

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Moralization and moral trade-offs explain (in)tolerance of Muslim minority behaviours

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Abstract

How do people decide whether specific minority behaviours should or should not be tolerated in society? The current research investigates the role of moralization in tolerance of Muslim minority behaviours that differ in their level of perceived normative dissent with four national samples of majority group members in the Netherlands and Germany ($N = 3628$). Study 1 revealed that behaviours perceived as more normatively dissenting were increasingly moralized and tolerated less. In Studies 2 and 3, we found that more normatively dissenting behaviours prompted people to prioritize the moral value of social cohesion over freedom and become less tolerant. Finally, Study 4 shows that priming the moral value of religious freedom decreases intolerance of a highly dissenting Muslim minority practice. Taken together, these studies reveal that moralization and value prioritizing can be associated with either intolerance or tolerance of minority behaviours depending on the perceived normative dissenting nature of these behaviours.

KEYWORDS

freedom, moralization, Muslim, social cohesion, tolerance

1 | INTRODUCTION

In many western societies, the hotly debated issues around cultural and religious diversity boil down to how people respond to the beliefs and concrete behaviours of minority groups in society, such as Muslim minorities (Cesari, 2013). Should people tolerate the refusal of some Muslims to shake hands with people of the opposite sex? Should people allow civil servants to wear a headscarf or other religious clothing to work? Should a distinct justice system (e.g., Sharia law) be allowed for certain religious minorities? It is around such concrete questions that the boundaries around multicultural acceptance are put to the test and intolerance can emerge.

Such intolerance is especially likely when minority beliefs and behaviours are moralized (Rhee et al., 2019; Rozin, 1999), such that attaching stronger moral significance to dissenting outgroup beliefs and behaviours makes intolerance of these beliefs and behaviours more likely (Hirsch et al., 2019). However, moralized acts can be viewed either as strongly morally unacceptable or acceptable depending on

the particular moral value. Thus, for tolerance, not only the degree of moralization is likely to matter, but also the specifics of the prioritizing of contrasting moral values that are used to evaluate minority beliefs and behaviours (Nelson et al., 1997; Peffley et al., 2001; Zilli Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011). For some majority members, the acceptance of these beliefs and behaviours may follow from liberal freedoms that characterize a tolerant society. For example, 'there is a second fraction [in society] which suggests that minarets must be tolerated because of the commitment to freedom of religion' (Schiffauer, 2013, p. 113). For others, the rejection of these beliefs and behaviours stems from concerns about communitarian values of societal cohesion: 'We've even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values ... This hands-off tolerance has only served to reinforce the sense that not enough is shared' (Cameron, 2011). Thus, tolerance of minority behaviours can be weighed, on the one hand, by the value placed on individual liberties and religious freedom that are supported by overwhelming proportions of citizens in western democracies (Wike & Simmons, 2015), and, on the other hand,

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by whether such practices undermine communitarian values of maintaining social cohesion and a unified society which are also endorsed by most citizens (Silver, 2018). These two values can conflict with each other making it important to consider the relative trade-off that people make between them for understanding their tolerance (i.e., freedom trumps cohesion) or intolerance (i.e., cohesion trumps freedom) of different minority behaviours.

The aim of the current research conducted among national majority group samples in the Netherlands and Germany is to examine two main questions: (1) to what extent is people's (in)tolerance of various minority behaviours driven by the degree of moralization and perceived normative dissent of these behaviours?, and (2) to what extent is the trade-off between individual freedoms and social cohesion concerns related to people's willingness to tolerate minority behaviours that differ in their perceived normative dissent? Given the centrality of debates regarding the place of Muslim minority practices in many western nations, we explore these questions specifically focusing on Muslim minorities in the Netherlands and Germany.

1.1 | Moralization

Moralization refers to the process by which moral significance is attached to specific actions and behaviours and preferences are converted into values (Rhee et al., 2019; Rozin, 1999; Rozin & Singh, 1999). Because people tend to consider matters of morality as objective and absolute (Skitka et al., 2021) and beyond compromise (Skitka, 2010), more strongly moralized activities and behaviours tend to lead to greater avoidance and rejection rather than toleration. Research has demonstrated that people are less accepting of divergent beliefs and behaviours that are viewed as moral issues, and that acceptance of moral issues is less context sensitive and less authority dependent than of nonmoral issues (e.g., Cole Wright et al., 2008; Skitka et al., 2005). Believing an issue to be immoral results in greater intolerance, independent of the moral emotions that might be involved and independent of the context or group engaging in it (Cole Wright et al., 2008; Hirsch et al., 2019).

Such findings suggest that majority members will be less tolerant of Muslim minority behaviours that are considered more controversial because these behaviours are more strongly moralized. In the context of Western Europe, empirical research has examined majority members' acceptance of specific Muslim minority behaviours such as the wearing of a headscarf by Muslim women, the building of new Mosques and minarets, or the establishment of Islamic primary schools (e.g., Adelman & Verkuyten, 2020; Van der Noll, 2014). The level of acceptance tends to differ because not all Muslim minority beliefs and behaviours are considered equally controversial or normatively dissenting (Adelman & Verkuyten, 2020; Dangubić, Verkuyten & Stark, 2021). While some of these behaviours are less controversial and therefore easier to accept, others might be more difficult to tolerate. Here we first test whether people will be less tolerant of Muslim minority behaviours that are strongly moralized using a national sample of ethnic Dutch participants.

1.2 | Moral values trade-off

Acts that are perceived as morally significant can be viewed either as acceptable or unacceptable depending on the moral values involved. Thus, although stronger moralization of controversial minority behaviours may generally lead to stronger intolerance of these behaviours, people's reactions are likely to depend on which moral values are considered relevant and how competing values are prioritized. For example, the founding of Islamic primary schools can either be understood as a matter of individual religious freedoms, which would lead to greater tolerance, or as a matter of undermining social cohesion, which would lead to greater intolerance.

