Islamophobia and its origins
A study among Dutch youth

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Abstract

How can we explain Islamophobia? This is the intriguing question that is answered in this paper. We conducted a survey among 581 Dutch non-Muslim youth aged 14-16 year, including seven questions to measure the attitude towards Islam and Muslims and a variety of questions to measure various independent variables derived from the main theories in this field of study. Theories included in this study are the direct contact hypothesis, political socialisation theory, social identity theory and theories of perceived threat. Our analyses show that the evaluation of direct contact, the perceived attitude of relevant others, and the perception of threat have most effect on the attitude towards Islam and Muslims. Perceived threat mediates the effects of negative clichés and stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, the national attitude, and the evaluation of the information received by the mass media on the attitude towards Islam and Muslims. Our proposed model explains up to 70 percent of the variance in the attitude towards the Islam and Muslims.

Introduction

How can we explain negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims, which is referred to as Islamophobia? That is the intriguing question that is answered in this paper.

Public opinion polls gave rise to this research. Polls in various countries discovered that large proportions of the population have negative opinions of Islam and Muslims. The Pew Research Centre 2005 poll, for example, showed that more than two out of ten respondents in the USA declared to have an unfavourable opinion of Muslims (22 percent) compared to one third in France (34 percent), almost half of the respondents in Germany (47 percent) and even a majority of the respondents in the Netherlands (51 percent). Furthermore, an analysis of European survey data has revealed that negative feelings towards Muslims are more widespread than prejudice towards immigrants in general (Strabac & Listhaug, 2008).

Scientifically we were triggered to do this study since we found out that a generally accepted instrument to measure Islamophobia did not exist and we could not find a model or theory to explain Islamophobia in the existing literature.

Another reason for this research project is that many political leaders, parties, institutions, and also many citizens believe that the relationships between non-Muslims and Muslims is one of the main political challenges for Western European states now and

in the future. The development of these relationships, in either a positive or negative way, will have a great impact on the social and political cohesion of these societies. Growing Islamophobia may result in increasing discrimination, marginalisation and social isolation of Muslims. More hindrances that obstruct the social development of Muslim youth may result in stronger feelings of social exclusion and helplessness among these youth, which in turn may increase the chance of further radicalization of some of these young Muslims, this can again result in increased levels of Islamophobia (EUMC 2006; 2006a). As such, a negative tendency is likely to develop.

In this paper, we present a new operationalisation of Islamophobia, a theoretical explanatory model, the findings from a new survey, and our conclusions about the origins of Islamophobia.

Islamophobia

In the existing literature, Islamophobia, literally a fear of Islam is defined in terms of behaviour and as an attitude. It is important to make a clear distinction between behaviour and attitude. Behaviour is observable for those who are confronted with it, while an attitude cannot be directly observed. Behaviour may be the effect of an attitude. An attitude is than a predictor of behaviour.

Islamophobia as negative behaviour towards Islam and Muslims includes 'hostility', 'violence', 'rejection', 'exclusion', and 'discrimination'. The Runnymede Trust (1997) conceptualised Islamophobia as an unfounded hostility towards Islam. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) registers discrimination and violence towards Muslims and negative reports about Muslims in the mass media. After '9/11', the Centre observed an increase in violence against Muslims as well as an increase in negative mass media reports. They noticed that Muslims are more than other groups confronted with exclusion, discrimination, and violence. Many Muslims suffer from discrimination in education, on the labour market and at the housing market. Their educational level is below average, their unemployment rate above average, they are over-represented in labour sectors with low wages and disproportionately represented in areas with bad housing. Furthermore, Muslims face verbal threats and physical aggression (EUMC, 2003; 2004; 2006).

In this research we focus on Islamophobia as an attitude, which has, to our knowledge, not yet extensively been investigated. We have found no validated instrument

to measure the attitude of Islamophobia. What we have found are public opinion polls usually asking not more than one or a few questions about the respondents' opinions. For example, the Pew Research Centre (2005) asked its respondents the following question: 'Please tell me if you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, somewhat unfavourable, or very unfavourable opinion of Muslims?'. Although the answers to this question are very informative (they were in fact an eye-opener in 2005) they do not say much about what the opinions entail and what the affections towards Muslims are. Nor did the study aim at revealing the origins of these opinions.

The major characteristic of an attitude is its affective nature. An attitude is 'the amount of affect for or against some object' (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975: 11) and 'is simply a person's general feeling of favourableness or unfavourableness' (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980: 54). We choose, following Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), the one-dimensional interpretation of the attitude concept instead of the multidimensional interpretation, in which the concept also comprehends knowledge and behaviour (e.g., Bohner, 2001). In our opinion, knowledge and behaviour are not dimensions of an attitude, but rather a variable that may explain variance in an attitude respectively an effect of an attitude. Specific for Islamophobia is that the individual has a negative attitude towards Islam and towards Muslims.

Predictors

The attitude explanatory model in this research has been based on the view that the subjective factors explaining attitudes are related to three processes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980: 63; Hewstone, 1986; Mackie & Hamilton, 1993). Basically, people directly and indirectly develop attitudes through their own affective and cognitive experiences (direct contact), through accepting affective and informative messages from external sources (socialisation), and through their own thinking (self-generation through inference processes). All three processes assume that attitudes are not inherited but rather acquired and developed after birth in interaction with the environment.

Direct contact

The first process of attitude development is processing one's own experiences through direct contact with the attitude object, here Islam and Muslims. Direct contact is expected to influence attitudes both directly and - through their effects on cognitions, emotions and

knowledge - indirectly. Personal experiences - 'I have seen it with my own eyes' – have generally a strong impact on people's orientations and are not easily forgotten. The Direct Contact hypothesis, as originally formulated by Allport (1954), states that direct contact with the attitude object results in a (more) positive attitude. Since the work of Allport, the effect of direct contact on attitudes has extensively been studied. In examining the contact hypothesis, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) reviewed more than 500 studies and showed that the quantity of intergroup contact has a reducing effect on prejudice. Furthermore, the positive effect of contact on prejudice appears to be larger than that of prejudice on contact (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

