Chapter 10
Being a Muslim in the Western World: A Social Identity Perspective

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Introduction

This chapter uses the social identity perspective to discuss religious group identity of Muslims living in the Western world. Our topic is an identity that has its roots in a non-Western context, namely, the Muslim Majority World, but has become the subject of academic research and societal debate because of its transferal, through large-scale migration, to Western countries (see Voas & Fleischmann, 2012). "Muslims in the Western world" are a large and internally diverse category, with an estimated group size of upward of 25.8 million in Europe and 3.5 million in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2017, 2018). Questions about Muslim identity in this context touch upon fields of research that have received broad coverage in different disciplines. Speaking about "Muslim identity" raises difficult and much discussed questions about who Muslims are, what is specific about Islam, and how identity can be conceptualized. There is a large literature on each of these questions, which cannot be addressed in this chapter. For example, there are many different Muslim groups and subgroups and many ways of being Muslim in the Western world. Furthermore, there is an increasing number of studies on Muslim identity in different disciplines (sociology, anthropology, religious studies, migration studies, social psychology), using different conceptualizations and theoretical perspectives, and different methods and forms of analysis.

Our aim is not to give an overview of this research, but rather to discuss Muslim identity in Western societies from the social identity perspective (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). We will argue that the existing research will benefit by more fully considering the implications of the social identity perspective that relate to (a) the conceptualization of social identity, (b) the importance of

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considering various dimensions of group identification, (c) the question of religious and host national identity (in)compatibility, and (d) the relationship between Muslim minority identity and social change.

Social Identity Perspective

The field of identity studies is large and diverse, and there are many different conceptualizations and approaches to the study of identity (Wetherell & Mohanty, 2010). The number of writings and empirical studies on "identity" has increased enormously, and the term has replaced social scientific concepts such as roles, personality, beliefs, worldviews, and the self. Whereas not so long ago it was common to describe someone as being a religious person, nowadays that person is considered to have a religious identity. Almost anything that has to do with what people think, feel, and do has been conceptualized as an identity issue, which leads to much confusion, perhaps to the point of the term losing almost all significant and coherent meaning (Verkuyten, 2018). Conceptual expansion as well as conceptual underspecification are endemic in the social sciences (Haslam, 2016). One example of this confusion is that the identity concept is interchangeably used for both the gradual development of a cultural or bicultural self in a process of enculturation and socialization and for the identification with specific social categories and groups. Yet the gradual development of an inner sense of *who* you are (a religious person) is something other than the recognition by oneself and others of *what* you are as a member of a particular category or group (e.g., a Muslim; Verkuyten, 2016, 2018). Being and feeling religious as an inner reality that results from religious socialization (Phalet et al., 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011) is not necessarily the same as being considered to belong to a particular religious community. For the latter, nouns (e.g., "a Muslim," "an intellectual," or "an athlete") rather than adjectives (e.g., "religious," "intelligent," or "athletic") are used to describe a person, and the concept of social (or collective or group) identity refers to this. This concept tells us something about how people, as individuals or as a group, position themselves and are positioned by others in their social environment, and how such positions have meaning and value.[1]

The main focus in the social identity perspective is not on the ways in which a social identity is incorporated into the self and represented as an integral part of one's self-concept, but rather on the reversed process whereby the self is considered similar to the respective category or group. This is best captured by the process of depersonalization that entails "a shift towards the perception of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category and away from the perception of self

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[1]The latter question is also the object of study in the more sociological literature on boundary dynamics (e.g., Lamont & Molnár, 2002), which has some overlap with the more social-psychological literature on the social identity perspective. As our focus is on the latter perspective, a comprehensive comparison of both perspectives is beyond the scope of this chapter.

as a unique person" (Turner et al., 1987, p. 50). The self becomes depersonalized, which implies a redefinition toward group-based characteristics and attributes. Through self-stereotyping, the attributes and behaviors of the individual self are assimilated *to* the representations of the group as a whole, rather than the other way around, in processes such as enculturation and socialization. With a religious identity, how one thinks and feels about oneself depends on the shared representations of the religious group and how one's group is doing. Thinking about "we" British Muslims or "we" German Muslims has significant effects on one's orientation toward others who do or do not share that identity (e.g., Christians, seculars, Americans). It involves expectations, group loyalties, and specific collective norms, values, and beliefs. It also involves a concern with the relative position of Muslims in Great Britain or Germany, or the West more generally, whereby one's self-feelings are assimilated to the fate of other Muslims. This conceptualization of social identity has various implications for research on Muslim identity in the Western world.

