Religious Norms, Norm Conflict, and Religious Identification

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We have no conflicts of interests to disclose.

All materials and syntax for the analyses are available at the OSF page here, https://osf.io/3ztkh/?view_only=ddc6267744b84f7cb5ddf90e44338cb2 . All data are available upon request from the corresponding author; they will not be uploaded to a repository because ethics consent was originally sought with the assurance that data would be shared publicly only in aggregate form.

Abstract

The present research sought to understand how religious identification is associated with normative practices and with norm conflict (the perception that people within the religious group are not all enacting the same standards or rules for behaviour). Using a multi-faith sample (N=400) we replicate positive associations of religious identification with engaging in normative practices such as prayer, and the associations of both identification and normative practices with stronger well-being. Religious norm conflict was associated with lower identification and lower well-being, however. Three coping strategies were examined: 1) engaging in normative ritual practices was protective of identification and well-being; 2) affirming that the conflict occurs on less important (vs core) religious norms was associated with higher well-being, but not with identification; and 3) challenging the religious norm was associated with lower well-being, but did not alter religious identification.

Keywords: religious identity, social identity, norms, group norms, norm conflict, religious conflict

Religious Norms, Norm Conflict, and Religious Identification

A great deal of research has been conducted to examine the outcomes of religious identification, such as well-being (see Ysseldyk et al., 2010; 2013) and social attitudes (see Strauss & Sawyerr, 2009; Todd & Ong, 2012). Individuals' religiosity is linked to important personal choices and outcomes, from marriage and voting (Brimhall & Butler, 2007) to life satisfaction (Hayward et al., 2016; Stavrova et al., 2013). Yet in addition to these individual correlates, changes in religious life are highly consequential societally. For example, changing North American or European laws on no-fault divorce, abortion, or the decriminalisation of homosexuality and affirmation of marriage equality, have all been associated with weakening or changing religious faith (Hayes, 1995; Todd & Ong, 2012; Vargas, 2012). Given the importance of the topic, analysis of religious identification as an outcome variable seems comparatively rare (Mavor & Ysseldyk, 2020).

In the present paper, this analysis is explored theoretically and empirically. Specifically, we examine the association of religious identification in three faiths (Christian, Muslim, and Jewish) with norm conflict. We conceptualise norm conflict in terms of perceived discrepancies in how much social issues (such as welcoming refugees or supporting women's rights) *are* perceived to be supported by members of the faith, compared to how much they *should be* supported. The present research explores the impact of perceived norm conflict in relation to three separate possible religious coping strategies: 1) engaging in normative ritual practices such as prayer and worship (Gabana et al., 2019); 2) challenging the religious norms or seeking to change them (Minwalla et al., 2005); and 3) affirming that the conflict is occurring on peripheral issues that are less important to the faith, while core religious norms are intact (Sani, 2005; Sani & Reicher, 2000; Sani & Todman, 2002). Furthermore, the potential protective role of these

strategies is explored in buffering the harmful impact of norm conflict on identification and well-being.

The impact of religious norm conflict on identification and well-being is important, particularly given contemporary trends towards pluralism and secularism (Hayes, 1995; Todd & Ong, 2012; Vargas, 2012). Within diverse societies, conflict over religious values and behaviours may increase in frequency, and have the potential to damage interpersonal relationships with family members, friends, and co-workers who may hold different religious norms. Such norm conflicts may occur within faiths as well as between religious groups: Social and moral conflict within families, institutions, and denominations may be intensely divisive, as some people resolutely resist adaptation and norm changes that others equally fervently promote.

The present research employs the lens of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ysseldyk et al., 2010, 2013), according to which people have both personal identities ("I"), and social identities ("we"), and these are important in experiencing and participating in social life. The theory distinguishes between conscious awareness of being a group member (salience), and strength of identification (degree of felt commitment or attachment to the group). The present research focuses on strength of identification (see also, Cameron, 2004), and specifically is interested in the correlates of stronger or weaker *religious* social identities. As Ysseldyk and others have argued (Mavor & Ysseldyk 2020; Ysseldyk et al., 2010; 2013; see also, Ransom et al., 2020), religious identities are among the most important social identities for the daily lives and well-being of the majority of humanity, and yet they have been comparatively neglected in social identity research.