However, the effects of direct contact with ethnic minorities and foreign peoples as measured in various empirical studies were not by definition positive (Hewstone & Brown 1986; Linssen 1995; Linssen et al., 1996). The complexity of the effects is assumed to result from selectivity and misunderstandings in observations, reception, and retention. What one observes and experiences is filtered by cognitions and affections acquired earlier. Selective observation will probably confirm and strengthen these earlier acquired orientations rather than weaken them. Direct contact experiences which conflict with pre-existing cognitions and affections will have less influence than experiences that match with the pre-existing orientations. Factors that influence the effects of direct contact on attitudes relate to the character and the frequency of the contact. Allport (1954) suggested that contact situations characterised by equal status, common goals, cooperation and support of authorities would be more successful in reducing prejudice. This was also confirmed in the meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006). Furthermore, they showed that more contact was positively related to more positive attitudes. The evaluation of the contact (positive or negative) is important as well (Tausch, et al., 2007). Having had frequent negatively evaluated direct contact with Islam and Muslims may be an important origin of Islamophobia. If someone has had no direct contact experiences he/she will not have been challenged to reflect on the original attitude and subsequently will not have been 'forced' to change this attitude. We hypothesize that a negative attitude towards Islam and Muslims is partly the result of the absence of direct contact with Islam and Muslims or of negatively experienced direct contact. The key independent variables are the *frequency of direct contact* with Islam and Muslims and the positive or negative *evaluation* of that contact.

Socialisation

The second process of attitude development is by socialisation, which is the processing of affective and informative messages received from relevant others (Dekker 1996; Gimpel et al., 2003; Oskamp & Schultz, 2005; Sears 2003). Various 'relevant others' are identified in the existing literature, such as the family, church, school, peer groups, mass media, employer and fellow-employees, and the political, economic and cultural elites. Theoretically, the most influential messengers of information and emotions are the persons who first exert influence on the subject (parents), who exert influence for the longest period of time (parents, best friend, partner), whose credibility the subject believes to be the highest (parents, teachers, television news), who have the most power over the subject (parents, teachers, employers, partner), and who have the most resources and skills to influence and manipulate perceptions and emotions (elites, mass media). It is important to recognize that we can only speak of 'influence' when there is a message, which reaches the individual being socialised via some form of communication, and when this person is receptive to it. The effect of a given communication is related to the content of the message, the channel of communication, and the extent to which the receiver pays attention to, comprehends, yields to, retains, and processes the information. Studies, which empirically explore the socialisation of non-Muslims with respect to Islam and Muslims and its effect on the attitude are scarce. A cross-national study on Western perceptions of Islam and Muslims showed that one-third of the respondents indicated that their opinion about Arab Muslims was (very) strongly influenced by what they had seen or read in the media. An additional 18 percent indicated that the views of their friends and family are important (Yalonios, Mogannam & Milton, 2005). However, there are only a few studies that focus on the socialisation about ethnic minorities and immigrants in general. Vergeer and Scheepers (1999) show for instance that when TV programs report about multicultural city areas, most attention is directed to negative themes such as criminality and ethnic minorities are often portrayed in negative situations.

We hypothesize that Islamophobia is partly the result of frequently received negative messages about the Islam and Muslims from the grandparents, parents, favourite teacher, one's best friend, and the mass media. The key independent variables are then the *frequency* of talking about the Islam and Muslims with these personal socialisers and the frequency of mass media use together with the *perceived attitudes* of these possible socialisers.

Inference

The third process of attitude formation is the process of inference, in which the attitude is deduced from previously acquired and developed orientations and previously performed behaviour. These become linked to each other and an attitude derives from that unique combination. The attitude is in this process of internal inference derived from what the individual already knows (knowledge and insights), perceives (perceptions or beliefs), thinks (opinions), feels (attitudes, other than the one under study), experiences bodily (emotions) and desires (values). These orientations may concern the object of the attitude – in our study Islam and Muslims -, as well as the individual him/herself.

In the relevant literature about attitude development through inference processes different weights are attached to the various components (Eagly et al., 1993; 1994; Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Three approaches can be identified: cognitive, affective and connotative. In the cognitive approach, a negative attitude is the effect of little or no knowledge and more negative than positive beliefs (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980; Grant, 1990, Hagendoorn, 1995; Hagendoorn 2001; Hagendoorn & Linssen, 1994; Hamilton et al., 1981; 1986; Jervis, 1976; Poppe, 1999;). The affective approach argues that affections and emotions in particular are most important in explaining attitudes (Crawford 2000; Zajonc, 1980). Recent discoveries by, among others, Marcus (2003), show that emotions, or strong feelings accompanied by physiological reactions (Frijda, 1986; Ledoux, 1996), are a major variable in explaining political attitudes. Emotions form potentially an important variable in explaining attitudes because they can be acquired at an early age and can be long-lasting. Once an emotion is linked to an object, it will manifest itself in every encounter with that object. This also happens when one for instance reads about the object or when the object just comes to mind (Bem, 1972). The emotions acquired first also hinder and filter the acquisition of new cognitions and affections. More 'negative' attitudes will be acquired about objects, which evoke negative emotions compared to emotionally neutral or 'positive' objects (Stillwell & Spencer, 1973). In the conative or behavioural approach of the inference process, behaviour, or the behavioural intention, precedes and influences the attitude. A particular attitude may be developed in order to justify (intended) behaviour (Bem, 1972; Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Milgram, 1974). There is no theoretical or empirical reason to exclude, a priori, one of the three approaches in explaining attitude development through inference (Eagly et al., 1994). Generally, the most promising explanation of an attitude seems to be a combination of the three approaches. This does, however, not mean that all variables are equally important in all

situations. Opinions usually relate to specific issues and not to more abstract and general objects such as Islam and Muslims. The conative approach may be less relevant in cases with no or only few behaviour opportunities as is the case in this study.

We hypothesize that Islamophobia can partly be explained by a low level of knowledge, having negative beliefs, and negative emotions with respect to Islam and Muslims. The key independent variables are then: *knowledge* about Islam and Muslims, *beliefs* about Islam (clichés) and Muslims (stereotypes), and *emotions* with respect to Islam and Muslims.

Specific inference theories are the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and theories of perceived threat (e.g., Sears & Henry, 2003; Sherif, 1966; Stephan & Stephan, 1993, 1996).

Social identity theory

The social identity theory argues that people have a fundamental need for a positive self-identity and that this is to a large extent derived from social group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1979). Therefore people compare their own group with other groups and evaluate the group they belong to positively while they evaluate other groups less positively or even negatively. The national group is one of the main groups to identify with (Bloom, 1990). People who suffer from a lack or have a low level of self-esteem will tend to value their own country and people as more positive and out-groups as more negative. They will be inclined to strengthen their positive attitude towards their own country and people and to attribute more negative characteristics and develop a more negative attitude towards out-groups within the country or abroad. Several studies have shown that attitudes towards one's own country and people can have an impact on the attitudes towards ethnic out-groups living within the country and the attitudes towards foreign countries and peoples (Schatz et al., 1999; Dekker 2001; Dekker et al., 2003; Coenders et al., 2004; Coenders & Scheepers, 2004; Hagendoorn & Poppe, 2004, Poppe & Hagendoorn, 2004b). Following the social identity theory, we hypothesize that Islamophobia can partly be explained by a low level of self-esteem and a strong positive attitude towards one's own national group. The key independent variables are than: *self-esteem* and *national attitude*.