Religious Identity and Identity Dimensions

Approaches that focus on the development of an inner sense of self and consider different identity domains (family, religion, local, national, etc.) assume that these are all part of a single, less or more integrated overall personal identity. The focus is on a coherent overall sense of self, whereby the various identities derived from different group memberships differ in subjective importance or centrality but are all part of a single (hierarchically ordered) identity (Erikson, 1968). However, from a social identity perspective, the question of multiple identities is less concerned with establishing a sense of overall coherence. Whether the totality of all one's social identities (plural) adds up and forms a single, overarching identity (singular) is not the topic of concern (Brewer, 2001). The focus is more on how, in particular contexts, specific social identities with their particular meanings become relevant, overlap, and relate to each other. Different social identities can involve contrasting understandings, competing demands, and different loyalties and allegiances to others. This raises a question about the nature of religious identity and its various dimensions.

Religions evoke a sense of the transcendental and sacred and emphasize doctrinal beliefs and ritual practices that set religious group identities apart from other social identities such as racial and ethnic identity. Among Muslims, just like other adherents of major world religions, adopting Muslim identity has implications for how the individual views the world, what is considered right and wrong, and what the purpose of life is (Cohen, 2009). The doctrinal content (beliefs and practices) is a defining characteristic of religious identity that makes it attractive, perhaps more attractive than ethnic identities, for minority members (Verkuyten, 2007; Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Religious group identification is often found to be stronger than other group identifications among Muslim minority youth (e.g., Ajrouch, 2004; Fine & Sirin, 2008). For example, for young British Pakistanis (Jacobson, 2006) and

Moroccan Dutch (Verkuyten et al., 2012), Islam has become a more meaningful source of social identity than ethnicity. Particularly in the context of migration, where immigrants are disconnected from their previous lives and may experience a sense of being uprooted, the psychologically adaptive benefits of religious group belonging may become apparent (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Furthermore, contemporary debates about migration and diversity that tend to focus on religious rather than ethnic differences (Alba, 2005), and that have led to the racialization of Muslim identity (Shadid, 2006; Shadid & van Koningsveld, 2002) may increase the salience of Muslim identity even more than that of their identification with their ethnic community or origin country.

Most approaches to social identities make a distinction between different identity components or dimensions such as private and public regard, cognitive centrality, commitment, importance, and values and beliefs (see Ashmore et al., 2004; Roccas et al., 2008; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Following Tajfel's (1982) well-known definition of social identity, researchers within the social identity tradition have argued for three aspects to a social identity: self-categorization, group self-esteem, and emotional commitment. Others, however, propose that identity centrality and feelings of interconnectedness and shared fate are also important dimensions (see Ashmore et al., 2004).

A distinction between different dimensions allows for a more detailed understanding of Muslim identity and its different meanings and for examining how variation along these dimensions is related to functioning and behavior. For example, the distinction between dimensions makes it possible to conceptualize group identification in terms of profiles (Roccas et al., 2008) and to differentiate between Muslims that have a more homogeneous or heterogeneous pattern of religious group identification. Muslims with a homogeneous identification profile express similarly high levels of identification across different dimensions, making one identification score sufficient for capturing the extent of their Muslim identification (Verkuyten, 2007). In that case, the different aspects are experienced as an integrated whole in which high religious importance equals adherence to religious beliefs, a sense of attachment to the worldwide community of Muslims (also referred to as *ummah*), and engagement in religious practices (such as praying, reading the Qur'an, fasting during Ramadan, or visiting the mosque) as behavioral enactments of one's Muslim identity. Such a homogeneous group identification profile might be the result of normative pressures within the Muslim community, in combination with social identity threats that Muslim minorities face from the dominant majority.

