

**Malleability of ideology: weaponization
of *laïcité* and gender equality in
multicultural contexts**

Malleability of ideology: weaponization of *laïcité* and gender equality in multicultural contexts

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	7
Résumé	13
Abstract	13
Acknowledgements	15
General introduction	23
Chapter 1. From egalitarian standards to the dissimulation of prejudice	29
1. <i>A diverse landscape</i>	29
2. <i>New forms of racism</i>	31
3. <i>Research on justification of prejudice</i>	33
Chapter 2. Malleability of ideologies	39
1. <i>Ideologies</i>	39
2. <i>The ‘original’ malleable ideology</i>	39
3. <i>Malleable ideologies in other contexts</i>	41
3.1 Diversity: a question of criteria	41
3.2 Malleability for vicarious justification: freedom and democracy	42
3.3 Analyzing politicians’ strategic reliance on egalitarian ideologies	44
4. <i>Issues and critical comments on the conceptualization of malleable ideologies</i>	45
4.1 An imprecise shift	45
4.2 Ideologies, principles, values?	46
4.3 A series of potential moderators	46
4.4 A multiplicity of processes	46
4.5 How does malleability differ from motivated reasoning and moral framing?	49
4.6 Is ideological malleability genuine?	49
Chapter 3. <i>Laïcité</i>	53
1. <i>Laïcité in France: a brief history</i>	53
1.1 From fighting the dominance of Catholicism to fighting the mere presence of Islam?	53
1.2 The Stasi report and the emergence of a new <i>laïcité</i>	54
2. <i>Social psychology research on laïcité</i>	55
2.1 A secular critique of Islam	55
2.2 Measuring <i>laïcité(s)</i>	56
2.3 <i>Laïcité</i> as a social norm	58

2.4 <i>Laïcité</i> as a malleable ideology	58
3. <i>Laïcité</i> in Belgium	60
3.1 Pillars structuring social and political life	60
3.2 <i>Laïcité</i> in Belgium: a nebulous concept	61
Chapter 4. Gender equality	65
1. <i>Gender equality and Islam: a perceived incongruency</i>	65
2. <i>Are gender equality and Islam really at odds?</i>	65
3. <i>Gender equality as a malleable ideology: an overview</i>	67
4. <i>Social psychology research on Gender equality malleability</i>	69
Chapter 5. Anti-sexism as weaponized discourse against Muslim immigration: A view from social psychology	73
1. <i>From blatant racism to malleable ideologies</i>	75
2. <i>Empirical demonstrations</i>	78
2.1 Color-blindness	78
2.2 Freedom of speech	80
2.3 Freedom	80
2.4 Diversity	81
2.5 Secularism (<i>laïcité</i>)	81
2.6 Anti-sexism	83
3. <i>Conclusion</i>	84
Chapter 6. Experimental studies testing malleability of ideology with gender equality and <i>laïcité</i>	91
1. <i>Gender equality as vicarious justification for prejudice (Study 1)</i>	95
1.1 Participants	95
1.2 Procedure	96
1.3 Hypotheses	97
1.4 Measures	97
1.5 Results	98
1.5.1 Correlations	98
1.5.2 Regressions	98
1.6 Discussion	105
2. <i>Gender equality and <i>laïcité</i> as arguments against the immigration of Muslims in Belgium (Study 2)</i>	107
2.1 Participants	107
2.2 Procedure	108
2.3 Hypotheses	109
2.4 Measures	109
2.5 Results	111
2.5.1 Correlations	111
2.5.2 Regressions	114
2.6 Discussion	123