Tolerance has been described as involving a psychological process of balancing competing values (Verkuyten & Yogeeswaran, 2017). Values tend to be inherently comparative and competitive (e.g., Tetlock, 1986) and the trade-off among multiple values that are simultaneously relevant tends to affect cognition and behaviour including tolerance judgements (Peffley et al., 2001; Schwartz, 1996). Further, the accommodation of Muslim minorities in western societies has been analysed in terms of finding the right balance between civil liberties and a cohesive society (Miller, 2014; Reeskens & Wright, 2013). Therefore, we consider the trade-off between the values of individual freedom and social cohesion for tolerance of Muslim minority behaviours. Muslims, like other minority groups, are often argued to have the freedom to express their own religion, but people might also reject specific behaviours that contradict societal norms and goals and that can lead to so-called parallel societies. Experimental research, for example, has demonstrated that people's concerns about Muslim minority beliefs and behaviours can be about conservative or orthodox forms of religiosity that are seen as incompatible with, and therefore undermining, western norms and conventions (Helbling & Traunmüller, 2018; Sleijpen et al., 2020). Thus, assigning higher priority to individual freedom over social cohesion should make tolerance more likely, while attaching higher priority to cohesion over freedom should make tolerance of Muslim minority practices less likely. How this trade-off plays out is likely to depend on the extent to which a specific belief of behaviour is considered normatively dissenting.

Whether a particular value guides one's actual judgement is not only dependent on the relative importance that one generally attaches to it, but also on the situation that makes competing values relatively less or more relevant (Fazio, 1986; Feather, 1990). Most events and situations trigger multiple concerns and require a psychological balancing of reasons to accept or to reject them. For example, people may strongly endorse freedom of expression, but in order for this value to influence their judgement about a particular situation, it should be considered more important than, for example, the value of social peace. Nelson et al. (1997) found that when news regarding political actions of right-wing extremist groups was framed in terms of the importance of freedom of speech, participants had higher levels of tolerance for this group compared to a situation in which the importance of public order was emphasized (see also Zilli Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011).

Studies 2 and 3 were designed to examine the trade-off between the values of individual freedom and social cohesion, and how the prioritization of these two values is associated with tolerance of Muslim minority behaviours that differ in their degree of perceived normative dissent. We test the expectation that people will be less tolerant of more controversial behaviours because they see a greater threat to the value of social cohesion and are more morally motivated by that threat than by the value of individual freedoms. Similarly, people are expected to be more tolerant of less controversial behaviours because for these behaviours they consider the value of individual freedom relatively more important than that of social cohesion. Finally, in Study 4 we used an experimental design to test if priming the moral value of religious freedom decreases intolerance of a highly dissenting Muslim minority practice.

2 | STUDY 1

The goal of Study 1 was to test the role of moralization in determining intolerance of different Muslim minority behaviours debated within the Dutch public sphere. We used a mixed-design analysis with a between-subjects experimental factor making a distinction between four predicted sets of two behaviours that have been found to vary in the degree to which they evoke negative feelings because of the degree in which they are considered to contradict Dutch majority's normative way of life (Adelman & Verkuyten, 2020; Hirsch et al., 2019; Sleijpen et al., 2020). We predicted that participants will be less tolerant of behaviours that dissent more from social norms and that this is driven by their stronger moralization of these practices. In testing this prediction, we control for prejudicial feelings towards Muslims as a group of people because majority members might reject certain beliefs and behaviours because of their group-based prejudice rather than their moralization of the practices per se (Blinder et al., 2019; Helbling, 2014; Van der Noll, 2014). Here we are interested in investigating the role of moralization in tolerance, which is theorized to be motivated by reasonable objection to specific beliefs and practices rather than group-based prejudice (Furedi, 2011; Verkuyten et al., 2020).

2.1 | Method

Participants. Four-hundred and four participants were randomly assigned to participate in this study among a larger nationally representative data collection of ethnic Dutch in the Netherlands. Data was collected by research organization Ipsos, which used the GfK panel of over 80,000 Dutch people to approach a gross sample of 1640 panel members. The response rate of 52% and four of the eight versions of the questionnaire contained the items that concern us here.¹ Eighteen participants were removed by GfK to assure data quality and one participant who self-identified as Muslim was removed from the

analyses, leaving 403 participants for analysis. Sensitivity power analysis revealed that at a desired power of 0.80 and $\alpha = 0.05$, this sample achieved sufficient sensitivity to detect at least a small effect ($\eta^2 \geq 0.027$). Participants were 54.3% male, with an average age of 53.7 years ($SD = 16.6$, range: 18–86), came from a range of educational backgrounds (low education [29.8%; no education/primary school, lower secondary vocational training], moderate education [41.4%; vocational training and high school pre-university education], high education [28.8%; at least propaedeutic certificate at the University]), and represented a wide range of political orientation on a 5-point political self-placement scale ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.26$; 50 participants declined to state their political orientation).² All data was fully collected before analysis, with the target of 100 participants per condition of normatively dissenting practices.

2.2 | Measures and procedure

Dissenting behaviours. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions where they were presented with two Muslim minority behaviours each. The four conditions aimed to represent an escalating scale of normative dissent based on theoretical considerations and findings from previous large-scale research in the Netherlands (e.g., Adelman & Verkuyten, 2020; Hirsch et al., 2019; Sleijpen et al., 2020). However, as tolerance is theorized and found to be situation specific (Adelman & Verkuyten, 2020; Chanley, 1994; Sleijpen et al., 2020) using only one example item would limit the ability to capture escalating levels of normative dissent. Therefore, we drew two examples for each level to better capture the differences in perceived normative dissent and the related level variability in tolerance. Thus, in line with our theoretical reasoning, the two examples were not meant to measure an underlying construct of 'intolerance' but rather served as two indicators of the same level of dissent, similar to a formative scale.