It is also possible, however, that Muslims have a more heterogeneous identification profile whereby they identify high on some dimensions and score relatively low on others. For instance, ethnographic work among Muslim youth in various European countries documents that religious self-identification is generally strong, despite an acknowledged lack of religious knowledge and practice, which is often postponed to later life stages when youth plan to live the life of "a good Muslim" (Vertovec & Rogers, 1998). Similarly, a 2012 quantitative study identified different ways of being Muslim across European cities, where young adults of Turkish descent combined high levels of religious group belonging with strict, selective, or

little behavioral involvement in religious practices such as fasting and praying (Phalet et al., 2012).

Heterogeneous profiles indicate that Muslim minorities differ not only in the extent of their group identification but also in the meaning of their group belonging. Muslims with similar overall levels of identification might have a different profile, which makes it difficult to meaningfully compare their levels of group identification. Heterogeneous profiles may also lead to intragroup disagreements and debates. Two women might have a similar sense of belonging to the Muslim community, but where for one this may imply the wearing of a headscarf, for the other it might not, and these different views can lead to strong debates about being a "true" Muslim (Hoekstra & Verkuyten, 2015). Within Muslim minority communities in the West, there are fierce debates about the acceptability of multiple ways of being a Muslim (e.g., Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2012). For example, whereas some argue for the need to develop a "Euro-Islam" or "Europeanized Islam" (Tibi, 2008), others see such a development as subverting or fundamentally altering the core of the group identity, making change or reform impossible (Bilgrami, 1992).

Multiple Group Identifications

People are always members of various categories and groups and therefore have multiple social identities. All social identities are "among–other" identities. These identities can refer to quite different forms of social categorization, separate domains of life, or different levels of abstraction but can also intersect, be combined, or be conflicting. In Western Europe, Muslims' religious group identification is often strongly entwined with their ethnic group identification, although these social identities are conceptually distinct and can carry different meanings and behavioral implications. Most Islamic communities in the West tend to be organized along ethnic lines (e.g., there are Turkish and Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands; Rath et al., 2001; for the United States, see Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Warner & Wittner, 1998), and despite religious diversity within the same co-ethnic community (e.g., Sunier & Landman, 2015), the substantial overlap between co-ethnic and co-religious communities gives rise to a pattern of identification where a stronger sense of belonging to one's ethnic group mostly goes together with a stronger sense of Muslim identification (e.g., Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016; Van Heelsum & Koomen, 2016). This overlap probably has to do not only with the self-importance of their religion and embeddedness in their religious community but also with their minority position, because research has found considerably more perceived overlap between social identities of minority than majority group members (Brewer et al., 2012).

For Muslim minorities in Western societies, there is also the important question of developing a sense of host national belonging in negotiation with non-Muslim majorities: How can the prevalence of a strong religious group identification be combined with a sense of belonging to their host society? This question is at the

heart of both societal and scholarly debates that grapple with the question of the position of Muslims in the Western world, and how this sizable and growing minority can become part of traditionally Christian and increasingly secular societies. Research on this question has not so much focused on how Muslim identity and host national identity are cognitively represented and organized (Brewer et al., 2012), but rather has used two main approaches for examining dual identity in terms of the strength of Muslim identification and host national identification.

A first approach focuses on the association between Muslims' levels of religious group identification and their sense of belonging to the host nation. This approach is similar to the acculturation literature, which conceives of these group identifications as independent from each other (Berry, 2001), such that multiple combinations of high and low attachment to both the religious and the host national communities would be possible. Indeed, empirical studies show that there is great variation in the association between Muslims' level of religious identification and their identification with their Western host nation. For instance, these two identifications were more negatively associated among Turkish-origin Muslims in Germany than among Pakistani-origin Muslims in Norway (Kunst et al., 2012). In their comparative study across five European cities, Fleischmann and Phalet (2016) found the entire spectrum: positive associations (Brussels), negative associations (Amsterdam and Stockholm), and nonsignificant associations between religious and national identification (Rotterdam and Antwerp). Research among Muslim youth also suggests that these associations vary with age, such that positive associations, which reflect greater identity compatibility, are more prevalent in childhood, while negative associations become more apparent during (late) adolescence (Phalet et al., 2018; Spiegler et al., 2016; Verkuyten et al., 2012).