Theories of perceived threat

In explaining inter-group attitudes, a large amount of research has dealt with the influence of actual and perceived threats posed by the out-group. A distinction commonly used by the scholars in the field, is the one between realistic and symbolic threat (e.g., Riek et al., 2006).

The realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966) predicts that a negative attitude towards a group is the result of a perceived conflict of interests over scarce sources such as power and jobs, as well as the result of perceived threat with respect to one's safety. Several studies have shown that such threats were related to a preference for the exclusion of immigrants (McLaren, 2003; Scheepers, Gijsberts & Coenders, 2002). Symbolic threats find their origin in the symbolic racism theory, which states that negative attitudes towards out-groups are the result of conflicting values and beliefs (Sears & Henry, 2003). The growing numbers of Muslims in Western Europe may be perceived as a threat to European values if one believes that the two value systems conflict with each other (Gijsberts et al. 2004). Conflicting values are perceived with respect to, among others, sexuality, women's social positions and roles, judicial punishments, and the state-church relationship.

Following the theories of perceived threat, we hypothesize that Islamophobia can partly be explained by the perception that Islam and Muslims threaten concrete and symbolic interests, such as labour market opportunities, safety, and Dutch cultural values. The key independent variables are then *perceptions of threat*.

Hypotheses

Summarizing, we hypothesize that the main origins of Islamophobia are: absence of or negatively experienced direct contact with Muslims; having frequently received negative information about Islam and Muslims from (grand)parents, one's favourite teacher, one's best friend and the mass media; having a low level of knowledge about Islam and Muslims; having developed negative clichés about Islam and negative stereotypes of Muslims; having experienced negative emotions with respect to Islam and Muslims; perceiving Islam and Muslims as a threat; suffering from a low self-esteem; and having a very positive attitude towards one's own country and people.

Research

Design and respondents

To test the hypotheses we conducted a new survey among Dutch youth. One of the reasons to focus on youth as research population is the growing empirical evidence that fundamental political attitudes are developed at an early age, and that these attitudes, once developed, tend be long-lasting (Nie et al., 1996; Putnam, 2000; Sears, 2003). Another reason to focus on young people is the knowledge that young adolescents and young adults can become very politically active and that they have a greater-than-average preference for protest behaviour. Attitude research among youngsters can give an indication whether there is a soil for negative actions. If desired, this group can be relatively easily approached through schools to improve their knowledge and to correct one-sided perceptions.

To prepare the questionnaire, we held open discussions with groups of non-Islamic youth at the lowest educational track according to the focus group method (Gibbs, 1997; Greenbaum, 1993; 2000). We wanted to find out what the thoughts of the pupils are and in which way they talk when Islam and Muslims are subject of conversation. We also wanted to know how the youth themselves explain their attitudes. From these conversations it became clear that Muslims were almost all the time connected to a nationality or ethnicity; all conversations were about Turks or Moroccans. The attitude towards Muslims varied between neutral and very negative. Quite often the participants argued that Muslims feel easily offended and that 'they quickly say that you are a racist'. Headscarves and burquas were perceived as oppression of women and evoke very negative emotions. Muslim girls were often perceived as harmless, while some participants felt intimidated when they meet small groups of Turkish or Moroccan boys. All participants of the discussions had direct contact with Muslims in their classes, but not outside school. Their Muslim classmates were perceived as positive exceptions compared to Muslims in general. This was however not true for pupils of classes in which a majority of the pupils had a non-Dutch background. According to the participants they received a lot of negative information: mostly, their parents have a negative opinion about Muslims and, in addition, television provides mainly negative information. Not only in informative programs like the news, but also for instance television shows in which is tried to find missing persons; 'they often report about fathers who have kidnapped their child to Morocco or Turkey'. Many participants indicated that they have a more negative

attitude towards Muslims and Islam since the terrorist attacks in the United States. (A more extensive report is available at the authors on request).

To obtain a sample which was stratified along divisions of educational level and gender, secondary schools were used to gain access to the respondents. In the survey, all three types of Dutch secondary education are included: pre-vocational education (in Dutch: 'vmbo'), higher general education ('havo'), and pre-university education ('vwo'). With respect to the stratification along the likelihood of having personal experiences with Muslims, the selection of the schools was based on the map 'Muslims and Mosques 2003/2004', which shows a regional division of the Netherlands, based on 'Muslim densities' in municipalities. This map differentiates between five areas; all these areas are represented in the sample. In total, 734 respondents from 33 third year classes of 11 secondary schools in the Netherlands filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaires of those respondents who indicated to be Muslim (79) were not included in the analysis. The same holds for the questionnaires of those respondents who did not have the Dutch nationality (9) were younger than 14 or older than 16 (20), who did not fill out the questionnaire seriously (40), and who did not answer one or more of the sub-questions of the dependent variable (6). As a result, the analyses that follow regard a sample of 580 non-Islamic Dutch youngsters. Girls and students from the higher general education level are slightly over represented in the sample.

The questionnaire, containing 104 mainly closed-ended single- and multi-item questions, was completed during regular school hours. The fieldwork has been conducted in the period between March 14 and April 26, 2006. In this period there have been no major national or internal events, which could have influenced the answers of a part of the sample.[*]

In the Netherlands, 60 percent of all Muslims have a Turkish or Moroccan background, while the other 40 percent is dispersed over many small groups (CBS, 2004). Furthermore, more than 90 percent of the people with a Turkish or Moroccan background declare to be Muslim (SCP/WODC/CBS, 2005: 119). This strong association between Muslims on the one, and Turks and Moroccans on the other hand was also reflected in our preparatory focus group discussions. Therefore, we decided to ask questions about

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[*]The dataset is stored at DANS (Data Archiving and Networked Services), which is the Dutch organisation responsible for storing and providing permanent access to research data from the humanities and social sciences and is an institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). The dataset is available at http://easy.dans.knaw.nl/dms under ID: p1725.

Turks and Moroccans instead of questions about 'Muslims'. The data shows furthermore that the attitudes towards the two groups are highly correlated (Pearson's r > .78).

