

Pre-Analysis Plan: Discrimination and Violence among Muslim Immigrants in Germany

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Abstract

Discrimination and hostility toward Muslim immigrants in the West is thought to fuel support for violence and terrorism. Can inclusionary rhetoric by political leaders break this dynamic, reducing feelings of discrimination and thereby reduce support for violence? This project will test this hypothesis through a phone survey of 1320 Muslims in Germany. Respondents will be primed with one of four treatment groups: (1) a control, (2) inclusionary rhetoric from Chancellor Angela Merkel, (3) exclusionary rhetoric from Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, or (4) exclusionary rhetoric from AfD leader Alexander Gauland. To conduct a parallel design causal mediation analysis, the project will simultaneously leverage a natural experiment, surveying half of the sample prior to Ramadan and half during, with the assumption that Ramadan will increase religious identity, in-group/out-group attitudes, and perceptions of discrimination. Overall, the project will provide a systematic test of whether inclusionary rhetoric toward Muslim immigrants can reduce support for violence.

1 Introduction

Muslim immigrants in Europe and North America face high rates of discrimination and hostility (Adida, Laitin and Valfort, 2010; Bansak, Hainmueller and Hangartner, 2016; Wilkins-Lafamme, 2018; Hekmatpour and Burns, 2019; Hangartner et al., 2019), with hate crimes and policy restrictions growing considerably after 9/11 and the rise of far-right parties (Jamal and Naber, 2008; Yilmaz, 2012; Czymara, 2019). Existing literature finds that this discrimination reduces the integration and assimilation of Muslim immigrants (Dancygier and Laitin, 2014; Adida, Laitin and Valfort, 2016; Gould and Klor, 2016; Abdelgadir and Fouka, 2020),¹ strengthens Islamic identity (Roy, 2004; Haddad, 2007) and support for Muslim political parties (Verkuyten, 2017), and is associated, at least correlationally, with higher support for violent extremism as measured through interviews (Wiktorowicz, 2005; Dawson and Amarasingham, 2017), surveys (Victoroff, Adelman and Matthews, 2012; Zhirkov, Verkuyten and Weesie, 2014; Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015; Tahir, Kunst and Sam, 2019), internet search rates (Bail, Merhout and Ding, 2018), social media analyses (Mitts, 2019), and the number of foreign fighters (Benmelech and Klor, 2018).²

Drawing on a survey of 1320 Muslims in Germany, this project will build on this literature in three ways. First, it will examine whether the correlation between discrimination and violent extremism is truly a causal effect, leveraging both a survey experiment and a natural experiment. Second, it will test one solution to breaking this dynamic: do inclusionary

¹Yet see also Fouka (2019), who finds that German Americans increased efforts to assimilate in the face of discrimination. Arab Americans likewise display a range of assimilation patterns even after 9/11 (Ajrouch and Jamal, 2007).

²For background on the origins of Muslim foreign fighters, see Hegghammer (2010). For non-Muslim foreign fighters, see Malet (2013). For a literature review on radicalization of European Muslims, see Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010); on radicalization generally, see della Porta (2018).

rhetoric and policies reduce feelings of discrimination and thereby reduce support for political violence?³ Third, it will examine what other effects inclusionary and exclusionary rhetoric may have across a wide variety of outcomes discussed below.

2 Survey Design

A telephone survey of 1320 Muslims will be conducted in Germany from April-May 2020. Germany was chosen for a number of reasons. First, Germany hosts some of the largest numbers of Muslim immigrants, admitting the highest number of Syrian refugees in Europe, and thus from a practical standpoint is one of the easiest countries in which to survey Muslim immigrants. Second, despite this large population, Germany has seen relatively few cases of violent extremism, sending some of the lowest per capita numbers of foreign fighters to ISIS (Barrett et al., 2015; Radio Free Europe, 2015; Capatides, 2016).