Such variation across localities and developmental stages notwithstanding, a pattern of negative rather than positive associations seems to be more common in Western Europe than, for example, in North America, suggesting that Muslims' religious group identification is not easily reconciled with a strong sense of belonging to European host nations. Research in five European countries among first-generation but not second-generation Muslim immigrants (Van Heelsum & Koomen, 2016) and among Turkish German adolescents (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016) found negative associations of religious identification with identification with host society and mainstream culture. Similarly, Schachner et al. (2014) found that the importance of religion at home negatively predicted mainstream cultural orientation among minority youth in Germany. Furthermore, research on host national dis-identification indicates that a substantial number of Turkish Dutch Muslims explicitly distance themselves from, and do not want to be identified with, their host nation (Maliepaard & Verkuyten, 2018; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). The level of dis-identification with the Netherlands was found to be higher the more strongly they identified with their religious community.

Focusing on the combination of two separate group identifications (British and Muslim) probably does not adequately capture the subjective meaning of dual identity (British Muslim). It is difficult to know whether people with both a strong religious and national identification actually experience this pattern as a dual identity.

The latter might have different psychological meaning and different social consequences from the former (Hopkins, 2011). Therefore, and as a second approach, one can also focus directly on the strength of dual identity identification ("feeling British Muslim"). However, the use of such a direct dual identity measure raises the question of what exactly a high and also a low score on such a measure means. For example, a low dual identity score might indicate a lack of identification with both group identities, or rather a low level of host national identification against the backdrop of a strong Muslim identification. A high score might indicate a strong identification with both groups, or rather a qualified form of strong Muslim identification to which a sense of host national belonging is added (Fleischmann & Verkuyten, 2016).

Identity Incompatibility

Within Muslim majority countries, the sense of being a Muslim and a host national are typically interlinked. Despite variations in the extent to which Islamic traditions are formally recognized in legislation, there is a close connection in these countries (e.g., Turkey, Morocco) between what it means to be a national and what it means to be a Muslim; in some countries the state is even defined in religious terms (e.g., the Islamic Republic of Iran). In contrast, Muslims in Western societies face the challenge of developing a sense of belonging to traditionally Christian and increasingly secular societies. This can involve the difficult task of reconciling group belongings and commitments and combining contrasting moral worldviews and normative expectations. This can all induce stress and psychological conflict (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Muslims can experience their religious and host national identities as being incompatible or in opposition to each other. For example, in the Belgian context, high scores are seen on the intrinsic values of religious faith, religious certainty, and practice, with negatively predicted mainstream culture adoption and identification among Muslim late adolescents (Saroglou & Galand, 2004; Saroglou & Mathijsen, 2007). In research in the Netherlands, it was found that the self-importance of being a Muslim predicted national dis-identification through higher levels of fundamentalist religious beliefs and an enhanced sense of belonging to the *ummah*. More standard religious practices, such as mosque attendance, praying, and fasting—which also increase with religious centrality—were, however, unrelated to identification with and dis-identification from the host society (Maliepaard & Verkuyten, 2018).

Some research has examined identity (in)compatibility in terms of individuals' experiences of identity conflict with statements modeled on the Bicultural Identity Integration scale (BII, Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005), such as "I feel torn between my Muslim and [host national] identity." In the case of Muslims living in the West, the perceived incompatibility of values (e.g., "Islamic and German ways of life are irreconcilable") has been most frequently assessed in empirical research and related to lower levels of host national identification. Moreover, the relationship between Muslim identification and host national identification was found to be

more negative among Turkish Muslims in Germany and the Netherlands the higher their perception of value incompatibility (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2012).