In general, a social identity approach highlights the malleability of identity strength in response to both intergroup and intragroup processes (Mavor & Ysseldyk, 2020; Tajfel &

Turner, 1979). At the intergroup level, identification with one's group grows stronger when it is attacked or threatened by other groups, and when inequality relative to an outgroup becomes larger and more salient (Branscombe et al., 1999). We will return to the role of intergroup conflict in norm change in our discussion. In addition to intergroup processes, however, intragroup processes also affect strength of identification. In the present research, the focus is on the impact of group members' adoption or contestation of their group's norms, i.e., social standards for behaviour (Smith & Louis, 2008; 2009), and the impact of religious norm contestation on the outcomes of religious identification and well-being.

The social identity approach proposes that stronger identification motivates group members to endorse and enact their group's norms (Terry & Hogg, 1999), and that endorsing and acting out norms also makes people feel more strongly identified as group members (Drury & Reicher, 2005; 2009; Reicher & Drury, 2011; Vestergren et al., 2018). For example, an individual may be motivated by religious identification to pray, and through prayer, their religious identification may grow stronger (Gabana et al., 2019; Greenfield & Marks, 2007; Kim et al., 2015). A commitment to engaging in normative practices is one means, therefore, by which a person may bolster a group identity that is under threat. Nevertheless, it is not the only path.

The present research sought specifically to explore the prevalence and impact of two alternative strategies that individuals might be using to resolve the normative conflicts within their faith: as well as 1) engaging in more frequent normative ritual practices such as prayer and worship; individuals may turn to 2) challenging the religious norms or seeking to change them; and/or 3) affirming that the conflict is occurring on peripheral issues that are less important to the faith, while maintaining that core religious values are intact. These three strategies are not

mutually exclusive, but have rarely been tested quantitatively, in relation to perceived norm conflict and identification, or to each other.

The first, engaging in prayer and other normative practices, represents a rededication to faith although it does not directly address the norm conflict. Engaging in normative ritual practice was expected to be associated with participants' sustained identification, as seen in previous research (e.g., Gabana et al, 2019; Greenfield & Marks, 2007; Kim et al., 2015). In the present research, it was also predicted that whereas normative conflict would be associated with lower well-being, enacting ritual practice would be associated with higher well-being.

In contrast, challenging a religious norm attempts to resolve a norm conflict by bringing the group into alignment with one's values. For example, if members of one's faith are seen as homophobic or sexist, members of the religion who are progressive may seek to promote a more inclusive or egalitarian understanding of the religion (Minwalla et al., 2005). Similarly, where liberal interpretations prevail, more conservative members of a faith may seek to contest these positions, and to assert traditional views (Mavor & Ysseldyk 2020). A strategy of respectfully contesting one's group's norms can be not only compatible with high identification, but even affirming of it, as shown by the work of Packer (2009) and Packer and Chasteen (2010) on loyal dissent. It is precisely those members of a faith who speak up when norms of the group are under debate, who might feel their faith affirmed in the process, in contrast to those who are silently alienated and withdrawing. The implications of this norm challenge for well-being, however, are not known.

A third, quite distinct, way of resolving the norm conflict to protect one's strength of identification, is to downplay the centrality of the issues where norm conflict is occurring, identifying these as less core, or more peripheral, to the faith. In social identity theory (see

Knippenberg & Wilke, 1992), normative conformity is higher for more 'prototypical' norms that define the group, whereas greater diversity within the group may be found on norms that are more peripheral. In the religious context, past research by Sani and colleagues examining schisms within the Anglican church has found that while lower identification and even exit from a faith are associated with perceiving a norm conflict on core principles, accepting internal contestation of a faith *without* distancing oneself is associated with perceiving that core principles are intact (Sani, 2005; Sani & Reicher, 2000; Sani & Todman, 2002).

In the present research, affirming that the conflict occurs on less core issues is reasoned to function as a coping strategy, decreasing the negative impact of norm conflict (see also, Glasford et al., 2009). Accordingly, the present study tests whether religious participants who affirm that norm conflict is occurring on less core (more peripheral) issues show higher identification and well-being compared to those who see conflict as occurring on more core issues.