In a first condition (low normative dissent), people were asked about two examples of more private identity expression expected to generate low normative dissent 'Muslims participating in Islamic praying meetings', and 'the wearing of Islamic dress in closed meetings'. Those in a second condition (medium-low dissent) were asked about a more public identity expression such as: 'Muslim civil servants wearing a headscarf', and 'the founding of Islamic primary schools'. Those in a third condition (medium-high dissent) were asked about practices that could be interpreted as infringing on the rights of others, 'the refusal of some Muslims to shake hands with people of the opposite gender' and 'arranged marriages for Muslim women', while those in a fourth condition (high dissent) were asked about practices that challenged central social structures, 'setting up separate religious ruling (Sharia) for Muslims' and 'using ISIL flags to demonstrate against Western values'. In each condition, participants were first presented with one of the two behaviours, responded to three follow-up questions described below, and then went through the same process with the other behaviour.

¹ This larger dataset included measures for other studies on prejudice, national nostalgia, and political attitudes.

² The data used in this research is available on the OSF server, https://osf.io/wsgn6/?view_only=12351de77b094eaa6dd2830992b2636 (anonymized for review).

TABLE 1 Study 1 means and standard deviations for the manipulation check, moralization, and intolerance across the two examples of the four sets of non-normativity behaviours

	Manipulation Check (attitudes)	Moralization	Intolerance
Normative dissent: low	4.40 _a (0.78)	2.63 _a (1.01)	1.73 _a (0.49)
Normative dissent: medium-low	3.26 _b (1.21)	2.93 _b (1.07)	2.49 _b (0.84)
Normative dissent: medium-high	1.94 _c (0.83)	3.76 _c (1.03)	3.15 _c (0.65)
Normative dissent: high	1.55 _d (0.76)	3.63 _c (1.18)	3.63 _d (0.52)

Note. Different subscripts within each column indicate significant differences and identical subscripts indicate non-significant differences. The low normative dissent condition used practices that past research indicates are perceived as not very controversial, escalating upward to high normative dissent.

Manipulation check. We first asked participants to indicate on a 7-point scale from very negative (1) to very positive (7) how they felt towards each of the behaviours. This served as a manipulation check to ensure that the set of behaviours in the four conditions differed from each other in their degree of perceived normative dissent as they were designed (Sleijpen et al., 2020).

Moralization. Next, participants indicated the degree to which their feeling towards each behaviour was based on their personal moral principles and convictions using a 5-point scale from Not at all (1) to Very strongly (5). This single-item measure directly asked to what extent one's moral principles and convictions formed the basis of one's views on each of the two behaviours. The use of this rather simple and straightforward question reduces the problem of meaning and interpretation inherent in more complex measures and has been successfully used in previous research (Skitka et al., 2021) including research on tolerance of Muslim minority practices (Hirsch et al., 2019).

Intolerance. Participants then indicated their intolerance towards these behaviours with an item asking if they thought that each of these should be forbidden in the Netherlands on 4-point scales from Certainly not (1) to Certainly yes (4), drawn from Sleijpen et al. (2020).

Prejudice towards Muslims. To ensure that the measure of tolerance was not merely capturing prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims, we measured participants' attitudes towards Muslims living in the Netherlands using a feeling thermometer asking participants to indicate how they felt towards Muslims from 0 (cold feelings) to 100 (warm feelings) on an 11-point scale ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 2.32$). Using a feeling thermometer with wider ranges of responses than Likert-type scales generates a more reliable measure (Alwin, 1997), and this explicit measure tend to correlate with subtler methods of assessing prejudice (Dovidio et al., 2001) and has been used in many studies including research in the Netherlands (e.g., Coenders et al., 2008; Dijk, 1987). Participants were instructed that 50 degrees represent neither positive or negative feelings (24.6%) and that lower scores stand for increasingly more negative feelings (51.6%) and higher scores for increasingly more positive feelings (23.8%).

2.3 | Results

Manipulation check. First, we tested whether our manipulation of normative dissent succeeded as intended, such that as the degree of dissent increased, participants' feelings towards those behaviours

would similarly become more negative, controlling for education³ and prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims. Based on our theoretical considerations on the role of the degree of perceived dissent, we averaged the feeling scores for the two examples within each condition to form a single score for each level ($r = 0.254$ - 0.522 ; see Appendix for details). Results indicated that the four levels performed as intended, $F(3, 397) = 232.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.637$. Contrast analyses confirmed that all differences between the four sets of behaviours were significant and clearly different from each other, all $p_s < 0.003$, all $d > 0.49$ (see Table 1).⁴

Moralization and intolerance. Using the combined moralization and intolerance scores within each level of normative dissent ($r_s = 0.353$ - 0.613 , and $r_s = 0.374$ - 0.693 , respectively; see Appendix), we tested whether normative dissent was related to the degree of moralization and increased intolerance, again while controlling for education and Muslim prejudice. As expected, we found a significant effect for moralization, $F(3, 397) = 26.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.167$, such that it was stronger with increased normative dissent. Contrast analysis revealed that all differences between conditions were significant, $p_s < 0.034$, all $d > 0.29$, except for that between the medium-high and high levels of dissent, $p = .160$, $d = 0.11$. Similarly, we found the predicted pattern of effects on intolerance, $F(3, 397) = 189.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.589$, such that increased normative dissent was associated with increased intolerance. In the case of tolerance, contrast analyses revealed that all four levels differed significantly from one another, all $p_s < 0.001$, all $d > 0.82$.

The mediating role of moralization. We then tested our prediction that increased moralization statistically explains increased intolerance towards stronger normatively dissenting behaviours. Again controlling for education and Muslim prejudice, we used the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) to test a mediation model with the four levels of normative dissent predicting moralization, which, in turn, predicts intolerance. Consistent with our expectation, we found that, relative to the lowest level of dissent, the medium-low level predicted higher

³ In all three studies, we checked the success of randomization against the demographic variables of age, education, gender, and political orientation, and included them as control variables in studies where the experimental manipulation was not fully random. The randomization check in Study 1 indicated a condition difference in education, so it was included as a control variable. All effects are robust to the exclusion of these control variables as well. In the other three studies the randomization was successful. See appendix for more details.