Because minority belonging in migration contexts always results from interactions between minorities and majorities, incompatibility between Muslim and national identification not only depends on the meaning and behavioral implications of the religious identity but also on the meanings and implications of the host national identity. There are quite different understandings of what it means to be a national (e.g., ethnic, civic, cultural), and national identification also has different aspects (political, historical, geographical). Just like majority members, minorities can, for example, identify with the host country and its institutions (e.g., Germany, Netherlands) but not with the native majority population (e.g., Germans, Dutch; van der Welle, 2011). Unfortunately, there is very little research among Muslim minorities examining what the host nation means to them and how they reason about their host national belonging. Research among young Muslim adults in the Netherlands (Omlo, 2011) found that they provide five main reasons for feeling Dutch: being born in the country (soil principle), being raised in the Netherlands (cultural principle), having one's future in the Netherlands (future principle), contributing to the country (participation principle), and feeling emotionally attached to the Netherlands (emotion principle). Thus Muslims can self-identify as a host national because they were born and raised in the country in which they imagine their future, but that does not have to mean that they identify with the majority group and have a sense of belonging, commitment, and loyalty to that group. There is also hardly any research among Muslim minorities on their profiles of identification with their religious and host national communities. An exception is a study among Turkish Belgian Muslims and Turkish Australian Muslims that found a wide range of identification profiles illustrating the broad individual differences that exist (Van Dommelen et al., 2015; see also Spiegler et al., 2019).

Furthermore, if the degree of identification with both communities corresponds, this does not have to mean that the feelings and meanings also correspond. There can be important qualitative differences in identification. People may, for example, feel emotionally involved in their religious community and have a more instrumental view toward their host national belonging (citizenship). Some aspects of a strong religious identity among Muslims are more easily reconciled with host national belonging than others (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). For instance, if identification refers to having social ties with ingroup members, it should be relatively easy to combine a religious identity with a host national identity if one's social network includes members of both the co-religious and co-national group. When it comes to loyalties, values, or even worldviews, a sense of compatibility between group identifications is often much more difficult. For example, to the extent that Muslims adhere to more orthodox or fundamentalist variants of their belief, these beliefs will be less compatible with host national belonging in Western societies that emphasize liberal values—including gender equality and sexual minority rights (Eskelinen & Verkuyten, 2018; Maliepaard & Verkuyten, 2018)—but they should not result in incompatibility in societies where a more fundamentalist approach to religion is part of the mainstream (e.g., in the United States). Similarly, identity

incompatibility is more likely if the behavioral implications of the two group identities are contradictory (Hirsh & Kang, 2016), which might be the case for Muslim youth at an age when alcohol use and premarital sex become more common among their peers and youngsters have to make a choice between following the behavioral norms of their religious or co-national ingroup.

Variation in Identity (In)Compatibility

Previous work has not only revealed the prevalence of identity incompatibility and the specific components of Muslim identity and host national belonging that create more or less compatible identification profiles, but it has also addressed the question of under what conditions these two identities are more or less compatible. The social identity perspective emphasizes the moderating role of intragroup and intergroup dynamics, but researchers have also focused on the importance of individual differences in the subjective representation of multiple group belongings.

Subjective Representations

Social identity complexity has been conceptualized as an individual's mental representation of the interrelations among their different social identities (Amiot et al., 2007; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). The complexity is lower when the perceived overlap among different group memberships is high, and both memberships thus tend to converge into a single encompassing identification. With a simple identity structure, the same profile of identification should be found for one's religious and national group, as is the case in Muslim majority countries in which the sense of religious and national attachment, pride, belonging, and deference are likely to go together. When the perceived overlap between the two group identifications is low, the associated subjective representation is more complex, and the two profiles of group identification might differ. For example, one might feel a sense of belonging to both one's Muslim and host national community, but it might be very difficult to simultaneously subscribe to one's religious beliefs and to host national secular beliefs. In relation to a sense of host national belonging, it was found among Turkish and Moroccan Muslims in the Netherlands that lower identity complexity with regard to the combination of Muslims' religious and ethnic (i.e., Turkish or Moroccan) identity went together with lower Dutch national identification and lower endorsement of host national liberal values (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). Thus, to the extent that youngsters felt it was necessary for members of their ethnic ingroup to also be Muslims, they identified less strongly as Dutch and with liberal values.