Finally, these basic processes were expected to operate similarly across different faith groups. While groups' normative contests may occur for different faiths on different issues at different historical periods, and in different regions or factions, we perceive that processes of norm conflict and change are likely to be universal, and that common processes of coping will be observed. However, the present research tests the robustness of the findings for participants who identified as Christian, Jewish, or Muslim. That is, we examine on an exploratory basis whether there is significant variability between religious groups in the association of the different coping strategies with religious identification and well-being.

The present research

In summary, the present research employed a sample of Jewish, Muslim and Christian Canadians, to explore the relationships of religious identification with perceived normative conflict between the position of their religion and respondents' own moral positions. Norm conflict was explored for a variety of issues related to pro-sociality (e.g., helping the homeless) and social attitudes (e.g., supporting women's rights). Religious norm conflict was hypothesised to be associated with lower religious identification (Packard & Ferguson, 2019; Pérez & Vallières, 2019; Sani 2005; Sani & Todman, 2002; Sani & Reicher, 2000). The implication of normative discrepancies and changing identification for well-being was also tested (e.g., Stavrova et al., 2013; Ysseldyk et al., 2013), alongside the efficacy of three coping strategies: engaging in normative practices, downplaying the centrality of issues on which norm conflicts are observed, and directly challenging the norms.

Method

Participants

Undergraduate students (N = 440) at a large Canadian university completed an online survey in exchange for course credit. Participants self-identified as Christian (n = 191), Muslim (n = 173), or Jewish (n = 76). Data were removed because of incomplete responses (i.e., data was missing for most or all of the main study variables; n = 11) or completing the survey twice (n = 3). Another 26 participants were identified as random responders, having failed three or more of five test items interspersed throughout the survey (e.g., "In response to this question, please select 'slightly agree'"; Marjanovic et al., 2014). This resulted in a final sample size of 400 participants (300 women, 88 men, and 12 missing), with ages ranging from 17 to 47 (M = 20.5; SD = 4.2), of whom 177 were Christian, 156 Muslim, and 67 Jewish.

Procedure

Students from a large undergraduate participant pool had earlier completed a screening survey in which religious affiliation was assessed. Participants who had indicated being Christian, Jewish, or Muslim were recruited to complete a version of the survey that was tailored to their religious group. Ethics clearance was obtained from the institutional IRB prior to data collection, and respondents were first asked to provide their informed consent.

Measures

Participants responded to the following measures using a 7-point scale (*Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*), unless otherwise noted.

Norm Conflict. Respondents rated the extent to which members of their religion "actually support" and "should support" five social issues related to pro-sociality and group attitudes: helping the poor, assisting the homeless, opening the country up to refugees, supporting women's rights, and gay marriage. The absolute differences were calculated, for each issue, between what members of the religion were perceived to actually do, and what respondents thought should be done. The differences ranged from 0 to 6, and higher scores were indicative of greater norm conflict, $\alpha = .75$. It may be noted that the present measurement of norm conflict focuses on the discrepancy between what is (also called the descriptive or behavioural norm) and what should be done (a proscriptive, moral, or injunctive norm; Smith & Louis, 2008; 2009), rather than, for example, debates, prejudice, or violence between denominations within a religion. This latter point is addressed in the discussion.

Normative Ritual Practice. Participants completed a 6-item measure of religious practice (e.g., "I go to church/mosque/synagogue"). Responses to this measure were assessed on a 5-point

scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*), and items were averaged to form a scale measuring more frequent normative ritual practice, $\alpha = .88$.

Challenging the Norms. Respondents rated the extent to which other members of their religion "need to change" their behaviour for each of the five social issues that were examined. The perceptions of need to change norms were averaged, with higher scores indicating stronger challenging of norms, $\alpha = .81$.

Affirming Core Values as Intact. For each of the five issues, respondents were asked, "To what extent do you think each of these social issues is a core issue for your religion?". The within-participant correlation was then calculated, across the five issues, between participants' ratings of the centrality of each of the issues, and their ratings of the absolute difference between what members of the faith do and should do for that issue. If either variable's standard deviation was zero, the correlation was set to zero. The correlation was then reverse-scored, to produce a measure of participants' affirmation of core values as intact. The scale thus ranged from +1 (participants perceived that all the issues that were more conflictual were also more peripheral to the faith) to -1 (participants perceived that the issues that were more conflictual were also less peripheral or more central to the faith), with zero indicating no association.