One explanation could be Chancellor Angela Merkel’s relatively inclusive rhetoric and policy toward Muslims. Despite the growth of the far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) and an increase in hate crimes (Bencek and Strasheim, 2016; Frey, 2020), Muslim immigrants in Germany integrate well and express high trust in government (Doerschler and Jackson, 2012).⁴ Germany thus presents a realistic case for testing the effects of inclusion on violent extremism, and one where the mechanisms should be clearest.

Due to deadlines associated with the grant, the survey will be conducted during the covid-19 lockdown, necessitating a phone rather than face-to-face survey. While face-to-face surveys are generally preferable to phone surveys across several dimensions (Holbrook, Green and Krosnick, 2003),⁵ the particular context of coronavirus may actually enhance

³Other studies have examined what effect immigrant behavior, particularly enforcing a shared norm, can have on reducing discrimination (Choi, Poertner and Sambanis, 2019).

⁴Though see also Koopmans and Schaeffer (2016), who argue that Germany is relatively less inclusive than other countries.

⁵In Germany, for instance, phone surveys have been found to slightly oversample the

representativeness. Survey firms have reported a much higher response rate during the covid-19 lockdown (Russonello and Lyall, 2020), especially among populations who usually work outside of the home during the day. With these populations now at home near their landline, covid-19 may offset any limits in the representativeness of phone surveys.

The survey will be conducted by AMR-Advanced Market Research using a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) method. Following the EURISLAM surveys (Koopmans, 2016), the sampling frame will be created from electronic phone directories (both landline and cellphone) supplemented with an onomastic (named-based) screening identifying typical Turkish, Arab, Pakistani, and Ex-Yugoslav surnames. The survey will be conducted in either German, Turkish, or Arabic, depending on the respondent’s selection.

2.1 Priming Experiment

After collecting demographic information (see appendix), the 1320 respondents will be divided into four groups of 330 respondents each for a priming experiment (see Table 1). The control group will receive no prime and will proceed directly to the post-treatment questions. The remaining three treatments are designed to prime respondents with either inclusionary or exclusionary rhetoric and policies. The first treatment, Merkel, will prime respondents with inclusionary rhetoric by and policies under German Chancellor Angela Merkel, particularly her statement that “Islam belongs to Germany” and factual statements about Germany accepting the largest number of Muslim refugees in Europe and introducing laws to defend Muslims from hate speech.

Relative to the control, we hypothesize that:

- **H1: The Merkel treatment will a) reduce feelings of discrimination, b) reduce out-group salience and threat, c) increase support for Western values, and d) reduce support for violence against the West.**

wealthy and higher educated (Szolnoki and Hoffmann, 2013).

Table 1: Priming Experiment

Treatment	Text	N
Control		330
Merkel	German Chancellor Angela Merkel has stated that “Islam belongs to Germany,” observing that “we are stronger together.” Germany has accepted more Muslim refugees than any other country in Europe and introduced laws to defend Muslims from hate speech.	330
Seehofer	German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer has stated that “Islam does not belong to Germany,” observing that Germany should not “give up its traditions and customs.” Germany has recently set a cap on Muslim refugees, while hate crimes increasingly target Muslims.	330
Gauland	AfD leader Alexander Gauland has stated that “Islam does not belong to Germany,” observing that “the values of Islam are not compatible with our Basic Law.” Germany has recently set a cap on Muslim refugees, while hate crimes increasingly target Muslims.	330

The second treatment group, Seehofer, will prime respondents with exclusionary rhetoric from Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, who, like Merkel, hails from the CSU/CDU party and occupies a powerful political position, but who has disagreed with Merkel’s pro-Muslim immigrant stance. The treatment therefore primes respondents to recall his statement that “Islam does NOT belong to Germany,” as well as factual statements of Germany setting a cap on Muslim refugees, while hate crimes against Muslims have increased.