⁴ We also further conducted a mixed analysis where we included the four between-subject levels of normative dissent and the two within-subject examples, and we found that attitudes towards all of the examples differed in the expected ways. The within-subject examples generated different levels of attitudinal opposition, as we would expect in situations of tolerance, yet the examples for each level were nonetheless distinct from the levels above and below.

intolerance through increased moralization, $Estimate = 0.037$, $Boot SE = 0.021$, $Boot CI [0.003, 0.084]$. In turn, relative to medium-low, the medium-high level predicted higher intolerance through increased moralization, $Estimate = 0.100$, $Boot SE = 0.032$, $Boot CI [0.041, 0.166]$. However, similar to the findings for differences in moralization, there was no significant difference in indirect effect of moralization on intolerance between the medium-high and high level of normative dissent, $Estimate = -0.025$, $Boot SE = 0.020$, $Boot CI [-0.068, 0.010]$.

2.4 | Discussion

Study 1 found that Muslim minority behaviours that are considered more controversial were moralized more strongly and tolerated less. Increased moralization mediated the effect of normative dissent on intolerance, although not between the highest two levels of dissent. Importantly, these effects emerged when controlling for prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims, indicating that the differences in moralization and intolerance occur independently of prejudice.

3 | STUDY 2

Study 1 supported the hypothesis that Muslim minority behaviours that are more normatively dissenting are moralized to a greater extent and tolerated less. However, moralization does not have to lead to intolerance, but can also increase tolerance. While a moral emphasis on the value of social cohesion might encourage intolerance of dissenting behaviours, moral values of individual freedom might encourage tolerance of these behaviours. Therefore, in Study 2, we drew on previous research which emphasizes the importance of moving beyond the single-value model of tolerance (e.g., Peffley et al., 2001), to instead investigate the trade-offs between competing moral values with their potential different implications for tolerance. Specifically, we predicted that stronger normative dissent of the behaviours makes moral concerns about social cohesion and unity relatively more important than the value of individual freedom, and this, in turn, predicts increased intolerance. This prediction is based on the notion that normative dissent triggers communitarian concerns about societal oneness and sameness which can result in lower outgroup tolerance (Stenner, 2005). In contrast, we expected that low normatively dissenting behaviours are more likely to be evaluated on the basis of the value of freedom relative to social cohesion, and therefore tolerated more.⁵

Study 2 also had three other changes. First, as the third and fourth levels of normative dissent, medium-high and high normative dissent respectively, did not differ in Study 1 in terms of moralization and intolerance, in Study 2 we only used the first three levels. Second, in Study 1, the level of (in)tolerance was measured using an item phrased in terms of forbidding rather than permitting those practices. The framing in terms of forbidding the practices might matter because in general peo-

ple are more reluctant to forbid something rather than not to permit it (e.g., Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009; Keinan & Bereby-Meyer, 2017; King, 2012). Therefore, in Study 2 participants were randomly assigned to be asked either whether the practice should be forbidden (intolerance) or rather permitted (tolerance) to test whether the findings conceptually replicate across the wording of the dependent measure. Third, we changed some of the examples of the Muslim minority behaviours to try to make the two examples within each level of normative dissent more similar to each other.

3.1 | Method

Participants. One thousand two hundred and sixty-six people participated in this study among a larger nationally representative sample of ethnic Dutch.⁶ Potential respondents were selected from the *Kantar Public* consumer panel for fieldwork in the Netherlands. From this online panel, a national sample of the ethnic Dutch population aged 18 years and older was compiled via a stratification procedure based on the characteristics gender, age, education, household size and region. One participant self-identified as Muslim and was removed from the analyses, leaving 1265 participants. Sensitivity power analysis found that at a power of 0.80 and $\alpha = 0.05$, this study achieved sensitivity to consistently detect at least a small effect ($\eta^2 \geq 0.008$). Participants were 51.4% male, with a mean age of 53.1 years ($SD = 16.9$, range: 18–97). A quarter (24.8%) had a low level of education, 42.3% moderate level of education, and 32.9% were highly educated, and the sample was politically diverse ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.45$; 182 participants declined to state their political orientation).⁷ All data was fully collected before any analysis, with a target of 200 participants per condition of normative dissenting practices.

3.2 | Measures and procedure

Dissenting behaviours. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In the first condition (low normative dissent), participants responded to the same two examples that were used in Study 1 (Muslims praying and wearing distinctive dress). In the second condition (medium dissent), they responded to items about 'Muslim women wearing headscarves in everyday life' and 'the building of new mosques'. Those in the third condition (high dissent) were again asked about some Muslims refusing to shake hands with people of the opposite sex and additionally about 'replacing the second day of Pentecost as a national holiday with the day of Islamic sugar fest'. The changes in the examples within conditions were based on findings from other large-scale datasets on majority members' attitudes towards these practices (Dangubić et al., 2021; Van der Noll, 2014).

To examine whether the practices do indeed differ in perceived normative dissent, we conducted a post-hoc test on a *separate* national

⁵ We also included a measure of the moral value of equality as a filler item and in an exploratory analysis we examined the trade-off between freedom and equality, and these results are reported in the Appendix.

⁶ This larger dataset included measures for other studies on prejudice, slippery slope beliefs, and political attitudes.

⁷ In both Studies 2 and 3, we used a timing variable to test the robustness of the effects. We found that excluding participants who completed the study twice as fast or faster than the others did not meaningfully change the results.

sample ($N = 426$).⁸ Respondents were presented with the six Muslim minority practices and asked to what extent they think that the native Dutch normatively disapprove of these practices. The results of a repeated-measures analysis indicated that participants did indeed think that Dutch people evaluate these practices differently, $\Lambda < 0.386$, $F(5, 421) = 134.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 > 0.61$. The low dissent practices were considered normatively less problematic (clothing, $M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.65$; prayer, $M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.32$) than the medium dissenting ones (headscarf, $M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.43$; Mosques, $M = 5.16$, $SD = 1.42$), and the high dissenting ones (Sugar fest, $M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.52$; Handshake, $M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.35$). Furthermore, the three sets of low, medium and high dissenting practices differ significantly from each other in perceived normative disapproval, $\Lambda < 0.407$, $F(2, 424) = 309.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 > 0.59$, with the low dissenting condition ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.32$) generating lower normative dissent than the medium dissenting condition ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 1.28$), which in turn was lower than the high dissenting condition ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.22$), all p_s (Bonferroni corrected) < 0.001 , all $d > 0.66$.