Intragroup Processes

At the intragroup level, two group perspectives are relevant to understanding the compatibility of Muslims' religious group identification with Western host national identification: that of the co-religious and of the co-national ingroup.[2] From the Muslim perspective, the definition of what it means to be a Muslim and how this religious identity should be enacted in Western host societies has been a topic of broad and strong debates within Muslim communities in Europe (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2012). Research connecting the specific religious teachings of different Islamic communities in relation to Muslims' role in their host societies to the sense of national belonging of their members is lacking to date, but it is reasonable to expect a greater sense of identity compatibility among members of congregations that encourage societal involvement than in those where involvement within the co-religious community takes center stage. Relatedly, a study among Turkish-origin Muslims in Germany and the Netherlands found that those who think that their religious ingroup exerts more pressure to adhere to strict versions of the Islamic faith identified more strongly with their religion and less with the host nation (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2012). Furthermore, among Muslims in the Netherlands, exclusion by co-believers has been found to lead to more support for religious beliefs (Schaafsma & Williams, 2012), and being considered "too Dutch" has been found to be associated with stronger Muslim identification and lower national identification (Cárdenas, 2019). This indicates that identity compatibility is reduced if one's Muslim community defines religious group belonging in a more rigid manner.

From the perspective of Western host nations, the definition of what it means to be a "true national" similarly has repercussions for Muslims' ability to reconcile national belonging with a strong Muslim identity. The classic distinction between national identity content in terms of ethnic versus civic definitions (Brubaker, 1992) has been complemented with a cultural definition, such that sharing core cultural traits like the national language, but also a Christian heritage, is regarded by some majority members as a necessary condition to claim national belonging (Reijerse et al., 2013). Along the same lines, sociologists of religion have argued that Christianity has largely lost its meaning as faith and enacted practice in European societies but has shifted meaning to become a component of national identity (Storm, 2011). The rejection by some European countries to admit refugees due to their Islamic religion at the height of the European "refugee crisis" is a recent example of how exclusionary definitions of national identity content engenders identity incompatibility by making national group boundaries impermeable for religious minorities in general and Muslims in particular.

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[2] We situate the perspective of the host society also at the intragroup level to emphasize that most Muslims living in Western societies are full members of these societies and that identity compatibility needs to be understood from their multiple group membership.

Intergroup Processes

At the intergroup level, a number of studies have documented the negative effects of perceived discrimination and Islamophobia for identity compatibility. Across several European societies, Muslims who reported more instances of perceived discrimination, or perceived more anti-Islamic attitudes in their receiving country, were more strongly identified with their religious community and displayed lower levels of identification with, or even dis-identification from, the nation of residence (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016; Kunst et al., 2012; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Furthermore, among Muslims, feelings of exclusion have been found to lead to more hostility toward majority members (Schaafsma & Williams, 2012). In contrast, national identification of (Muslim) immigrants tends to be stronger in European societies with more multicultural policies (Igarashi, 2019).

According to the social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the particular response to devaluation and discrimination depends on the perception of the three socio-structural variables of stability, legitimacy, and permeability. *Stability* refers to the extent to which group positions are considered to be changeable, and *legitimacy* refers to the extent to which the status structure is accepted as just. *Permeability* (or openness) refers to the extent to which individual group members can leave one group and join another (passing). Depending on the nature of the social structure, minority members adopt different strategies to achieve a positive social identity. The most basic way in which this can be done is to follow an individualistic social mobility path and dissociate oneself psychologically from one's devalued religious minority group. However, this is very unlikely for Muslims and also presupposes that the group boundaries are relatively permeable or open, indicating that membership in a higher status group can be achieved. If this is not the case, collective strategies to achieve a positive social identity and to change the status quo are more likely. There is empirical evidence for this reasoning (see Bettencourt et al., 2001), including research using cardiovascular measures (Scheepers, 2013), among Turkish Dutch minority youth (Verkuyten & Reijerse, 2008), although not among Muslim minorities.