The final treatment group, Gauland, will prime respondents with exclusionary rhetoric from AfD leader Alexander Gauland, particularly the same statement that “Islam does not belong to Germany,” and the same factual statements from the Seehofer treatment. We hypothesize that:

- **H2: The Seehofer and Gauland treatments will a) increase feelings of discrimination, b) increase out-group salience and threat, c) decrease support for Western values, and c) increase support for violence against the West.**

We may also expect the Seehofer treatment to have a stronger effect than Gauland, given that Seehofer currently occupies a policy-making position, while the views of the AfD could

be dismissed as not having direct policy consequences.

All three treatments are factual, and therefore do not involve deception. All three are also relatively parallel, invoking a statement by the politician and referencing two relevant policy outcomes, one on the number of Muslim refugees and the other on hate crimes toward Muslims.

2.2 Natural Experiment: Ramadan

In addition to the priming experiment, we will also exploit a natural experiment, conducting half of the survey before Ramadan (April 23-May 23, 2020) and half during (660 respondents each). Ramadan, one of the five pillars of Islam, is a holy month involving daytime fasting from dawn (*suhur*) to dusk (*iftar*). The month is viewed as a time for prayer, reflection, and community.

Ramadan exposure has been used by a number of scholars as a quasi-natural experiment. Rad and Ginges (2017) finds Ramadan fasting induces loss and risk aversion, while Rad, Ansarinia and Shafir (2020) suggests it may decrease cognitive control. Akay, Karabulut and Martinsson (2013) suggest that Ramadan exposure may reduce positionality (status envy), especially among the less religious. Exploiting the length of time spent fasting (varies by latitude and season), Campante and Yanagizawa-Drott (2015) find that Ramadan decreases economic output but increases subjective well-being.⁶

More relevant for our study, Carter (2011), Toft and Zhukov (2015), and Cubukcu and Bartholomew (2018) find that Ramadan is associated with increased violence,⁷ and Limodio

⁶Other economists and epidemiologists have exploited Ramadan exposure during pregnancy, linking it to lower fetal health (Almond and Mazumder, 2011; Schoeps et al., 2018), educational attainment (Almond, Mazumder and van Ewijk, 2015; Majid, Behrman and Mani, 2019), and labor market outcomes (Schultz-Nielsen, Tekin and Greve, 2016).

⁷Though see also Reese, Ruby and Pape (2017) and Hodler, Raschky and Strittmatter (2020), who challenge this finding.

(2019) suggests Ramadan donations may increase terrorist financing. In Turkey, [Aksoy and Gambetta \(2020\)](#) find that longer Ramadan fasting is associated with a higher vote share for Islamist parties. In Germany, [Colussi, Isphording and Pestel \(2019\)](#) finds that Ramadan increases native German hostility toward Muslims.

Building off this literature, we hypothesize that for Muslim immigrants in Germany:

- **H3: Ramadan will a) increase in-group (Muslim) identity, b) increase out-group salience and threat, c) increase perceptions of discrimination, d) decrease support for Western values, and e) increase support for violence against the West.**

The particular context of Ramadan 2020, occurring during the covid-19 lockdown, helps to isolate the various Ramadan effects. Due to the lockdown, mosques have been temporarily closed and large gatherings limited. This year’s Ramadan will therefore primarily heighten individual-level spirituality and reflection, rather than any community-based solidarity.

2.3 Outcomes of interest

The analysis will trace the effect of both experiments on several outcomes of interest. Tables [2](#), [3](#), and [4](#) present each hypothesis by category. The first and primary outcome is support for violence. The most common survey question includes a mention of suicide bombing: “Some think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies.” I modify this question to remove reference to suicide bombings and focus more generally on violence against civilian targets, especially since suicide bombings have been controversial even among some violent extremists who otherwise support violence. I hypothesize that the Merkel treatment will reduce support for violence, while the Seehofer, Gauland, and Ramadan treatments will increase it.

