a good fit to the data and increased the ability to predict support for and opposition to a ban on headscarves. A substantial part of this increase was due to controlling for the country of residence of the respondents. This again strengthens the case that contextual factors are important in explaining public support.

It was hypothesized that there would be cross-national differences, not only in the mean levels of support, but also in the structure of the explanatory model. This was only partly confirmed; in Germany the perception that Muslims prefer to remain distinct was not related to support for the ban on headscarves, whereas it increased support in the other countries. This could be interpreted along the lines of the German tradition of perceiving immigrants as temporary and encouraging them to sustain their own culture (Brubaker 2001). Perhaps Germans do not perceive it as threatening when Muslims decline to adopt their customs and way of life. However, if that is the case, it might be seen as surprising that a majority (60 percent) is in favour of a ban on headscarves. Perhaps this is an indication of the shift towards assimilation that has taken place in Germany since the 1990s (Brubaker 2001). The lack of effect in Germany could, however, also be the result of the lack of variation in the predictor variable; a large majority of

the German respondents perceived that Muslims prefer to remain distinct.

Another tendency in the results, although not statistically significant, was that the perception of Islam being more violent than other religions had a weaker effect in France and the United Kingdom than in Germany and the Netherlands. Again, this can be interpreted as an indication that national traditions are important and shape the attitudes of the population. Individual perceptions of threat are of less importance when a country has a tradition of strict secularism (France) or strong multiculturalism (United Kingdom).

Although the results show that the explanatory models of the countries are largely similar, there are substantial differences between countries in the ability of the model to predict support for a ban on headscarves. In the Netherlands, the predictor variables increased this ability by 14 percent, whereas in France the increase was not even one percent. One explanation for this could be differences in the amount of variation within countries. When there is broad support for a ban on headscarves, as there was in France, there is not much variation that the model can explain, and thus the performance of the model will seem weaker.

At the level of the individual it was hypothesized that support for a ban on headscarves was not limited to people with a negative attitude towards Muslims. The study shows that the freedom to wear headscarves in public places meets resistance among non-prejudiced people as well. In the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, approximately one-fifth of the respondents had a positive opinion of Muslims yet supported a ban on headscarves; in Germany the figure was one quarter and in France half of the respondents. This challenges the assumption of tolerance research that the question of tolerating activities of others is relevant only for those with a prejudiced attitude (Marcus et al. 1995; Vogt 1997). In line with previous research (Van der Noll, Poppe, and Verkuyten 2010; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007), this study shows that the perceptions that Islam is more violent than other religions and that Muslims want to remain distinct from the society – two arguments that are often used in the debates about headscarves (McGoldrick 2006) – make it more likely that prejudiced and also

non-prejudiced people will support a ban on headscarves for Muslim women. There is a need for further research to examine when and under what conditions threat perceptions provoke exclusionary reactions.

The variables used in this study suffer from severe limitations and future studies could be improved by including better measures. The dependent variables measures support for “a ban on headscarves in public places”, which is a very broad and vague formulation. The debates and controversies about the headscarf were more specific, for instance focused on schools, and it is very likely that support for a ban on headscarves is graduated, depending on the situation and the kind of headscarf, rather than a clear decision of supporting or opposing the idea of a complete ban on headscarves in public places.

In addition, better measures of perceptions of threat would improve the study. As mentioned above, the perception that Muslims prefer to remain distinct does not refer to a threat per se, and it may even be encouraged by the majority population. The question addressing concern about Islamic extremism is also problematic, because it suggests that there is actually a rise of extremism. Although the results show that around one-fourth of the respondents did not feel concerned, people might have felt uncomfortable (unconsciously perhaps) stating that they were not concerned. In future use, such items need to be carefully formulated. The measurement of the overall attitude towards Muslims is also limited and could be subject to social desirability. More subtle indicators to measure attitudes towards Muslims would be preferred.

Contemporary theories on prejudice argue that old-fashioned prejudice has given way to modern forms of racism and prejudice based on perceived conflicts of values (Sears and Henry 2003; Kleinpenning and Hagendoorn

1993). Future studies on support for the rights and liberties of Muslims would benefit from including measures of value orientations. Orientations such as universalism and multiculturalism or traditionalism and conformity could for instance at the level of the individual, as well as at the aggregated societal level, be an important predictor of support (Saroglou et al. 2009). In addition, discussions about the wearing of headscarves, and about Islam in general, are often focused on the position of women and value conflicts with respect to gender equality and patriarchy (Shadid and Van Koningsveld 2005; McGoldrick 2006). Including indicators that address these values and conflicts in the explanatory model could largely contribute to the explanation of support for a ban on headscarves. Including value orientations in the explanatory model would furthermore allow us to test whether support for issues such as a ban on headscarves is mainly driven by prejudice, or stems from value orientations reflecting what the society should be like.

Despite its limitations, the current study is one of the first to compare the level of support for one specific aspect of Muslims’ religious rights and to test an explanatory model across countries. The results of this study show that national contexts have a substantial influence on the tendency of the population to support a ban on headscarves. Furthermore, the results show that perceptions of threat posed by Islam and Muslims influence the tolerance judgements of both prejudiced and unprejudiced people. As long as the debate on headscarves is focused on threat and differences between Muslims and non-Muslims, the debate will harm relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. If, on the other hand, the focus of the debate were to shift to issues such as neutrality and non-discrimination, rather than Islamic extremism and rejection of western values, relations between Muslims and non-Muslims would not be that strongly affected by the debate and could (actually) improve.

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