Manipulation check. As in Study 1, participants first indicated their feelings about each of the two behaviours they were presented with.

Moral values. Next, participants indicated on 5-point scales (1 = not at all, 5 = very strong) the extent to which their feelings about the specific behaviour were based on their moral convictions about 'freedom in the sense of being able to make one's own choices and being yourself' ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.01$),⁹ and 'societal cohesion in the sense of social order, connectedness, and unity' ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.98$; $r = 0.53$, $p < .001$). The values were introduced and presented together so that participants could evaluate them in relation to each other. Following our theoretical reasoning and previous research, we examined the process of value prioritization by using a moral difference measure in which an individual's value for social cohesion is subtracted from the importance attached to individual freedom (Peffley et al., 2001). Thus, a higher or more positive score means that in evaluating the specific behaviour the moral value of freedom is considered relatively more important than social cohesion, and vice versa for the lower or more negative score. Overall, there was a somewhat stronger emphasis on freedom over social cohesion ($M = 0.06$, $SD = 0.97$).

(In)tolerance. Finally, participants were randomly assigned to indicate on 5-point scales either the extent to which each of the normatively dissenting practices ought to be permitted (tolerance) or forbidden (intolerance) in the Netherlands.

Prejudice towards Muslims in the Netherlands was again measured with a feeling thermometer, but this time on a 0–100 scale ($M = 46.41$, $SD = 26.16$).

3.3 | Results

Manipulation check. We again tested whether our manipulation of degree of normative dissent performed as intended with behaviours

that are more dissenting triggering more negative feelings, once again controlling for prejudice towards Muslims.¹⁰ Results indicated significant and large differences between the three levels, $F(2, 1261) = 454.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.419$, with contrast analyses confirming that all differences between conditions were significant and substantial, all $p_s < .001$, all $d > 1.03$ (see Table 2). Thus, and similar to the post-hoc test (see above), the manipulation check indicated that the three sets of two practices differed from each other in terms of perceived normative dissent.

Testing the tolerance/intolerance manipulation. Next, we tested whether there was an effect of asking participants their level of tolerance (permit) or intolerance (forbidden) towards the behaviours by reversing the scores of the tolerance items. The results indicated a significant difference, $F(1, 1262) = 33.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.026$, such that participants were more intolerant when they had been asked if a given behaviour should be allowed ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.19$) rather than forbidden ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.16$). Therefore, we included this measure and its interaction with our primary manipulation of normative dissent in the analyses that follow.

Moral trade-off. We tested whether the three levels of normative dissent predicted different emphasis of freedom over social cohesion values, controlling again for Muslim prejudice.¹¹ We found a main effect of normative dissent, $F(2, 1261) = 55.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.080$, such that while people in the low dissent condition emphasized the importance of freedom more than social cohesion, the degree of that prioritizing dropped in the medium dissent condition, and fully reversed in the highest dissent condition, all $p_s < 0.007$, all $d > 0.20$ (see Table 2).

The effect of dissent on intolerance. We then tested whether the increasing degree of normative dissent predicts increasing intolerance. As there is an effect of the tolerance/intolerance measure (permit or forbid), we performed a two-way ANOVA to include the possible interaction between the level of normative dissent and the wording of the (in)tolerance question (permit or forbid), and we found that there was no significant interaction effect, $F(2, 1258) = 2.14$, $p = .118$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$. However, we did find the expected main effect of normative dissent, $F(2, 1258) = 307.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.038$, with intolerance increasing with the level of dissent, all $p_s < 0.001$, all $d > 0.66$.

The mediating role of moral trade-off. We then investigated whether the trade-off between the moral values of freedom and social cohesion mediated the effect of normative dissent on intolerance. We again used the Hayes PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017), and controlled for Muslim prejudice. As predicted, we found that the medium level of normative dissent predicted higher intolerance through increased preference for social cohesion over that of freedom, compared to the lowest level of dissent, $Estimate = 0.032$, $Boot SE = 0.012$, $Boot CI [0.009, 0.058]$. Further, the highest level of dissent predicted higher intolerance through increased preference for cohesion over freedom

⁸ One participant who self-identified as Muslim was excluded from analyses.

⁹ These statistics are based on the combined scores for the two examples within each condition.

¹⁰ Unlike Study 1, in Study 2 education levels did not differ between the normative dissent conditions, so it was not included as a covariate.

¹¹ We did not include the tolerance/intolerance manipulation in this analysis, since that manipulation followed the dependent variable (moralization) we tested here.

TABLE 2 Study 2 means and standard deviations for the manipulation check, moral trade-off, and intolerance across the three sets of non-normativity behaviours

	Manipulation Check (attitudes)	Freedom over Cohesion	Intolerance
Normative dissent: low	4.22 _a (1.00)	0.33 _a (0.84)	2.16 _a (0.88)
Normative dissent: medium	3.35 _b (1.16)	0.16 _b (0.91)	2.81 _b (1.08)
Normative dissent high	2.22 _c (1.04)	-0.32 _c (1.02)	3.72 _c (1.04)

Note. Different subscripts within each column indicate significant differences. The low normative dissent condition used practices that past research indicates are perceived as not very controversial, escalating upward to high normative dissent.

compared to the medium level, $Estimate = 0.089$, $Boot SE = 0.019$, $Boot CI [0.054, 0.128]$.

3.4 | Discussion

As in Study 1, we again found that intolerance was higher for those Muslim minority behaviours that are considered normatively dissenting and therefore perceived more negatively. More importantly, this increase in intolerance was related to changes in the relative importance of specific moral values and principles that formed the basis for people's judgements. Specifically, we focused on the value trade-off between individual freedom and social cohesion and found that as the behaviours increased in their perceived normative dissent, participants increasingly emphasized the importance of social cohesion over freedom. This change in prioritization, in turn, increased intolerance towards those behaviours, all above and beyond the effects of prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims. In contrast, less controversial behaviours were tolerated more because the value of freedom was considered more important than social cohesion.