The study was presented to the respondents as a study of 'how youth think about particular groups in Dutch society'. We have chosen this general wording of the aim and contents of the study because we wanted to avoid a too strong focus or any priming to Islam and Muslims. For the same reason, the group questions in the survey do not only name Turks and Moroccans but also Jews and the Dutch and the religion questions refer not only to Islam but also Judaism and Christianity. We included Christianity because this is the religion that the focus group participants mentioned when asked for the religion of the Dutch. The main reason to include questions about Jews – and not about, for example, Surinamese - is that for this group there is an obvious link with another religion, which could be included in the religion question.

Measurements

The *Attitude towards Islam and Muslims* was measured using seven questions. There are several reasons why it is generally desirable to use more than one question for the measurement of an attitude. This is more desirable if the object of the attitude consists of more than one element (here two elements: Islam and Muslims). Furthermore, an attitude can be either general or specific, for example the specific attitude of trust.

The seven questions were introduced as follows: 'There are many different groups in the Netherlands, which differ on, for example, country of origin and religion. Two large recognizable groups of foreigners in the Netherlands are Turks and Moroccans, of whom most are Muslim. There is also a relatively large group of Jews in the Netherlands, but they are not obviously connected to one country. When the questions are about Dutch people we mean people who have the Netherlands as originating country (as well as for the parents, grandparents and great-grandparents). Many of the questions in this survey are about the ethnic groups Turks, Moroccans, Dutch and Jews. Other questions are about the religions Christianity, Islam and Judaism'.

The seven questions referred to the general attitude towards Islam, the general attitude towards Turks and Moroccans, the amount of trust in Turks and Moroccans, and the feeling of (un)favourableness of getting new neighbours with a Turkish or Moroccan background. The question asking for the general attitude towards Islam was worded as follows: 'Below you can indicate what you think of certain religions in the Netherlands. Give each religion a grade between 0 (very negative) and 10 (very positive). If you are

not positive neither negative with respect to a religion you grade it a 5'. The question about the general attitude towards the different groups was worded as follows: 'How do you feel in general about the following groups? Give each group a grade ranging from 0 (very negative) to 10 (very positive). If you are neither positive nor negative with respect to a group you can grade them a 5'. The question asking for trust in the different groups was worded as follows: 'How much trust do you generally have in these groups?'. The answers ranged from 1 (no trust) to 5 (very much trust)'. To measure the feeling of (un)favourableness of getting neighbours with an Islamic background, we asked: 'Imagine, your neighbours are moving and you will get new neighbours. How positive or negative would you be with respect to neighbours from the following groups?' The answer scale ranged from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). The answers to these questions formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .87). To obtain a five-point scale for all sub-questions, the answers to the general attitude towards Islam, Turks and Moroccans were recoded. To achieve a balance in the scale between the single question on Islam and the six questions towards Muslims – Turks and Moroccans –, the answer on the general attitude towards Islam has been counted three times. The score on the attitude scale is the sum of the scores on the seven sub-questions divided by nine. The scale values vary from 1 to 5. The higher the scale score, the more positive the attitude towards the Islam and Muslims is.

We measured two aspects of *direct contact*: the frequency and the evaluation. The *Direct Contact Frequency* was measured by asking for the frequency of contact in class, at school, in the neighbourhood, and 'somewhere else'. The question was worded as follows: 'Indicate for each group whether you have contact with members of these groups (in class, at school, in the neighbourhood, somewhere else)'. The answer categories were: 'Never', 'Seldom', 'Sometimes', and 'Often'. The answers for Turks and Moroccans formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .91). The value of the direct contact frequency variable is the average score of the answers on these eight sub questions (contact with Turks and Moroccans in four possible situations) and varies from no contact (0) to much contact (4). The scale has been divided in the categories 'seldom', 'occasionally', 'sometimes', and 'often'. The answer categories for the final scale differ from the one for its sub questions because there was no-one who did not have any contact with Turks or Moroccans in any of the situations.

The *Direct Contact Evaluation* was measured using one question concerning the overall evaluation of the contact with each of the four groups. The question was worded

as follows: 'How do you in general evaluate the contact with the people of these groups?' The five-point scale ranges from very negative (-2) to very positive (+2).

In addition, we asked the respondents whether they had Turkish or Moroccan friends. The question was worded as follows: 'Does one of your friends belong to the following groups? – Yes or No'. Having such friends would imply positive direct contact (McLaren 2003: 193).

There are four *socialisation* variables related to socialisation by persons or to socialisation through mass media.

Socialisation by Persons was measured using two sets of questions: one about the frequency of communication with the socialisers and one about the perceived attitude of these socialisers. The socialisers were the respondent's grandfather, grandmother, (foster) father, (foster) mother, favourite teacher and one's best friend.

First, the respondents were asked for the *frequency* of their conversations – never, occasionally, sometimes, often – with the socialisers about three religions – Islam, Judaism and Christianity - and four groups – Turks, Moroccans, Jews, and Dutch. The questions were worded as follows: 'With some people you might talk often about the different religions [groups], with others maybe never. Please indicate with whom you talk often, sometimes, occasionally or never about the different religions [groups]'. The answers to the questions concerning Islam, Turks and Moroccans for all six socialisers formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .85). The scale ranges from rare conversations (0) to many conversations (4).

In addition, we asked for the respondent's perceptions of their socialisers' attitudes towards the three religions and the four groups. The questions were worded as follows: 'What do these people generally think of these different religions [groups]?' and were rated on a five-point scale from very negative (-2) to very positive (+2). The answers to the questions related to Islam, Turks and Moroccans for all six socialisers formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .88).

Socialisation by Media was also measured by using two sets of questions: one about the frequency of mass media use and one about the perceived content of the information these media provide. The media named in the questions were the newspaper, television news, informative programs on TV, and Internet.

First, we asked the respondents how often they read a newspaper, watched the TV news, watched other informative television programmes, and searched for information about the different religions and groups on the Internet. The questions were worded as

follows: 'How often have you read the newspaper last week?' 'How often have you watched the television news last week?' 'How often have you watched other informative television programs last week?' How often did you search for information about the different groups and religions on the Internet last week?' For all questions, the answer categories were 'Every day', '5-6 days', '3-4 days', '1-2 days', 'Not at all', 'don't know', and 'don't (read newspapers/ watch television news/ other informative television programs/ search the Internet). There appeared to be hardly any variation on the use of Internet - 86 percent of the respondents indicated not have used the Internet for these purposes – and has therefore be left out in further analyses. The answers to the questions about reading a newspaper and watching TV news and other informative TV programmes formed almost a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .58). The score of the frequency variable is the sum of the scores on the questions about the use of the three media and varies from 1 to 5.