Shaping the Context

The research typically emphasizes the important role of context in shaping Muslim identity in Western societies. The proximal (family, friends) and broader social context has an impact on the feelings, norms, beliefs, customs, and ideologies of what it means to be a Muslim. For example, close contact or friendship relations with other Muslims and with members of the host national majority have been related to feelings of more or less identity compatibility. Among ethnically diverse samples of Muslim youth in five European countries, a larger share of majority friends was the strongest explanation for Muslims' level of national identification (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018). Social network analyses reveal that friendship networks among

European youth are segregated not only along ethnic but also on religious lines (Simsek et al., in press) and that Muslim youth are the least well connected to majority peers in these networks (Leszczensky & Pink, 2017).

This research is mainly concerned with the ways in which the context shapes Muslim identity. However, from the social identity perspective, the social context is not simply an external given, but is also shaped by religious identity expression, both individually and collectively. Social identity theory argues that minority members who believe that their lower status is illegitimate and unstable, and that group boundaries are rather impermeable, will show more ingroup solidarity and will be more likely to engage in collective action to achieve a different societal order (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identities do not only reflect the world as it is, but are also instrumental in trying to make the world the place one wants it to be. A shared sense of "us" transforms individual relationships because people see each other as belonging to the same category or group and they start to act on the basis of the collective understanding, beliefs, and norms that define who "we" are and what counts for "us." Thus, a shared sense of "us" gives unity and direction and is therefore an important basis of social power for trying to achieve identity-related goals, as evidenced in the civil rights struggle and other politically normative struggles for group equality and justice around the world. For example, among Muslim minority youth in Europe, identification with Islam and religious youth organizations form the basis for collective action and protest against inequality and exclusion (Cesari, 2003). Collective action is an important strategy for challenging and changing discriminatory practices and trying to improve the rights, power, and influence of one's religious minority group. This requires a sense of "us" and can happen in the local context of school or neighborhood where Muslim minority youth act together to change a situation and also on a regional or national level when Muslim youth get involved in religious (transnational) movement by actual participation and via social media (Cohen & Kahne, 2011).

Conclusion

Muslim identity in the Western world has become the topic of strong societal debates; there are many ways of being a Muslim and important differences between Muslim communities and countries. There is an increasing number of empirical studies on Muslim identity in different disciplines using different conceptualizations, theoretical perspectives, and research methods. In this chapter we have tried to argue that the social identity perspective has important implications for research on Muslim minority identity because the perspective places its major theoretical emphasis on social identities that mediate the relationship between social structure and individual social behavior. For several of these implications, there is empirical evidence, but the implications discussed should be examined more fully and systematically in future research. For example, although there is increasing interest in different identity dimensions, multiple identities, and identity (in)compatibilities,

the research is scarce in relation to Muslim (minority) identity. Additionally, there are various other implications that we have been unable to address in the context of this chapter, such as the processes of depersonalization and self-stereotyping, and important social-motivational dynamics (e.g., belonging, esteem, and meaningfulness motives) involved in determining the meaning of Muslim identity and its (in) compatibility with host national belonging (Verkuyten, 2018; Vignoles, 2011). Much research is predominantly concerned with the ways in which religious group membership is incorporated into the individual's structured self-concept (being a religious person). The social identity perspective focuses on the reversed process of self-stereotyping, whereby the self is depersonalized toward that which typifies one's religious group of Muslims. The emphasis is on the identity processes that serve to unite and shape the thoughts, feelings, and actions of those who belong to the same religious community. These are important processes that allow research on Muslim identity to more fully consider the agency of Muslim minorities in trying to shape the social world so that it comes more into line with their beliefs, goals, and values. Thus, the social identity perspective offers a theoretical framework for systematically examining Muslim minority identity in a range of settings, which is critical for more fully understanding what belonging to this religious community can mean and whether and when this belonging is considered (in)compatible with being a member of the host society.

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