Table 2: Hypotheses: Dependent Variables

Question	Merkel	Seehofer	Gauland	Ramadan
<u>Support for Violence</u>				
Some people think that violence against civilian targets is justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?	-	+	+	+
<u>Support for Western values</u>				
We can learn from Western culture.	+	-	-	-
Despite its flaws, democracy is the best form of government.	+	-	-	-
Religion and politics should be separate.	+	-	-	-
When minority rights and the will of the majority are in conflict, which should take precedence?	+	-	-	-

A second set of outcomes concerns support for Western values, such democracy and secularism. Grewal (2020) finds that Tunisian Islamists who lived in exile in Europe and North America became more supportive of democracy, secularism, and minority rights, and were thus more willing to compromise with secular parties upon their return to Tunisia. This project will seek to substantiate that hypothesis, and examine whether it may vary the exile’s experience in the West, particularly whether they faced discrimination. I hypothesize that those receiving the Merkel treatment will be more supportive of Western values, while those receiving the other treatments will be more hostile.

Table 3 and 4 then present the mechanisms through which these effects are expected to occur, particularly, feelings of discrimination, in-group/out-group salience, and threat perception. I hypothesize that the Merkel treatment will decrease discrimination, out-group salience, and threat perception, while the other treatments will increase them. In-group

salience, however, could go in either direction: with the Merkel treatment Muslims may feel more welcome in Germany and therefore less strongly Muslim; but they may also be more willing to express their true identity. Ramadan, however, will likely have a clear effect increasing in-group identity.

Table 3: Hypotheses: Mechanisms (1)

Question	Merkel	Seehofer	Gauland	Ramadan
<u>Discrimination</u>				
In general, how often do you think Muslims experience hostility or unfair treatment in Germany?	-	+	+	+
In the past 5 years, would you say that discrimination against Muslims in Germany has increased decreased, or stayed the same?	-	+	+	+
Have you personally faced discrimination or hostility in Germany?	-	+	+	+
<u>Threat Perception</u>				
In your opinion, how big of a threat is the AfD party to the rights of Muslims in Germany?	-	+	+	+
Would you say that the rise of the AfD in Germany reflects a broader societal shift against Muslims, or are they just a fringe group?	-	+	+	+
Western countries are trying to destroy Islam.	-	+	+	+
Long term, would you prefer to stay in Germany or leave Germany?	+	-	-	-

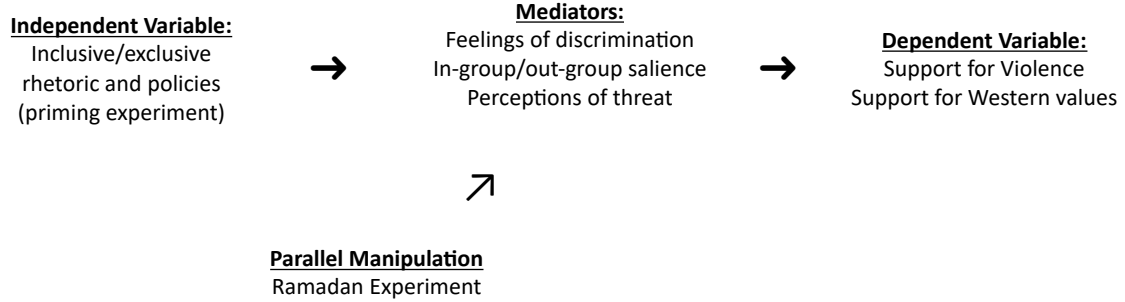
Table 4: Hypotheses: Mechanisms (2)