3. <i>Gender equality and laïcité weaponized against threat from immigrants and their supporters (Study 3)</i>	125
3.1 Participants	125
3.2 Procedure	125
3.3 Hypotheses	126
3.4 Measures	127
3.5 Results	128
3.5.1 Correlations	128
3.5.2 Regressions	130
3.6 Discussion	135
4. <i>Gender equality to justify biased evaluations of an immigrant (Study 4)</i>	137
4.1 Participants	137
4.2 Procedure	138
4.3 Hypotheses	138
4.4 Measures	139
4.5 Results	140
4.5.1 Correlations	140
4.5.2 Regressions	141
4.6 Discussion	148
5. <i>Attachment to gender equality to justify biased evaluations of an immigrant in a US sample (Study 5)</i>	149
5.1 Participants	149
5.2 Procedure	149
5.3 Hypotheses	150
5.4 Measures	150
5.5 Results	151
5.5.1 Correlations	151
5.5.2 Regressions	152
5.6 Discussion	156
6. <i>Attachment to gender equality after taking the outgroup perspective (Study 6)</i>	157
6.1 Participants	157
6.2 Procedure	157
6.3 Hypotheses	158
6.4 Measures	158
6.5 Results	158
6.5.1 Correlations	158
6.5.2 Regressions	159
6.6 Discussion	163
Chapter 7. Belgian <i>laïcité</i>: Associations with racism, sexism, and strategic endorsement in the face of Islam	167
1. <i>Laïcité in France</i>	167
2. <i>Laïcité in Belgium</i>	169
3. <i>Laïcité and prejudice</i>	170
4. <i>Overview of the present research</i>	171
5. <i>Study 1</i>	172

5.1 Method	172
5.1.1 Participants	172
5.1.2 Measures	172
5.2 Results	174
5.2.1 Measurement models of Islam	174
5.2.2 Measurement models of Sexism	178
5.2.3 Measurement model of racism	178
5.2.4 Measurement model of laïcité	178
5.2.5 Global model	178
5.3 Discussion	184
6. Study 2	185
6.1 Method	186
6.1.1 Participants	186
6.1.2 Procedure	187
6.1.3 Measures	187
6.2 Results	188
6.2.1 Anti-expression and anti-funding dimensions	188
6.2.2 Attachment to laïcité	189
6.3 Discussion	190
7. General discussion	191
Chapter 8. Gender inequality discourse as a tool to express attitudes towards Islam	195
1. Malleable ideologies	196
2. Anti-sexism to Justify Anti-Islam Stances	197
3. The present research	199
4. Method	200
4.1 Participants	200
4.2 Procedure	200
4.3 Materials	201
5. Analysis	202
6. Results	203
6.1 European lifestyle values	203
6.2 Perceived similarity between Muslim and Christian religions	203
6.3 Perceived (in)compatibility of Islam and feminism	207
7. Discussion	209
8. Conclusion	211
Chapter 9. Discussion	215
1. Objectives of the thesis	215
2. Discussion of the findings	218
2.1 Summary of the findings	218
2.2 What can we conclude?	223
2.3 Reflexivity	225
2.4 Limitations and future research	227

Conclusion	233
References	237
Appendices	277
1. <i>Vignette materials</i>	277
1.1 Vignettes from Chapter 6, Study 1	277
1.2 Vignettes from Chapter 6, Study 3	278
2. <i>Tasks</i>	281
2.1 Argument listing task from Chapter 6, Study 2	281
2.2 Evaluation of sexist comments from Chapter 6, Study 4	281
2.3 Evaluation of sexist comments from Chapter 6, Study 5	285
3. <i>Scales</i>	288

Résumé

Depuis les années 1980, les débats sur le foulard et l'intégration de l'islam agitent la France et la Belgique. La *laïcité* et l'émancipation des femmes ont été invoquées pour justifier l'interdiction des signes religieux. De nombreux chercheurs en sciences sociales ont dénoncé une instrumentalisation de ces principes contre l'islam, mais les recherches sur les relations entre la *laïcité*, l'égalité des sexes et les préjugés sont limitées. Notre programme de recherche vise à déterminer si les individus anti-égalitaires mobilisent la *laïcité* et l'égalité de genre en réponse à une menace perçue de l'islam. Nous utilisons une approche multiméthode, incluant des données expérimentales, corrélationnelles et textuelles. Nos résultats révèlent des différences dans la manière dont la *laïcité* est conceptualisée en Belgique et en France, et suggèrent une instrumentalisation de la *laïcité* 'anti-signes religieux' face à l'Islam. En outre, les analyses textuelles montrent que les individus anti-égalitaires recrutent l'égalité de genre pour justifier leur rejet de l'islam. Nos résultats contribuent à la compréhension de ces phénomènes psychosociaux complexes.