Religious Identification. Cameron's (2004) social identity measure was adapted for each religious faith (12 items; e.g., "I have a lot in common with other Christians / Muslims / Jews"). The items were averaged, with higher scores indicating stronger identification with one's religion, $\alpha = .89$.

Psychological Well-Being. The Waterman et al. (2010) measure of eudaimonic well-being was used to assess participants' overall life satisfaction and purpose in life (21 items; e.g.,

"I can say that I have found my purpose in life"). Items were averaged to measure higher well-being, $\alpha = .84$.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Descriptive analyses for the pooled sample are presented in Table 1. Participants displayed moderately high levels of identification and well-being, and perceived low levels of normative conflict. Perceived norm conflict was associated with lower normative ritual practice and identification, and greater challenge of the norms. Well-being was associated with greater levels of identification, normative ritual practice, and affirmation that core values are intact, and with lower levels of challenging the norms.

Overview of Analyses

Two hierarchical multiple regressions were then conducted with listwise deletion for missing variables to predict identification and well-being. We use hierarchical multiple regression so that we can directly target our three research questions, in their logical sequence. In Block 1, the direct role of normative conflict was examined: is greater norm conflict associated with higher or lower identification or well-being? In Block 2, we consider the impact of the possible religious affirmation strategies: given a particular level of norm conflict, how are identification and well-being associated with engaging in normative ritual practices, challenging the norm, or affirming core values as intact? Finally, in Block 3, we explore whether there are any interfaith differences, by including the effect codes representing interfaith differences in means, along with their interactions with the other variables: Do the religious groups differ overall, and/or, does the impact of norm conflict, or of using particular strategies, change across groups?

Specifically, interfaith differences in average identification and well-being were examined with two orthogonal codes: one comparing Christian (majority religion) participants (+2) to members of the two other (minority) religions (-1), and the second comparing Muslim participants (+1) to Jewish participants (-1) to each other, with Christians zero. Continuous variables were centered, and interactions were created with each of the effect codes to test whether different religions showed different patterns. One multivariate outlier (absolute standardized residual > 3) was removed from the analyses below.

Predicting Identification. As shown in Table 2, a hierarchical multiple regression was employed and accounted for 12% of the variability in identification from norm conflict in Block 1, ΔF (1, 380) = 51.09, p < .001. As predicted, perceiving greater normative conflict was associated with lower identification, β = -.34, p < .001.

Inclusion of the affirmation strategies accounted for 19% of additional variance in Block 2, ΔF (3, 377) = 34.55, p < .001. Greater normative ritual practice was associated positively with greater identification, β = .47, p < .001; controlling for this, perceiving greater normative conflict was still associated with lower identification, β = -.13, p = .009. Neither of the other two possible religious affirmation strategies impacted on identification significantly: core value affirmation did not uniquely boost identification, β = .04, p = .395, and neither did challenging the norms, β = -.07, p = .156.

Consideration of the between-faith differences in Block 3 did account for significant additional variance, ΔR^2 = .07, ΔF (10, 367) = 3.87, p < .001. As shown in Table 2, however, the only unique predictor was the effect code comparing the level of identification for Christians to the two other faiths. That is, Christian participants had significantly lower religious identity overall, β = -.26, p < .001, compared to Muslim and Jewish participants, who were not

significantly different from each other, β = -.07, *p* = .128. None of the interactions were

significant, |β|s < .09, *p*s > .215, indicating that the coping strategies had similar relationships to

identification across faiths. The final model accounted for 38% of the variance in identification,

F (14, 367) = 15.70, *p* < .001.

  Predicting Well-Being. The analysis of well-being is presented in Table 3. Norm

conflict was significantly associated with well-being in Block 1, ΔR^2 = .02, ΔF (1, 371) = 7.33, *p*

= .007, and as predicted, perceiving greater normative conflict was associated with lower well-

being, β = -.14, *p* = .007.

  Inclusion of the strategies in Block 2 accounted for 11% of additional variance in well-

being, ΔF (3, 368) = 16.15, *p* < .001. Greater normative ritual practice was associated with

greater well-being, β = .24, *p* < .001, and affirming core values as intact also was associated with

higher well-being, β = .14, *p* = .003. In contrast, challenging religious norms was associated

with lower well-being, β = -.24, *p* < .001. Once the strategies were controlled for, norm conflict

was not a unique predictor, β = .05, *p* = .355.