4 | STUDY 3

Study 3 sought to replicate the findings of Study 2 in a different national setting, namely Germany. While both Netherlands and Germany have a sizeable Muslim minority population and both countries have debates about tolerance of Muslim minority beliefs and practices, Germany and the Netherlands differ in national policies towards Muslim minorities and cultural diversity (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2018; Weiner, 2015). Specifically, Germany is considered one of the least accommodating and inclusive West European countries for Muslim minorities due to its restrictive citizenship regime and monist rather than pluralist approach to cultural diversity (Koopmans et al., 2005). Muslims experience considerable disadvantages compared to the legal and financial privileges of established Christian churches. In contrast, the Netherlands is known for its tolerance that goes back to its tradition of pillarization that allowed minority groups to have their distinct social and political organizations for participating in policy making and cultural life (Eisen & Kentmen-Cin, 2017). These country differences make Germany an interesting comparative case for testing the generalizability of our findings across two differing national contexts. Additionally, these European countries have also differed in

their management of recent events with Germany accepting a much larger number of refugees from Muslim nations over the past five years compared to the Netherlands (WorldData.Info, n.d.). In addition to these country-specific differences that make such a replication important, Study 3 responds to the larger call for greater replication in psychological research (e.g., Simons, 2014).¹²

4.1 | Method

Participants. A total of 1546 ethnic Germans participated in this study from a large nationally representative data collection.¹³ Population data was derived from the MiniCensus and used to compile a representative sample of the German population aged 18 years and older via a stratification procedure based on the characteristics age, gender and education. Twenty-two participants self-identified as Muslim and were removed from the analyses, leaving 1524 participants for analysis. Sensitivity power analysis found that at a power of 0.80 and $\alpha = 0.05$, this study achieved sensitivity to consistently detect a small effect ($\eta^2 \geq 0.006$). Participants were 50.5% female, with an average age of 48.7 years ($SD = 16.0$, range: 18–100). Approximately a third of the sample (36.0%) had low levels of education, 37.7% middle education, and 26.4% high education, and participants were politically diverse ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.14$; 168 participants declined to state their political orientation). All data was fully collected before any analyses, with the target of 250 participants per condition as there was greater ease accessing a larger national sample in a country as large as Germany relative to the Netherlands.

Measures and Procedure. All measures, procedures, and data preparations were identical to those of Study 2, except that all references to the Netherlands were replaced with references to Germany.¹⁴

4.2 | Results

Manipulation check. The normative dissent manipulation was effective in Germany just like in the Netherlands, with more negative

¹² We looked into the possibility of combining the datasets from Studies 2 and 3 to compare country effects directly, but we did not achieve sufficient measurement invariance. Nonetheless, an exploration of the comparison can be found in the Appendix.

¹³ This larger dataset included measures for other studies on prejudice, slippery slope beliefs, and political attitudes.

¹⁴ Attitudes toward Muslims on the 0–100 scale ($M = 39.24$, $SD = 29.12$).

TABLE 3 Study 3 means and standard deviations for the manipulation check, moral trade-off, and intolerance across the three sets of non-normative behaviours

	Manipulation Check (attitudes)	Freedom over Cohesion	Intolerance
Normative dissent: low	3.71 _a (1.29)	0.06 _a (0.78)	2.49 _a (1.13)
Normative dissent: medium	3.14 _b (1.27)	0.05 _a (0.92)	3.12 _b (1.19)
Normative dissent: high	2.48 _c (1.27)	-.018 _b (0.91)	3.57 _c (1.03)

Note. Different subscripts within each row indicate significant differences and identical subscripts indicate non-significant differences. The low normative dissent condition used practices that past research indicates are perceived as not very controversial, escalating upward to high normative dissent.

feelings towards those behaviours that were normatively more deviant, controlling for prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims. The results indicate significant differences between the three levels, $F(2, 1520) = 143.27, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.159$. Contrast analyses confirm that the differences between levels were all significant, all $p_s < 0.001$, all $d > 0.45$ (Table 3).

Testing the tolerance/intolerance manipulation. The results for the wording of the tolerance/intolerance manipulation also showed a similar significant difference, $F(1, 1521) = 31.97, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.021$, such that participants were more intolerant when they were asked if a given behaviour should be allowed ($M = 3.21, SD = 1.21$) rather than forbidden ($M = 2.89, SD = 1.18$).

Moral trade-off. Using the same procedure as Study 2, we created a score to indicate the value trade-off between freedom and social cohesion (positive scores indicating a higher importance of freedom over social cohesion; $M = -0.03, SD = 0.87$). We again tested the effects of the normativity manipulation on the moral trade-off between freedom and social cohesion, while controlling for Muslim prejudice. We found a main effect of normative dissent on the relative importance of freedom over cohesion, $F(2, 1520) = 14.43, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.019$. People in the low and medium conditions used freedom more than cohesion in making their judgement, which did not differ from each other, $p = .755, d = 0.01$, and this priority fully reversed in the highest level with people considering cohesion relatively more important than freedom compared to both the low and medium condition, all $p_s < .001$, all $d > 0.27$.

Effects of dissent on intolerance. We then tested an interaction between the degree of normative dissent and whether the tolerance question was worded in terms of permitting or forbidding, on intolerance. We again found the main effect of normative dissent, $F(2, 1517) = 158.01, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.172$, with intolerance increasing significantly with each level of dissent, all $p_s < .001$, all $d > 0.41$ (see Table 3). Additionally, and unlike Study 2, there was also a significant interaction between normative dissent and toleration wording, $F(2, 1517) = 8.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.011$. In the highest normative dissent condition, asking if the behaviour should be permitted ($M = 3.94, SE = 0.06$) was associated with more intolerance than asking if it should be forbidden ($M = 3.27, SE = 0.07$), $F(2, 1517) = 51.78, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.033$. In the other two conditions the direction of the effect was similar, but relatively smaller, all $F_s < 5.31$, all $p_s > 0.021, \eta_p^2 > 0.003$.