Abstract

Since the 1980s, France and Belgium have grappled with debates over the headscarf and the integration of Islam. *Laïcité* and women's emancipation have been invoked to justify bans on religious symbols. Social scientists have denounced a weaponization of these principles against Islam, but research on the relations between *laïcité*, gender equality, and prejudice has been limited. Our research program aims to investigate whether with antiegalitarian individuals embrace and manipulate *laïcité* and gender equality in response to perceived threats from Islam. We employ a multi-method approach, including experimental, correlational, and textual data. Our findings reveal differences in how *laïcité* is conceptualized in Belgium and France. Additionally, we identify a weaponization of the 'anti-religious sign' *laïcité* in the face of Islam. Furthermore, textual analyses show that anti-egalitarian individuals recruit gender equality to justify their rejection of Islam. Our results contribute to the understanding of these complex sociopsychological phenomena.

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General introduction

General introduction

Although the current social climate is by no means one of total tolerance, a number of events that took place during the last century, such as the American civil rights movement and the World War II genocide, triggered a normative transition. Indeed racism, belief in biological inferiority, and prejudice in general have increasingly been regarded as morally wrong (Pettigrew et al., 1997; Sears & Henry, 2003; Zick et al., 2008). But while individuals refrain from being associated with racism (Monteith et al., 2010), anti-immigrant discourse and discrimination persist. For example, Muslims face discrimination in the hiring process and in the workplace (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Monteith et al., 2010). In social psychology, models describing new forms of racism (McConahay & Hough, 1976; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Swim et al., 1995) posit that negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviors have taken on more subtle and insidious guises. Recent work, mainly conducted in the United States, showed that egalitarian ideologies can be altered or mobilized to disguise racist ends, with Knowles and colleagues (2009) coining the concept of ‘malleable ideologies’. As a case in point, these authors found that anti-egalitarian white participants embraced the color-blindness principle when they felt threatened by affirmative action policies promoting racial equality and thus dispossessing them of their privilege (Chow & Knowles, 2016; Knowles et al., 2009). Turning to France, in the wake of the ban on religious symbols, activists and sociologists denounced attempts to ‘make racism respectable’ through the use of the principle of *laïcité* (Al-Saji, 2018; Benelli et al., 2006; Delphy, 2006; Jacquemain, 2014). Originally championed by left-wing political figures to counterbalance the overwhelming influence of the Catholic Church, *laïcité* promotes freedom of conscience, equality of beliefs, and the separation of State and Church (Baubérot, 2012). This form of secularism has increasingly come to be used as an argument to ban the garments most often worn by members of minorities, be it the headscarf, the long skirts, the burkini, or more recently, the abaya (Bentouhami, 2018). Ever since the ‘headscarf cases’ broke out in France in the late 1980s, political debates have been raging about the reconciliation of Islam and ‘republican values’. On the one hand, advocates of strict *laïcité* require citizens to adopt a ‘neutral’ appearance in an increasing number of places. On the other, opponents of this new form of *laïcité* are often dismissed as naïve and a breeding ground for religious fundamentalism (Howard, 2012; Martin, 2015).