  Inclusion of identification accounted for 7% of additional variance in well-being in Block

3, ΔF (1, 367) = 33.43, *p* < .001. Greater religious group identification was associated with

greater well-being, β = .32, *p* < .001. Controlling for identification, challenging the norm was

still negatively associated with lower well-being, β = -.21, *p* < .001, and affirming core values as

intact was still significantly positive, β = .13, *p* = .005. However, when controlling for

identification, norm conflict did not uniquely undermine well-being, β = .09, *p* = .082, and

religious practice also did not boost it, β = .09, *p* = .118.

  The between-faith differences entered in Block 4 did not account for significant

additional variance, ΔR^2 = .03, ΔF (10, 357) = 1.23, *p* = .268. For parsimony, the coefficients for

the two effect codes and eight interactions are therefore not individually considered. The final model in Block 3 accounted for 21% of the variance in well-being, F (5, 367) = 19.02, $p < .001$.

Discussion

In the present study, as predicted religious norm conflict is associated with lower identification and well-being. The impact of three possible coping strategies is explored. Engaging in normative ritual practices is associated with both higher identification and higher well-being. Challenging the norm did not boost or undermine religious identification significantly, but was associated with *lower* well-being. And finally, affirming that one's core values are intact also did not boost or undermine identification, but it was associated with *higher* well-being. Each of these findings is addressed in turn.

First, consistent with past research, stronger religious identification was associated with higher well-being (Hayward et al., 2016; Ysseldyk et al., 2010; 2013). These findings replicate previous work on the positive value of religious identity for well-being, and the bolstering impact of engaging in normative ritual practices for one's faith. Moreover, the present research also highlights a range of other associations between norms, norm conflict, identification, and well-being.

In the present research, although participants reported relatively low levels of norm conflict, greater conflict was still associated with lower well-being. Various coping strategies were explored, and it was found that challenging religious norms did not systematically boost or undermine identification, but did have a negative association with well-being. The null finding with regard to the link between norm challenge and identification is inconsistent with research on loyal dissent by Packer and colleagues (Packer, 2009; Packer & Chasteen, 2010). The loyal dissent research highlights the role of higher identification motivating group members to

advocate for change, particularly in contexts when it is easy to be silent. The present finding, however, could reflect the mixed motives that reformers have: to reform a loved group, or to critique a flawed one from which they have begun to distance themselves. Future research might try to measure these distinct motives for norm challenge directly, and examine whether they moderate the relationship of norm challenge to identification and well-being. Another possibility is that there is a temporal sequence, with a positive initial association of motivation for norm challenge and higher identification, which erodes over a period of growing disillusionment, culminating in an association of norm challenge with lower identification. Third, the responsiveness of the group to norm challenge (that is, collective willingness to engage in self-reflection and norm change) may determine whether or not religious identification erodes after a challenge. Future research may explore these possibilities.

A relevant methodological issue that was noted earlier is that norm conflict is measured in terms of the perceived discrepancy between how much members of a faith do support particular practices and positions (e.g., helping the homeless, or supporting women's rights), and how much participants think the practices and positions *should* be supported. This approach focuses on the internal discrepancy between the descriptive and injunctive norms for the group or religion as a whole (Smith & Louis, 2008; 2009). Another way of understanding and operationalising perceived norm conflict within a faith might be to measure perceptions of debates and disagreements, or indeed open violence, between denominations within a faith (e.g., between Protestant vs Catholic Christians, or Sunni vs Shia Muslims). Past research suggests that when an intergroup aspect develops in the norm conflict – so that instead of individuals deviating from their shared religious norm, subgroups or denominations are seen to break off and each have their own norms – then high identification with the religious faith as a whole initially

might be replaced over time with more narrow identification with the subgroup of other members

of the faith who are like-minded (Sani, 2005; Sani & Reicher, 2000). The present data do not

speak clearly to whether this dynamic of narrowing identification was operating, or how it

combines with other coping strategies. It would be interesting in longitudinal research to track

both denominational and superordinate religious identification over time, and examine changes

in relation to perceived denominational norm conflict as well as other coping strategies.