Next, we asked for the respondent's perceptions of the content of the information the media provide about the three religions and the four groups. The questions asking for the *Perceived Content* were: 'is the [newspaper you read/TV news you watch/other informative TV programs you watch] mainly positive or negative about the different religions [groups]?'. The answer categories ranged from 'very negative' to 'very positive' on a five point scale. The answers to the questions about the newspaper, TV news and other TV informative programmes related to Islam, Turks and Moroccans formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .86). The score on the content perception variable is the average of the scores on the perceived content of the three media and varies from –2 to +2.

Subjective knowledge was measured by the self-assessed knowledge of the various religions and the various groups. The questions were worded as follows: 'Please indicate for each religion [group] how much you know about them'. The answer categories were: 'Nothing', 'Little', 'Something', 'A lot', and 'Very much'. The answers to the questions about the Islam, Turks, and Moroccans formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .79). The scale values varied between 1 (no knowledge) to 5 (much knowledge).

Clichés of Islam and *stereotypes* of Turks and Moroccans were measured using questions asking whether or not certain characteristics applied to the religions and the groups. The questions were worded as follows: '… which characteristics are according to you applicable to the different religions [groups]? Please indicate for each characteristic whether you perceive this as applicable to the religions [groups] at this moment. If you

think that a characteristic is applicable to one religion [group], you mark that one religion [group]. If you think a characteristic is applicable to two religions [groups], then you mark those two religions [groups]. If you think a characteristic is applicable to all religions [groups], you mark all religions [groups]. Do you think a characteristic is not applicable to any of the religions [groups], you mark none of them'. An equal number of positive and negative characteristics were presented to the respondents. For the religions the mentioned characteristics (clichés) were old-fashioned, peaceful, violent, social, dominant, tolerant, unfriendly towards women, and just. The listed characteristics (stereotypes) for the groups were: rude, tolerant, selfish, pleasant, aggressive, friendly, arrogant, intelligent, clumsy, hard working, slowly, confident, dominant, and efficient.

Respondents received one point for every assigned cliché or stereotype The answers to the characteristic questions about Islam, Turks, and Moroccans were reduced to two reliable scales: one *Positive Beliefs* scale with the mean score of all positive clichés and stereotypes, and one *Negative Beliefs* scale which consists of the mean score of all negative clichés and stereotypes (Cronbach's alphas are .84 and .87 respectively). A high score means more positive beliefs respectively more negative beliefs about Islam and Muslims.

Emotions with respect to the Islam and Muslims were measured in a similar way as beliefs were measured, using questions asking whether or not the respondents have experienced particular emotions with respect to the religions and the groups. The questions were worded as follows: 'Below is a list of emotions. Please indicate for each emotion with respect to which religion [group] you have experienced this emotion. Have you experienced an emotion for one religion [group], you mark that one religion. Have you experienced an emotion for two religions [groups] then you mark those two religions [groups]. You have to mark all [groups] religions by which you experienced that emotion. Have you never experienced a certain emotion for one of the religions [groups], you mark none of them'. The same emotions were asked for the religions as for the groups and an equal number of positive and negative emotions were presented to the respondents: fear, admiration, anger, enthusiasm, uneasiness, happiness, disdain, and appreciation. Respondents received one point for every assigned emotion. The answers to all emotion questions can be reduced to two reliable scales: one scale with *Positive Emotions* with respect to the Islam and Muslims and one with *Negative Emotions* with respect to the Islam and Muslims (Cronbach's alphas are respectively .87 and .86). A high score on the positive emotions scale means that the respondent has experienced many positive

emotions. A high score on the negative emotions scale indicates that the respondent has experienced many negative emotions.

The *perception of threat* was measured by asking for a reaction to more than 20 statements with respect to labour, safety and values, including democracy. One of these statements refers to the Islam; two refer to 'Muslims', and four to Turks and Moroccans. The other statements refer to foreigners in general, Jews, and the respondents' fellow-nationals, the Dutch, and were not included in the analysis. The statements concerning the Islam, Muslims, Turks, and Moroccans were: 'Islam and democracy are hard to combine', 'The opinions of Muslims and the Dutch are in general the same', 'Muslims who maintain their own culture threaten the Dutch culture', 'Turks take the jobs of the Dutch', 'Moroccans take the jobs of the Dutch', 'I feel unsafe when I meet a group of Turks on the street', 'I feel unsafe when I meet a group of Moroccans on the street'. All statements are coded in such a way that a higher score indicated more perceived threat. The answers show a high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .82). The average score of the seven statements was computed for the perceived threat scale score and a higher score indicates a higher level of perceived threat.

S*elf-esteem* was measured using 10 statements, which are translations and adaptations of the Rosenberg's (1965) 'self-esteem scale' items. The question was worded as follows: 'Please read the list of statements below. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?'. The statements were: 'On the whole, I am satisfied with myself', 'At times I think I am not good at all', 'I feel that I have a number of good qualities', 'I am able to do things as well as most other people', 'I feel I do not have much to be proud of', 'I certainly feel useless at times', 'I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others', 'I wish I could have more respect for myself', 'All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure', and 'I take a positive attitude toward myself'. The answer categories ranged from 1 to 5 and all statement were coded in such a way that a higher score represented a higher self-esteem. The reactions to the statements form one reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .91) and the mean score of the statements was included as the scale value. Higher scores represent a higher level of self-esteem.

The *National Attitude* was measured by asking for a reaction to 15 statements. These statements represent five different national attitudes: national liking, pride, preference, superiority and nationalism (Dekker, Malova & Hoogendoorn, 2003). The statements are: 'I am happy to be Dutch', 'I love the Netherlands', 'I am proud to be Dutch', 'I am proud about what the Netherlands has achieved', 'I prefer to hang around with Dutch people', 'I

prefer to live in the Netherlands', 'I prefer to have the Dutch nationality', 'I like Dutch people better than inhabitants of other countries', 'the Dutch are better', 'I like it most to hang around with Dutch people', 'the Dutch nationality is the best nationality', 'the Netherlands is the best country to live in', 'I feel member of one Dutch family', 'I have Dutch blood', and 'I have the same descent as other Dutch people'. All statements were measured on a five-point scale ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5). Together these statements construct one reliable national attitude scale (Cronbach's alpha = .93), the scale value is the mean score of the statements. A higher scale value represents a more positive attitude towards one's own country and people.