Question	Merkel	Seehofer	Gauland	Ramadan
<u>Out-Group Salience</u>				
Do you consider yourself German?	+	-	-	-
To what extent are you proud of being German?	+	-	-	-
No matter how much they assimilate, Muslims will never be accepted in Germany.	-	+	+	+
<u>In-Group Salience</u>				
To what extent are you proud of being Muslim?	-/+	-/+	-/+	+
On average, how often would you say you pray?	-/+	-/+	-/+	+
If Muslims one day became a majority in your city, would you favor having local sharia courts for Muslims?	-/+	-/+	-/+	+
Would you say you are: very religious, somewhat religious, Not very religious, not religious	Pre-treatment			+
If there is tension between sharia law and German laws, which should take precedence?	Pre-treatment			+

Causal mediation analyses (Imai, Keele and Tingley, 2010) will be conducted to examine whether the effect of the experiments on the outcomes in Table 2 are indeed mediated through the variables in Tables 3 and 4. In particular, the two experiments allow us to conduct a parallel design causal mediation analysis (Imai, Tingley and Yamamoto, 2013), in which the effect of the priming experiment on the mediator and then outcome can be paired with the Ramadan experiment likewise shaping the mediator and outcome (see figure 1).⁸

⁸For one application of a parallel design causal mediation, see Grewal et al. (2019).

Figure 1: Parallel Design



All analyses will be conducted in R using the [mediation](#) package.

3 Questionnaire

1. What is your age? ___ [If under 18, END]
2. What is your gender? [Male, Female]
3. What is your religion? [If not Muslim, END]
4. What branch of Islam do you follow?
 - Sunni
 - Shia
 - Alevi
 - Ahmadiyya [don't read]
 - Sufi [don't read]
 - Salafi [don't read]
 - Other: -----
 - Just a Muslim [don't read]
 - DK/Refuse
5. Would you say you are:
 - Very religious
 - Somewhat religious
 - Not very religious
 - Not religious
 - DK/Refuse
6. Do you fast during Ramadan?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- DK/Refuse

7. How would you characterize your religious orientation? Please check all that apply.

- Liberal
- Conservative
- Secular
- Islamist
- Ikhwani
- Salafi
- Sufi
- None/Just a Muslim [don't read]
- DK/Refuse

8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Elementary school
- Middle school
- Junior high school
- High school
- Bachelor's degree

- Master's degree or higher
- DK/Refuse

9. What is the total income of your household?

- (Insert appropriate scale for Germany)
- DK/Refuse

10. What is your employment status?

- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Apprentice
- Unemployed
- Student
- Retired
- Housewife/husband
- DK/Refuse

11. Where do you live?

- State: -----
- Postal Code: -----
- DK/Refuse

12. Are you a German citizen?

- Yes
- No
- DK/Refuse

13. How would you describe your immigration status?

- First generation: Born elsewhere and moved to Germany
- Second generation: Born in Germany to immigrant parents
- Third generation: Grandparents immigrated to Germany
- Fourth generation or above

14. {If first gen} How many years have you lived in Germany? ---- years

15. {If first gen} Why did you move to Germany? Check all that apply.

- Refugee, fleeing war
- Exile, fleeing political persecution
- Seeking economic opportunity
- Germany was more welcoming to Muslims than other countries.
- I already had family in Germany
- DK/Refuse

16. Where did you / your parents / your grandparents / etc. [depending on Q13] immigrate from originally? What is your/their country of origin? [don't read options]

- Turkey
- Syria
- Egypt
- Morocco
- Algeria
- Tunisia
- Libya

- Afghanistan
- Pakistan
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Kosovo
- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Montenegro
- Slovenia
- Macedonia
- Other: ----
- DK/Refuse

17. What is your marital status?

- Married
- Single
- Widowed
- Divorced or separated
- DK/Refuse

18. {If married, widowed, divorced, or separated} Is/was your spouse also of:

- Migrant origin and Muslim
- Migrant origin and non-Muslim
- Native German and Muslim

- Native German and non-Muslim
- DK/Refuse

19. On a daily basis, would you say you primarily interact with people who are:

- Native German
- Migrant origin and Muslim
- Migrant origin and non-Muslim
- DK/Refuse