The mediating role of value trade-off. Using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017), and controlling for prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims, we again tested the trade-off between freedom and social

cohesion as a mediator of the relationship between the degree of normative dissent and intolerance.

As in Study 2, there was a significant mediation through the prioritizing of cohesion over freedom. Although the two conditions with a low and medium level of dissent did not differ from one another in value trade-off, the increased priority given to the value of social cohesion over that of freedom in the highest level of normative dissent significantly mediated the relationship with intolerance compared to both the low, $Estimate = 0.055, Boot SE = 0.014, Boot CI [0.031, 0.085]$, and the medium conditions, $Estimate = 0.051, Boot SE = 0.015, Boot CI [0.024, 0.083]$.

4.3 | Discussion

The results from Study 3 largely replicate the findings of Study 2 in a new national context. We once again found that majority members' reliance on two competing values in making their tolerance judgements about Muslim minority behaviours depends on the degree of perceived normative dissent of those behaviours. Specifically, people reduced their reliance on the liberal value of freedom compared to the communitarian value of social cohesion as a basis for their judgement of the behaviours that were evaluated most negatively. In contrast, less-dissenting behaviours were tolerated more because of a stronger emphasis on freedom compared to social cohesion. However, although the pattern of findings was similar, German participants did not differentiate as clearly between the two levels of low and medium dissenting behaviours compared to Dutch participants. The reason for this country difference seems to be that the German participants were less inclined to prioritize freedom over social cohesion (Table 3), compared to Dutch participants (Table 2).

5 | STUDY 4

Across three studies, increasing perceived normative dissent predicted stronger intolerance of Muslim minority practices through moralization (Study 1) and moral prioritization (Studies 2 and 3). In Study 4, we used an experimental design to examine the causal pathway between moralization and tolerance by testing whether moralizing a given action through framing it in terms of specific moral values affects tolerance judgements. Specifically, we focused on a high-level dissenting practice (not shaking hands with someone of the opposite sex) and

examined whether emphasizing the importance of religious freedom or social cohesion leads to higher or lower tolerance relative to a control. Studies 2 and 3 have demonstrated that people tend to be intolerant of this practice because it raises relatively strong concerns about societal cohesion. However, following our reasoning about the role of moral values we expected that this practice would be tolerated more when presented in terms of freedom of religion.

5.1 | Method

Participants. Four hundred and thirty-six participants were randomly assigned from within a larger nationally representative sample of ethnic Dutch.¹⁵ The participants were again selected from the Kantar consumer panel for fieldwork and from this panel, a representative sample was compiled via a stratification procedure based on the characteristics gender, age, education, household size and region. One participant self-identified as Muslim and was excluded from the analyses, leaving 435 participants. Sensitivity power analysis for a one-way ANOVA with three conditions indicated that at 0.80 power and $\alpha = 0.05$, this sample could consistently detect effects of $\eta_p^2 = 0.022$ or greater. Participants were 50.8% male, with a mean age of 48.47 years ($SD = 17.44$, range: 18–89). Most participants were highly (40.2%) or moderately (47.1%) educated (low educated = 12.6%), and were politically diverse ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.40$; 61 participants declined). All data was fully collected before any analysis, with a target of 150 participants per experimental condition, and the study was pre-registered at OSF.¹⁶

5.2 | Measures and procedure

Experimental manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to a control or one of two experimental conditions. All participants were first told about the religious practice of some Muslims refusing to shake hands with people of another sex. In the control condition, they received no other information. In the social cohesion condition, they were additionally told that ‘Many Dutch people think this is wrong because it disrupts the normal, everyday course of events, which can cause unrest.’ In the freedom condition, they were instead told: ‘Many Dutch people find this wrong, but recognize that Muslims have the freedom to greet others in their own way.’¹⁷

(In)tolerance. Finally, participants were asked to what extent they thought that the not shaking of hands should be accepted in the Netherlands (1–7 scale, reverse-coded to indicate intolerance, $M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.78$).

5.3 | Results

We tested the effect of experimental condition on intolerance and found a significant effect, $F(2, 432) = 4.69$ $p = .010$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.021$, such that participants prompted with the value of freedom were less intolerant of not shaking hands ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.83$) than those in both the control condition ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.69$; $p = .018$, $d = 0.32$) and the social cohesion condition ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.77$; $p = .039$, $d = 0.29$), which did not differ from each other ($p = 1.00$, $d = 0.02$). This suggests that people in general are intolerant towards the practice of refusing to shake hands with people of the opposite sex, with no difference between a control condition and one emphasizing the value of social cohesion. This is consistent with the previous studies, where the refusal to shake hands is considered highly dissenting and prompts prioritization of the moral value of social cohesion over freedom. However, when this practice is presented as a matter of religious freedom, people are more tolerant towards this normatively dissenting practice.

6 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

Tolerance of minority group practices, and Muslim minorities in particular, are much-discussed topics in many western nations. The disapproval and rejection of Muslim minority behaviours has been commonly explained by the negative feelings that people have towards Muslims as a group, with research indicating that people who reject Muslim behaviours tend to have prejudices towards Muslims (e.g., Blinder et al., 2019; Helbling, 2014; Saroglou et al., 2009). However, recent research suggests that people can also reject Muslim minority practices even when they have neutral or positive feelings towards the group (Adelman & Verkuyten, 2020; Dangubić et al., 2021). Here we examine if majority members might also reject minority behaviours by taking into account the moral nature of the specific behaviour when thinking about whether these should be tolerated.

In four studies using national samples from two countries, the current findings demonstrate that not all Muslim minority behaviours generate the same level of moralization, and that they differentially lead to prioritization of competing moral values to be tolerant or intolerant of those given behaviours. Thus, different practices are not equally controversial or normatively dissenting, and this is relevant for people’s (in)tolerance. There were large differences between people’s feelings towards the different behaviours, the degree to which these raised moral concerns, and the trade-off that people made between the liberal value of religious freedom and the communitarian value of social cohesion. These findings show that the moral status of different Muslim minority behaviours depended on their perceived normative dissent, which was associated with majority members’ perceived moralization of the behaviour and their tolerance towards it.