Interestingly, *laïcité* is only one side of the coin. Largely ignored by social psychology, the question of the exploitation of gender equality as part of an anti-Islamic agenda is often said to be inextricably linked to that of the new *laïcité*. Numerous scholars have asserted that legal bans passed on the grounds of *laïcité* were in fact discussed and defended as gender equality issues. Despite their usual indifference to women’s rights issues, many politicians showed extreme concern about the threat posed by the headscarf to women’s rights. The law was deemed the ideal remedy to this oppression (e.g., Al-Saji, 2018; Baubérot, 2012; Benelli et al., 2006; Bentouhami, 2018; Delphy, 2006).

Inspired by this debate, a number of French studies of social psychology have examined the link between adherence to *laïcité* and prejudice (Cohu et al., 2018; Kamiejski et al., 2012; Roebroek & Guimond, 2017; Roebroek & Guimond, 2018). Their findings have highlighted the multi-faceted nature of *laïcité*. Indeed, on the one hand, French participants endorsed a historical conception of *laïcité* that acknowledges freedom of conscience and equality. This historical *laïcité* was statistically associated with tolerance towards minorities. On the other, they also gave way to a newer conception of *laïcité* restricting the wearing of religious symbols, statistically associated with greater intolerance towards minorities.

Going one step further, subsequent work by Roebroek and Guimond (2018) suggested that *laïcité* is an instance of a ‘malleable ideology’, a principle weaponized by antiegalitarian individuals. Their findings, although encouraging, need to be replicated and extended. In Belgium, to our knowledge, no work has investigated the dimensionality of *laïcité*, nor the hypothesis that this principle is used in our political and cultural context as an anti-Islamic disguise.

The issue of women's position within Islam was also at the heart of the debate on *laïcité* and religious symbols' regulation. Social scientists noted that this sudden emphasis on women's rights merely camouflaged forms of racism (Benelli et al., 2006; Bentouhami, 2018; Howard, 2012; Selby, 2011). Yet, the question of the weaponization of gender equality is largely absent from social psychology. The present thesis aims at examining the potential malleability of the ideologies of *laïcité* and gender equality.

The present dissertation is divided in nine chapters. In Chapter 1, we outline the history of Muslim immigration to our countries and present the results of research into stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against Muslims. Then, based on recent theories of racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Swim et al., 1995), we identify how and when individuals express negative attitudes towards other groups, in spite of prevalent egalitarian norms. In particular, we consider the justification processes by which individuals can express negative attitudes towards minority groups whilst escaping social sanctions.

In Chapter 2, we examine how egalitarian ideologies can serve as justifications for racism or other antiegalitarian motives. Building on the literature on ‘malleability of ideologies’ (Knowles et al., 2009) as well as the literature on the ‘justification-suppression model’ (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), we review research highlighting the strategic use of ideologies (e.g., color-blindness, diversity, freedom) by antiegalitarian individuals and politicians wishing to justify their own stances, or the racist stances of others. We propose an explanation of malleability processes, arguing that they can in fact be grounded in different processes: socio-categorization processes, motivational processes or mobilization processes. We then call attention to issues and unanswered questions with regard to the conceptualization and measurement of the phenomenon.

Chapter 3 focuses on the ideology of *laïcité*. We present its history, its application and its controversies in France and Belgium. We also review the evidence on the intricate relations between different conceptions of *laïcité* and intergroup relations. Specifically, we highlight

the multifaceted nature of French *laïcité*, and explore how conceptions of *laïcité* can trigger (as a social norm) or be associated with (as a belief) prejudice against immigrants and Muslims.

Chapter 4 looks at gender equality. In particular, we dissect perceptions of incongruency between gender equality and Islam, and review social sciences literature on the weaponization of a feminist agenda against Islam, notably on a political level (Farris, 2017). We stress how, even more so than for *laïcité*, the phenomenon has received far too little attention from social psychology, despite its social and scientific importance.

Chapter 5 consists in a book chapter targeting an interdisciplinary audience. It is part of a volume addressing the intersections between anti-immigration discourses and gender discourses in Europe and beyond. As social psychologists, we sought to bring insights from our discipline to explain the paradoxical association of anti-immigration and gender-friendly stances.