20. If there is tension between sharia law and German laws, which should take precedence?

- Sharia law
- German law
- {don't read} There would be no tension
- {don't read} Depends on situation
- DK/Refuse

21. Which of the following German parties do you support most?

- CDU/CSU
- SPD
- AfD
- Gruene
- FDP
- Die Linke
- Other: ----
- None

- DK/Refuse
22. {Survey Experiment: Randomize: read ONE of the following four statements (330 respondents each):}
- **Control:** {Skip to Q23}
 - **Treatment 1:** “German Chancellor Angela Merkel has stated that “Islam belongs to Germany,” observing that “we are stronger together.” Germany has accepted more Muslim refugees than any other country in Europe and introduced laws to defend Muslims from hate speech.”
 - **Treatment 2:** “German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer has stated that “Islam does not belong to Germany,” observing that Germany should not “give up its traditions and customs.” Germany has recently set a cap on Muslim refugees, while hate crimes increasingly target Muslims.
 - **Treatment 3:** “AfD leader Alexander Gauland has stated that “Islam does not belong to Germany,” observing that “the values of Islam are not compatible with our Basic Law.” Germany has recently set a cap on Muslim refugees, while hate crimes increasingly target Muslims.”
23. In general, how often do you think Muslims experience hostility or unfair treatment in Germany?
- Never
 - Rarely
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently
 - DK/Refuse
24. In the past 5 years, would you say that discrimination against Muslims in Germany has increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

- Increased
- Decreased
- Same
- DK/Refuse

25. In your opinion, how big of a threat is the AfD party to the rights of Muslims in Germany?

- A major threat
- A minor threat
- Not a threat
- DK/Refuse

26. Would you say that the rise of the AfD in Germany reflects a broader societal shift against Muslims, or are they just a fringe group?

- Broader shift
- Fringe group
- DK/Refuse

27. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? No matter how much they assimilate, Muslims will never be accepted in Germany.

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly
- DK/Refuse

28. We can learn from Western culture.

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly
- DK/Refuse

29. Western countries are trying to destroy Islam.

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly
- DK/Refuse

30. Despite its flaws, democracy is the best form of government.

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly
- DK/Refuse

31. Religion and politics should be separate.

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Disagree

- Disagree strongly
- DK/Refuse

32. When minority rights and the will of the majority are in conflict, which should take precedence?

- Minority rights
- Will of the majority
- {Don't read} Depends
- {Don't read} DK/Refuse

33. Do you consider yourself German? [Yes, No]

34. To what extent are you proud of being German?

- Very strongly
- Strongly
- Somewhat
- Hardly
- Not at all
- DK/Refuse

35. To what extent are you proud of being Muslim?

- Very strongly
- Strongly
- Somewhat
- Hardly
- Not at all

- DK/Refuse

36. On average, how often would you say you pray?

- Five times a day
- Once a day
- A few times a week
- Only on special occasions
- Never
- DK/Refuse

37. Long term, would you prefer to stay in Germany or leave Germany?

- Stay
- Leave
- DK/Refuse

38. Some people think that violence against civilian targets is justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?

- Often justified
- Sometimes justified
- Rarely justified
- Never justified
- DK/Refuse

39. If Muslims one day became a majority in your city, would you favor having local sharia courts for Muslims?

- Yes
- No
- DK/Refuse

40. Have you personally faced discrimination or hostility in Germany?

- Yes
- No
- DK/Refuse

41. {If no} Have any of your close friends or family personally faced discrimination or hostility in Germany?

- Yes
- No
- DK/Refuse

42. {If yes to either} What sort of discrimination or hostility did you/they face? Please check all that apply.

- Physical violence
- Verbal harassment
- Destruction of property or defacement of religious centers
- Discrimination in the workplace or academic institutions
- Ban on hijab or other religious apparel
- Other: ----
- None
- DK/Refuse

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