We also asked questions about several background variables such as *gender*, *age*, *education level*, *social class*, and *religiosity*.

Description

Table 1 shows the descriptive information for the attitude towards the Islam and Muslims and for the various independent variables.

The table reveals that more than half of the respondents have a negative to very negative *attitude towards Islam and Muslims* (54 percent), while four out of ten respondents have a positive to very positive attitude towards the Islam and Muslims (40 percent).

More than half of the respondents reports having only seldom or occasionally *direct contact* with Muslims (60 percent) while only a small minority has often direct contact with Muslims (8 percent). Overall, more respondents report positive than negative contact experiences (respectively 38 and 30 percent). This is especially true among the respondents with sometimes or often contact (65 percent evaluate their contact as positive). From the respondents with only seldom contact, however, more negative than positive experiences are reported (68 percent report a negative evaluation of their contact). A little more than half of the respondents indicate to have Turkish or Moroccan friends (53 percent).

Generally, the respondents do not *talk* much about Islam and Muslims. Almost eight out of ten report that they seldom or occasionally talk about Islam and Muslims (78 percent). Most conversations about Islam are held with the mother, father and the best friend (respectively 29, 28 and 28 percent). With the favourite teacher the respondents talk least often (12 percent). Similar patterns arise when looking at conversations about

Turks and Moroccans. Six out of ten respondents report to talk sometimes or often about Turks and Moroccans with their best friend (62 percent). Less frequently are conversations with the father (49 percent) and the mother (48 percent), and much less frequently with the grandfather and -mother (both 23 percent). Again, the least is talked with a favourite teacher (21 percent).

A majority of the respondents perceive the attitude about Islam and Muslims of these persons as negative to very negative (61 percent). Only two out of ten have positive to very positive *perceptions* of these attitudes (23 percent). The persons that are talked with most often – the mother, father and best friend – are perceived as being the most negative about Islam (respectively 33, 28 and 30 percent). The favourite teacher is perceived as being the least negative about Islam (11 percent). Similar patterns are shown with respect to the attitude towards Turks and Moroccans: the best friend is not only most often the partner in conversations, but is also perceived as the one with the most negative attitude towards Turks and Moroccans. One's favourite teacher is perceived as being the least negative in the eyes of the respondents.

Almost two out of ten of the respondents indicate to *use* the *media* (newspaper, TV news, other informative TV programmes) not more than 2 days a week (19 percent). Television news bulletins are mostly watched; more than half of the respondents watch the news three or more days per week (57 percent). Almost half of the respondents read a newspaper three or more days a weak (47 percent). Almost three out of ten respondents watches three or more days per week other informative television programmes.

A majority of the respondents have the *perception* that the media are negative to very negative about the Islam and Muslims (64 percent), while about one fourth thinks the media are neutral in their reports (26 percent).

Half of the respondents assess their *knowledge* about the Islam and Muslims as a little to nothing (51 percent), and only two out of ten respondents think they know much to very much about the Islam and Muslims (20 percent).

Almost half of the respondents have (very) negative *clichés and stereotypes* about Islam and Muslims (47 percent). Only two out of ten respondents have (very) positive clichés and stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. The negative clichés of Islam, which received high scores, are: 'violent', 'dominant', and 'unfriendly towards women'. The negative stereotypes, which were declared applicable most to Moroccans, are 'aggressive', 'rude', 'arrogant', and 'dominant'. The positive clichés are most often

assigned to Christianity, the dominant religion in the respondents' country, and the positive stereotypes are mostly assigned to the respondents' own group, the Dutch.

More than four out of ten have experienced mainly negative to very negative emotions with respect to the Islam and Muslims (44 percent). Approximately one out of ten respondents has experienced mainly (very) positive emotions with respect to the Islam and Muslims (11 percent). The negative emotions, in particular, 'uneasiness', 'anger' and 'fear', were mostly experienced with respect to Islam and Moroccans. The positive emotions were mostly experienced with respect to the respondents' own national group, the Dutch, and the dominant religion in the respondents' country, Christianity.

One fourth of the respondents *perceive threat* from Islam, Turks and Moroccans (25 percent). Most respondents (45 percent) have a neutral position on this.

There are not many respondents who suffer from a very low or low self-esteem (5 percent), while two-thirds has a high or very high self-esteem (65 percent). Almost half of the respondents have a very positive national attitude (48 percent).

Table 1: Descriptive information Attitude towards Islam and Muslims and independent variables

	N	No. of items	Mean	SD	Percentages				
					1	2	3	4	5
Attitudes towards Islam and Muslims[1]	580	7	2.82	.85	16.7	37.1	6.0	30.0	10.2
Frequency direct contact[2]	579	8	2.32	.81	21.8	38.7	31.8	7.8	
Evaluation direct contact[1]	529	2	3.06		9.8	20.4	31.6	30.8	7.4
Having friends[3]	574	2	1.53	.50	46.7	53.3			
Frequency conversations socialisation agents[2]	580	18	2.01	.64	24.8	53.1	20.5	1.6	
Perceived attitude socialisation agents[1]	534	18	2.40	.78	19.7	41.9	14.8	22.2	1.3
Frequency mass media use[4]	572	3	3.58	1.06	4.0	15.0	24.3	36.9	19.8
Evaluation content mass media[1]	501	9	2.52	.62	13.0	50.7	26.3	9.8	.2
Knowledge[5]	578	3	2.71	.69	8.5	42.2	29.8	18.5	1.0
Positive beliefs[5]	580	18	2.63	1.22	46.2	28.1	5.3	13.3	7.1
Negative beliefs[5]	580	18	3.53	1.34	20.2	24.3	8.1	27.6	19.8
Positive emotions[5]	580	12	1.98	1.27	63.4	20.5	5.0	5.2	5.9
Negative emotions[5]	580	12	3.39	1.52	24.1	20.3	11.7	17.1	26.7
Perceived threat[5]	523	7	2.99	.85	3.1	27.0	44.9	20.1	5.0
Self-esteem[5]	571	10	3.81	.75	.7	4.4	29.9	45.9	19.1
National attitude[1]	567	15	3.42	.87	1.8	13.9	36.7	36.3	11.3

[1] 1=very negative; 2=negative; 3=neutral; 4=positive; 5=very positive.
[2] 1=seldom; 2=occasionally; 3=sometimes; 4=often.
[3] 1=no; 2=yes
[4] 1 = < 1 a week; 2 = 1-2 days a week; 3 = 3-4 days a week; 4 = 5-6 days a week; 5 = every day.
[5] 1=does not apply at all; 2=does not apply; 3=neutral; 4=applies; 5=strongly applies.