In Chapter 6, we report a selection of our empirical efforts to test the weaponization of *laïcité* and gender equality using experimental data. Six experimental studies are presented, relying on the three processes presented in Chapter 2. Although the presented studies did not yield the expected results, we argue that presenting a short report of these efforts is most relevant for various reasons. First, experimental work has constituted most of the empirical work done during the thesis. Second, the experimental method is a particularly relevant one to test the emergence of interaction hypotheses, as is the case here. Third, reporting such non-significant results is in line with recent efforts to increase transparency in science.

In Chapter 7, we present two studies investigating Belgians' conceptions of *laïcité*, and their relations with intergroup outcomes. Study 1 relies on confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to map distinct dimensions of *laïcité* in Belgium. Interestingly, our results highlight the presence of three dimensions of *laïcité*: a historical, tolerant form of *laïcité* encompassing freedom of conscience and equality, a dimension tapping into the opposition to the public expression of religious signs, and a dimension measuring the reluctance to grant funds to acknowledged beliefs. Interestingly, these results contrast with what has been found in France, where the two latter dimensions were grouped into one form of 'new *laïcité*'. Study 1 also unveils the relation between these dimensions and factors of sexism, racism, and anti-Islam attitudes. In study 2, in line with the concept of malleability, we sought to test whether antiegalitarian individuals endorse the 'anti-expression of religious signs' *laïcité* in the presence of Islam (vs. Catholicism), and whether this shift did not occur for the 'anti-funding' *laïcité*. Study 2 confirmed our expectation and showed that the two dimensions of 'anti-expression' and 'anti-funding' operate in a distinct way: while the former is endorsed by antiegalitarians in the face of Islam, the other is not.

In Chapter 8, we report lexicometric analyses performed to explore the malleability of gender equality against Islam. Using Iramuteq, a statistical software, we examine participants' responses to three questions regarding European values, (dis)similarities between Christian religions and Islam, and (in)compatibility between Islam and feminism.

Across various analyses, we show how antiegalitarian participants significantly rely on words and groups of words associated with gender equality to elaborate on their anti-Islam posture.

Chapter 9 contains the general discussion. In this final chapter, we offer a comprehensive view of the findings and discuss the relevance of our somehow set of results. We also offer a reflexive view of the political nature of the present research, and discuss limitations and future perspectives.

Chapter 1.

From egalitarian standards to the dissimulation of prejudice

Chapter 1. From egalitarian standards to the dissimulation of prejudice

In this chapter, we first provide a brief history of Muslims' immigration in Belgium and in France, and examine stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination associated with this minority group. Second, we discuss the social context in which these intergroup relations operate, that is, a social context in which newer, more subtle forms of racism predominate. Within these new forms of racism, individuals only express their prejudice provided there is a socially acceptable justification for doing so. The third part thus consists in a brief review of the studies uncovering mechanisms used by individuals to justify their prejudiced stances.

1. A diverse landscape

In Europe, the 1960s saw the start of several decades of immigration of workers, many of whom came from the Mediterranean basin, mainly from Muslim countries (Phalet et al., 2015; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008; Zick et al., 2008). The Belgian and French agreements with countries such as Italy, Turkey, and Morocco offered the security of employment in certain industries (e.g., mining). In the 1970s, the oil shock hit and put an end to the policy of active recruitment of foreign workers. Still, since then, the number of immigrants has continued to increase as a result of family reunification, high birth rates of these populations, and a growing number of refugees (e.g., from Rwanda, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan), not to mention student immigration and the East European immigrants after the enlargement of the EU (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). By the 1980s, as immigrants became aware that 'they were here to stay', they built mosques, opened halal shops and negotiated prayer room (Modood et al., 2006). This new presence of Islam in the public space, along with a series of events and public affairs (headscarf affairs in France, Satanic verses controversy, ...), led to the emergence of numerous debates around their integration (Bousetta & Jacobs, 2006; Cesari, 2002). Central to these debates are questions around the emancipation of Muslim women and the enforcement of *laïcité* with regard to the wearing of religious symbols.