In addition, the finding that willingness to support norm change is associated with lower

well-being also has distinct interpretations that cannot directly be resolved by the present data.

One explanation for the lower well-being of those who are willing to challenge the norm is

associated with the interpersonal consequences of advocating for norm change, e.g., other group

members' rejection of the advocates as trouble-makers or as heretics. Past research, however,

has found that engaging in activism is generally associated with higher well-being (Klar &

Kasser, 2009; Selvanathan & Jetten, 2020). It is a limitation of the present study that it is not

known whether, or how, or to whom, participants would express their support for norm change.

Different forms of pro-group action may deliver different well-being outcomes (Gilster, 2012;

Louis, 2009), and the positive well-being benefits of activism might be more likely if participants

advocate for norm change collectively, instead of being silently alienated (Drury & Reicher,

2005). Another possibility is that factors such as the degree of success in advocacy for change

create divergent outcomes (Louis et al., 2020). In any event, the relationship of norm challenge

to group members' lower well-being is an interesting avenue for future research to explore.

Third, the present research also examined the impact of affirming that the norm conflict

is occurring on less core (peripheral) norms for the group. This strategy does not appear to

protect identification, but it is indeed associated with higher well-being. Examining the within-

participant association of ratings of norms as core or peripheral and perceived conflict to predict

identification and well-being is a novel methodological contribution of the research, adding to

the literature on prototypicality and normative influence (Knippenberg & Wilke, 1992) as well as

the literature on religious identity change. Future research should seek to replicate these

empirical findings and explore how affirming core values operates longitudinally.

In understanding why affirmation does not apparently protect identification, we reflect

that we conceptualised affirmation as coping psychologically with emerging conflict for an issue

by selectively devaluing its importance for the religion as a whole. The idea is that when

participants are using this strategy, as conflict increases for an issue (e.g., gay marriage),

participants' perceptions that it is core to the faith strategically decrease. That is why the

measurement approach of examining the within-person correlations between lower conflict and

higher "coreness" for a range of issues was employed in the present research. As Sani and others

have highlighted, however, the extent to which an issue is core to a faith is often explicitly and

openly debated in conflict (Sani & Todman, 2002; Sani & Reicher, 2000), and affirming

contested values as core can be to some extent a marker of high identification or a demand

placed on high identifiers by leaders. If this is the case, longitudinal research would allow us to

tease apart the oppositional processes whereby 1) high identifiers at Time 1 may be less likely to

use affirmation strategies (because they are among those who affirm the contested norms as

core); but at the same time, 2) respondents who use increasing affirmation strategies over time

will be more likely to sustain or increase group identification.

Finally, the present research explored the consistency of findings across religious groups.

Few interfaith differences were observed. In the present data, Christian participants had lower

levels of religious identification compared to Muslim and Jewish participants who did not differ.

In other words, the sample of Christians in this context (i.e., undergraduate students at an urban Canadian university) appears to be comparatively secular, while the other faith samples were more devout. This finding should not be over-interpreted given the unrepresentative convenience sample. However, one possibility is that the proportion of recent immigrants or foreign students might be higher among the sample of non-Christians than Christians, resulting in differences in exposure to the comparatively secular Canadian culture. Another possibility is that identification is not as strong among religious majority group members as religious minority group members. Denominational differences in identification within faiths (e.g., greater Christian identification in stricter denominations; Ransom et al., 2020) may also be explored in future research.

In general, moderators would be expected to operate across contexts in the effectiveness of different strategies, regardless of which religious group is studied. For example, there might be higher levels of intolerance of norm challenge by other faith members in more conservative contexts, or when the group is under threat, which might strengthen the association of challenge with lower identification or well-being (Ransom et al., 2020; Stavrova et al., 2013; see also, Wibisono et al., 2019). Some religions may also be more challenging to integrate with other contemporary identities: for example, stricter religious faiths or denominations may give rise to more norm conflict in Western permissive societies, or be more punitive to those who do not conform (Ransom et al., 2020; Scheitle & Adamcyzk, 2010; Testoni et al., 2019). These are promising avenues for future research.