Study 1 showed that the degree to which moral relevance was attached to specific behaviours accounted for why more normatively dissenting Muslim behaviours were not tolerated. Studies 2 and 3 further demonstrated that beyond the level of general moralization,

¹⁵ This larger dataset included other studies on tolerance, efficacy, and thinking styles.

¹⁶ Link for peer review: https://osf.io/hmqp6/?view_only=22cb3f2367ba4478abaa0863d2f45a75.

¹⁷ A fourth condition was originally included in the experiment which presented the issue as moral in a general sense, and which was left out of the analyses as it did not address the weighing of moral values, but rather referred to moralization more generally. When included, the freedom condition remains significantly different from the control condition, and a contrast analysis between the freedom condition and the other three similarly finds that the freedom prime reduces intolerance (see Appendix for details).

the differential weighting of two key moral values of freedom and of social cohesion determined the degree of (in)tolerance. Muslim minority behaviours that were less normatively dissenting were tolerated more because the commitment to freedom of religion was considered to be more important than concern for social cohesion. In contrast, behaviours that were normatively more dissenting were not tolerated because concerns about a cohesive, integrated society outweighed the principle of freedom. In Study 4, we additionally demonstrate that prompting people to consider the value of religious freedom leads people to become more tolerant of the highly normatively dissenting practice of refusing to shake hands with people of another sex.

While Study 1 found, consistent with previous research (Cole Wright et al., 2008; Skitka et al., 2005), that moralization plays an important role in determining acceptance and tolerance of certain out-group behaviours, Studies 2 and 3 represent an important step forward in investigating the moral balancing of competing values. When faced with behaviours that differ in normative dissent, Dutch and German participants weighed two competing values of individual freedoms against social cohesion, and arrived at different conclusions based on the level of dissent of the target behaviours. These findings provide supporting evidence for the proposed weighing process of toleration (Forst, 2013; Verkuyten et al., 2021), as well as advancing the research on moralization and the complex role it plays in inter-group relations. Additionally, Study 4 demonstrated that emphasizing a particular moral value can even lead to higher tolerance of a practice that is considered highly dissenting and challenging for societal cohesion.

Collectively, we demonstrate that the disapproval and rejection of particular behaviours by a religious minority group does not have to imply that other dissenting practices by that group are also rejected. Tolerance differs as a function of the specific minority behaviours people are presented with (Adelman & Verkuyten, 2020; Chanley, 1994) and the practice-related variance in tolerance relates to the degree to which behaviours are considered morally relevant and the weighing of competing values which differs across what people are asked to tolerate (Hirsch et al., 2019). Furthermore, people's moral concerns about minority behaviours and their related tolerance do not simply reflect their prejudicial feelings. The current pattern of findings indicate that tolerance is not a global construct reflecting prejudicial attitudes (Verkuyten et al., 2021; 2020), but depends on the particular behaviours that people are asked to tolerate and the extent to which these are considered normatively dissenting, and therefore, raise various moral concerns.

Future research would benefit from examining these processes further. For example, while we were able to find support for our hypotheses about the role of moral values on (in)tolerance in two countries, it remains to be seen whether the findings generalize to other national contexts. We already found that compared to the Netherlands, participants in Germany were less inclined to prioritize freedom over social cohesion. In other countries, this prioritization of values could also be different, such as, for example, people in the USA being strongly inclined to prioritize freedoms, while people in China may prioritize social cohesion and unity (Gelfand et al., 2011). Furthermore, the

meaning of specific values might differ and also change. For some people, freedom might be best expressed through intolerance of others seen as threatening existing freedoms, while for others, attempts at forcing cohesion may be thought to backfire, leading to the belief that social cohesion might be best achieved through a *laissez-faire* tolerance of all kinds of behaviours.

Additionally, while we proposed and tested a model in which moral attitudes lead to judgements of tolerance or intolerance, one could also argue the reverse, that after arriving at decisions of tolerance or intolerance, moral judgements are used as post-hoc rationalizations. While Studies 1–3 are unable to test the causal direction beyond indirect effects, in Study 4 we manipulated the value of freedom compared to that of social cohesion and a control, and found evidence that when freedom is emphasized, people become less intolerant towards the controversial practice of refusing to shake hands with people of another sex.

Future research would also benefit from examining how the current findings map onto other ethnic or religious minority groups and in different settings. Although Muslim minority practices are widely contentious and seen as the centre of debates in the west through the perceived clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1996; Inglehart & Norris, 2003), we expect that the same underlying psychological factors involving normatively dissenting practices, moral trade-offs, and intolerance are foundational, and therefore should replicate with other minority group behaviours as well. However, it may also be that factors such as the level of threat perceived from a minority group might influence both moral and tolerance judgements. For example, debates around religious head coverings, women's rights, and ritual slaughter of animals have increased in recent years connected to a rise in Muslim immigration in many western countries, although many of these practices also exist among longstanding religious minorities such as Orthodox Jews and certain Christian groups. Furthermore, while here we looked at these factors in two different countries, both countries share much in common, including a border, and therefore future work is needed to test these effects across a wider range of settings and with other minority groups.

While questions remain, the present research makes a novel contribution to the literature and provides directions for future exploration. It reveals the role of moralization and moral trade-offs in people's weighing of moral concerns for individual freedom versus social cohesion as these influence people's tolerance and intolerance of religious minority practices. In doing so, the present work provides important insight into various contemporary debates around cultural and religious diversity.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to report.

ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT

Ethics approval was obtained from the first author's institution for all data used in this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data used in this research will be available on the OSF server under the names of the authors listed here. That page can already be accessed by reviewers at https://osf.io/wsgn6/?view_only=12351de77b094aea6dd2830992b2636 (anonymized for review).

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

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