Explanation

Table 2 presents the correlations between the dependent variable (attitude towards Islam and Muslims) and the independent variables. Almost all theoretically chosen variables correlate with the attitude towards Islam and Muslims. The highest correlations are found between the attitude and the evaluation of experienced direct contact, the perceived attitudes of personal socialisers and the perception of threat ($r = .70$, $.68$ and $-.67$ respectively). There is no significant correlation between the attitude towards Islam and Muslims and the frequency of receiving messages from relevant others or mass media, nor is there an association with self-esteem.

Table 2: Correlations between the attitude towards Islam and Muslims, perceived threat and various independent variables

		Attitude towards Islam and Muslims
Contact	Frequency	.43**
	Evaluation	.70**
	Muslim friends	.31**
Socialisation	Frequency conversations	-.03
	Perceived attitudes	.69**
	Mass media use	.06
	Evaluation mass media	.29**
Inference	Negative beliefs	-.46**
	Positive beliefs	.44**
	Negative emotions	-.46**
	Positive emotions	.38**
	Knowledge	.13**
	Self-esteem	-.03
	National attitude	-.49**
	Perceived threat	-.67**

** Correlation is significant at a .01 level (2-tailed).

In the next step we conducted multiple regression analyses to examine how the independent variables are together related to the attitude and the mediating effect of perceived threat. To prevent the exclusion of too many respondents from our sample, the missing values of the continuous variables were imputed by mean estimation. Respondents with missing values on any of the categorical variables (gender, age, educational level, being religious, social class and having Muslim friends) were omitted from the analyses. This resulted in a sample of 522 respondents.

To be sure that there was no multicollinearity between the independent variables, we inspected the variance inflation factors (VIF). A VIF-value larger than 10 indicates serious problems (Field, 2005). However, the VIF-values of all variables are smaller than 3, indicating that there was no problem of multicollinearity among these variables.

Table 3 present the results of the regression analyses. Model 1 to 3 tested the single processes of attitude formation. The results reveal that, when studied individually, all three processes contribute significantly to the explanation of attitudes towards Islam and Muslims. The explained variation increased with at least 30 percent. The direct contact evaluation, perceived attitudes of relevant others, and beliefs, emotions and the perception of threat are especially important for the respective processes.

Next, we wanted to see how the different theories hold, when they are examined simultaneously (model 4). The regression analysis revealed that the main predictors of attitudes towards Islam and Muslims are the evaluation of personal experiences, the perceived attitude of relevant others and the perception of threat posed by Islam and Muslims (β = .32, .27 and -.21 respectively, $p < .01$). In addition, having positive clichés and stereotypes, and negative emotions with respect to Islam and Muslims contribute to the explanation of the attitude (β = .11, $p < .01$ and -.07, $p < .05$ respectively). Finally, girls and younger respondents are more positive about Islam and Muslims (β = -.10, $p < .01$ and β = -.05, $p < .05$ respectively). These variables account for 70 percent in the variance in the attitude towards Islam and Muslims.

We included interaction effects in the analyses for the direct contact and socialisation variables in order to examine whether the effect of the evaluation of direct contact and the effect of the perceived attitudes of others is stronger when one has more contact and when one receives more information from others. The results show that the interaction effects are insignificant. This means that the effect of the positive or negative evaluation of direct contact on the attitude is equally strong for people with little and for those with much contact and that the effect of receiving positive or negative information from relevant others is equally strong for people who receive little and those who receive much information.

Table 3: Predictors of the attitude towards Islam and Muslims

	Model 0			Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	(SE)	Beta	B	(SE)	Beta	B	(SE)	Beta	B	(SE)	Beta	B	(SE)	Beta	B	(SE)	Beta
Background																		
Gender	−.47	(.07)	-.33***	-.18	(.05)	-.10**	-.26	(.06)	-.15***	-.29	(.05)	-.17***	-.17	(.05)	-.10***	-.17	(.05)	-.11***
Age	-.01	(.06)	-.10*	-.14	(.04)	-.11**	-.06	(.04)	-.04	-.08	(.04)	-.06*	-.07	(.03)	-.05*	-.07	(.04)	-.05*
Income	.15	(.07)	.10*	.11	(.05)	.07*	.05	(.05)	.03	.07	(.05)	.05	.05	(.04)	.03	.04	(.04)	.03
Educational level	.05	(.03)	.07	.06	(.02)	.01	.01	(.02)	.01	.00	(.02)	.00	-.00	(.02)	-.00	.00	(.02)	.01
Being religious	.12	(.08)	.07	.10	(.06)	.01	.01	(.06)	.01	.12	(.05)	.07*	.07	(.05)	.04	.07	(.05)	.04
Contact																		
Frequency				.07	(.05)	.07							-.04	(.04)	-.03	-.01	(.04)	-.01
Evaluation				.56	(.04)	.64***							.28	(.03)	.32***	.29	(.03)	.34***
Muslim friends				-.04	(.07)	-.03							-.02	(.05)	-.01	-.03	(.06)	-.02
Socialisation																		
Frequency conversations							-.05	(.04)	-.04				-.01	(.04)	-.01	-.02	(.04)	-.01
Perceived attitudes							.71	(.04)	.65***				.28	(.04)	.26***	.31	(.04)	.28***
Mass media use							-.05	(.03)	-.06				-.04	(.02)	-.04	-.03	(.02)	-.04
Evaluation mass media							.06	(.05)	.04				.07	(.04)	.05	.10	(.04)	.06*
Inference																		
Negative beliefs										-.29	(.13)	-.09*	-.10	(.11)	-.03	-.26	(.11)	-.08*
Positive beliefs										.65	(.14)	.19***	.37	(.12)	.11**	.49	(.12)	.14***
Negative emotions										-.46	(.11)	-.16***	-.20	(.10)	-.07*	-.30	(.10)	-.11**
Positive emotions										.24	(.12)	.07*	-.07	(.11)	-.02	-.02	(.11)	-.01
Knowledge										.07	(.04)	.06	.02	(.03)	.01	.00	(.04)	.00
Self-esteem										.06	(.04)	.05	.03	(.03)	.03	.06	(.03)	.05
National attitude										-.10	(.04)	-.10**	-.05	(.03)	-.05	-.10	(.03)	-.10***
Perceived threat										-.34	(.04)	-.34***	-.22	(.04)	-.21***			
R2		.117			.532			.516			.583			.699			.680	

N= 522. * p <.05. ** p < .01. ***p<.001

Mediation effects

Perceived threat is one of the main predictors of a negative attitude towards Islam and Muslims. In the existing literature, there is some evidence that perceived threat mediates the relationship between inter-group contact and out-group attitudes (e.g., Stephan et al., 2000; Tausch et al., 2007; Ward & Masgoret, 2006). Inter-group contact can contribute to a reduction of negative feelings and beliefs and to an increase in knowledge (Pettigrew, 1998), which in turn might lead to lower perceptions of threat. The same line of reasoning can be applied to the effects of messages received from relevant others; receiving more positive messages about Islam and Muslims might lower the perceived threat posed by them. This has, to our knowledge, not yet been investigated. In addition, previous studies have shown that in-group identification is significantly related to perceptions of threat (e.g., Riek et al., 2006). Group identity can function as a lens through which people see the world and people who identify more strongly with their in-group can become more sensitive to perceive threats posed to their group.