As a limitation of the study, it should be reiterated that the direction of causality is ambiguous, given the correlational nature of the present research. Feedback loops would be expected to occur in longitudinal research, as well as biased perception of norms as a function of

higher identification. For example, those who are more strongly identified might be more likely to deny the norm conflict altogether, or to choose to affirm the norm conflict within a faith is more peripheral, as well as more likely to turn to normative practices. To demonstrate causality, future research could examine trajectories in longitudinal data, as well as the experimental impacts of making norm conflict more salient or less. Future research should also seek more representative samples, so that the generalizability of the results may be tested.

Furthermore, research might seek to examine theoretically interesting moderating variables. The effectiveness of the three strategies might vary when norm conflict is more intense, for example, such that denying the conflict on core issues is less realistic. The role of leadership is also of interest: while these strategies are analysed here as individual choices, leaders often explicitly communicate messages about how they wish norm conflicts within a faith to be resolved. Messages which present particular norm contestations as core (or not) to a faith appear relatively common in religious norm conflict. As the work of Sani has highlighted (2005; Sani & Todman, 2002; Sani & Reicher, 2000), belief in the centrality (or not) of a norm contest has important implications for how group members react, even pushing members in some contexts to abandon their faith or schism from their church. Age and education may also play a role in exposure to norm conflict: norm conflict may be more salient for younger respondents (e.g., if exposed to conflicting norms during the transition to university). These are fascinating directions of future research.

Conclusion

The present research seeks to understand how religious identification is associated with normative practices and conflicts. A strong positive association was observed of religious identification with engaging in normative practices such as prayer and worship, as expected on

the basis of past research, and the association extended to stronger well-being. However, norm conflict was associated with undermined identification and lower well-being. Among the possible coping strategies, normative ritual practice emerged as associated with stronger identification, and both normative ritual practice and affirming the integrity of core values were associated with higher well-being. Challenging the norm, in contrast, was associated with *lower* well-being – though group identification was not affected.

The present study is unique in considering these potential coping strategies comparatively and in a multi-faith sample. Studying how people of faith navigate religious norm conflict is important: as societies become more pluralistic and more secular, divisive conflict over religious norms may increase both within and between faith groups. While replication in representative samples remains a challenge for future research, the present study makes an important contribution to the study of religious identification, group members' reactions to norm conflict, and pathways for religious norm change and affirmation.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-Correlations

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5
1. Norm conflict (0-6)	1.2 (1.0)					
2. Normative ritual practices (1 to 5)	2.7 (1.0)	-.39***				
3. Norm challenge (1 to 7)	3.9 (1.6)	.44***	-.21**			
4. Affirming core values (-1 to 1)	0.1 (0.6)	-.02	-.09	-.03		
5. Identification (1 to 7)	5.3 (1.0)	-.34***	.52***	.23**	.01	
6. Well-being (1 to 7)	4.9 (0.7)	-.14**	.25***	.27**	.13*	.38***

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

Table 2

Standardized Coefficients for Religious Group Identification Predicted from Norm Conflict

(Block 1), Affirmation Strategies (Block 2), and Interfaith Differences (Block 3)

	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
Norm conflict	-.34***	-.13*	-.14*
Normative religious practices		.47***	.47***
Norm challenge		-.07	-.05
Affirming core values as intact		.04	.03
Christian vs Jewish and Muslim (CvJM)			-.26***
Muslim vs Jewish (MvJ)			-.07
Norm conflict x CvJM			.01
Normative religious practice x CvJM			.03
Norm challenge x CvJM			-.01
Affirming x CvJM			.02
Norm conflict x MvJ			.08
Normative religious practice x MvJ			.01
Norm challenge x MvJ			-.05
Affirming x MvJ			-.02
ΔR^2	.12***	.19***	.07***

Notes. Standardized coefficients are shown.

*p < .05; ***p < .001.

Table 3

Standardized Coefficients for Well-Being Predicted from Norm Conflict (Block 1), Affirmation

Strategies (Block 2), and Identification (Block 3)

	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
Norm conflict	-.14**	.05	.10
Normative religious practice		.24***	.09
Norm challenge		-.24***	-.21***
Affirming core values as intact		.14**	.13**
Religious identification			.32***
ΔR^2	.02**	.11***	.07***

Notes. Standardized coefficients are shown.

**p < .01; ***p < .001.