To test if, and to what extent, perceived threat acts as a mediator for the other variables, we tested the integrated model once more, but this time without the effect of perceived threat (model 5). Removing perceived threat from the model reveals a significant effect from the national attitude. People who have a very positive attitude towards their own national group have a more negative attitude towards Islam and Muslims. Effects of other predictors - direct contact evaluation, perceived attitudes of relevant others, positive beliefs, negative emotions and gender - become little stronger compared to the model including perceived threat.

Conclusion, reflection and discussion

How can we explain negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims? That is the question we tried to answer in this paper. Several public opinion polls showed that substantial parts of the populations in Western countries have a negative attitude towards Islam and Muslims. However, none of these opinion polls provided a satisfying answer on the question why these negative attitudes exist. In this paper we presented a new operationalisation of Islamophobia and a theoretical explanatory model.

Islamophobia does, in our opinion, refer both to a negative attitude towards Islam, as well as to followers of Islam – Muslims. Furthermore, we assumed that an attitude can either be general or specific, such as trust, and the desirability of having a Muslim

neighbour. This resulted in a scale of Islamophobia including questions referring to the general attitude towards Islam and Muslims, and questions referring to the level of trust and the favourability of getting Muslim neighbours.

To explain the negative attitude, we conducted multiple regression analyses. The results showed that the evaluation of direct contact, the perceived attitudes of other persons towards Islam and Muslims and the perception of threat were the most important predictors of the attitude towards Islam and Muslims. Our explanatory model accounted for 70 percent of the variance found in the attitude towards Islam and Muslims. In addition, perceived threat fully mediated the effect having a positive attitude towards one's own national.

The results show that all three processes of attitude formation from which the independent variables were derived, contribute to the explanation. Especially processing one's own experiences, direct contact, and the messages received by relevant others, socialisation, appeared to be important. But also the process of inference, mainly by means of the effect of perceived threat, clichés and stereotypes on the attitude, makes a significant contribution.

Most of the hypotheses cannot be rejected. However, in contrast to our expectations, we did not find any support that a low level of knowledge and a low self-esteem contributed to the explanation of Islamophobia. Also, we did not find support for our expectation that perceive threat would be an important mediator for the effect of inter-group contact on Islamophobia. The difference of the effect that direct contact evaluation had between the models with and without perceived threat was small.

The study suffers from various limitations: it is a study in just one country (the Netherlands) among a small part of the population (youngsters) and the data were collected at a single juncture.

Future comparative research involving various countries should study possible influences on the attitudes towards the Islam and Muslims of, among others, differences in the proportion of Muslims in the country's population, differences in social-economic positions of Muslims and non-Muslims, the various governmental segregation or integration policies, the segregation or integration aims of Muslim elites, differences in citizenship education, the presence or absence of anti-Muslim politicians and political parties, and the differences in political participation by and representations of Muslims in the political system. Future research should also involve various age groups in order to study whether the attitudes of younger cohorts differ from the adults' attitudes. Another

suggestion for future research has to do with the important limitation in our study, that the data about the dependent and independent variables have been collected simultaneously so that it is not possible to establish a time order to the variables in question. The likely causal order of the variables has been reconstructed within a correlational design. Although this reconstruction seems fairly plausible, we cannot exclude any other causal order. We have not the certainty that the proposed relations are right in terms of causality. In a future study with a possible panel design, the hypothesized causal relationships should be checked, for example, whether the impact of clichés and stereotypes on the subsequent attitude is greater than the impact of the attitude on subsequent clichés and stereotypes. A longitudinal study is also necessary to discover whether or not there is an increase in Islamophobia among both young and older citizens and whether this increase is greater among youth.

To improve the explanatory power of the follow-up study some variables should be measured in a more valid and reliable way and a few new variables should be included in the analysis. The measurements of emotions and beliefs with respect to Islam and Muslims can be improved. Our study lacked a way to measure the strength of the emotions and stereotypes and clichés. The respondents could only indicate whether or not they have experienced a certain emotion and whether they perceived a cliché or stereotype to be applicable to Islam and Muslims. They could not indicate whether this emotion was very strongly or only weakly experienced, or whether the strength with which they thought the cliché or stereotype could be applied.

When we developed the questionnaire we decided not to include questions to measure objective knowledge because of their possible negative effects on the respondents' motivation to continue their willingness to answer the subsequent questions. Instead of objective knowledge we measured subjective knowledge that is self-assessed knowledge. This subjective knowledge showed a low association with the attitude under study. The question thus remains whether objective knowledge of Islam and Muslims has a positive effect on the attitude towards Islam and Muslims.

The socialisers included in the study were the (grand) parents, favourite teacher, best friend, and mass media. Questions were asked about only one of the many possible school socialisers. Future research may also ask for, for example, the students' perceptions of the attitude towards Islam and Muslims of their citizenship or social studies, or history teachers and the contents of the textbooks, which are used in these classes. Future research may also include experiments to test the intended and unintended

effects of separate educational projects that aim to improve the knowledge and understanding of the Islam and Muslims among non-Muslims students.

We had no questions included to study the possible socialising effect of politicians. They may serve as important Islam-Muslims socialisers when they express (using mass media) positive or negative beliefs and emotions on Islam and Muslims. Some current politicians in the Netherlands and in other countries voice a very negative view on Islam and Muslims.

The relationship between non-Muslims and Muslims in Western European states forms one of the main political challenges now and in the future. We hope that insights from our study may be informative for policy makers and political leaders and may help them to design policies, which will not only prevent further social isolation and radicalization of certain groups but also will strengthen the social and political cohesion of their countries.

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