In social psychology, and precisely in intergroup relations, researchers distinguish between stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. While stereotypes refer to *cognitions* or representations associated with a group, prejudice refers to the *affective* evaluation felt by one when interacting or thinking about a group. Discrimination refers to differences in *treatment* of members of the outgroup compared to members of one's own group (Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2019). Research, mainly in Europe and the United States, has provided insight into the stereotypes associated with Muslims, as well as the presence of prejudice and discrimination against them.

According to the bias map, Muslims have been reported as stereotypically low in warmth and low in competence, or as moderate on both dimensions (Fiske et al., 2002; Koch et al., 2021; Nicolas et al., 2022). The stereotyping of Muslims and Islam can be summarized as comprising three aspects. First, Muslims are often perceived as a *proselytising* group, confusing faith and State, private and public affairs, and Islam as a political ideology more so than a religion (Lindner, 2019; Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015). Second, numerous scholars claim that Europeans see Muslims as a *backward* group, notably with respect to women's rights (Al-Saji, 2018; Howard, 2012; Selby, 2011; Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015). Thirdly, Muslims are perceived as *inferior* and inherently *foreign* from the Western world (Al-Saji, 2018; Imhoff & Recker, 2012). Interestingly, a study by Imhoff and Recker (2012) revealed that a criticism of Islam (regarding the relation of religion and the State, gender issues, and religious fundamentalism) should not necessarily be discounted and labeled as prejudice. Indeed, this form of critique, which the authors called 'secular critique of Islam', was only related to prejudice among participants presenting high levels of social dominance (Imhoff & Recker, 2012, Study 2). Finally, we should stress that stereotypes surrounding Muslims show a gendered aspect. Indeed, the perception of Muslim women is ambivalent, with submissive and docile traits on the one hand, and threatening traits on the other. Muslim men, on the other hand, are seen as aggressive, hostile, and dominant (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013).

Several studies and reports also point to the existence of discrimination towards Muslims. Perceived as a particularly problematic group (Allievi, 2005; van der Noll, 2014), Muslims are subject to disadvantage and discrimination in many areas of society. Firstly, from a socio-economic perspective, the migration policies of the 1960s meant that migrants were welcomed into unskilled or low-skilled occupations. This unfavorable position on the socio-economic scale has often been carried over to the second generation (Heath et al., 2008). Secondly, numerous studies have attested to the discrimination experienced by this community in Europe. Among others, a study by Ghumann and Ryan (2013) confirmed that an accomplice wearing the headscarf faced interpersonal discrimination and discrimination on job offers (i.e., being less likely to be given permission to complete applications and to receive callbacks) as compared to a fellow accomplice who did not wear the headscarf.

In Belgium, more than 90% of Moroccans and Turks declared themselves to be Muslims by 2015 (Torrekens & Adam, 2015). Muslims accounted for about 5.9% of Belgian residents in 2012-2015 (Schlueter et al., 2020) and for 7.5% in 2020 (Pew Research Center, 2022). Overall, reports of Muslim discrimination in Belgium abound, be it in housing or in the workplace (Torrekens & Adam, 2015; Unia, 2019). Various voices expressed concern that recent regulations discriminate against the Muslim community, such as the ban on ritual slaughter or the regulation of the Great Mosque of Belgium (Bayraklı & Hafez, 2018; RTBF, 2021). Importantly, discrimination towards Muslims is gender-specific: Muslim women are the victims of attacks and discrimination to a greater extent (Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique, 2016; Unia, 2019).

Remarkably, some strands of the literature in social psychology point to an increase in prejudice and discrimination against Muslims, particularly since 9/11 (Bayraklı & Hafez,

2018; Semyonov et al., 2006; Zick et al., 2008). Although the rise of nationalist parties (e.g., the PVV in the Netherlands, the RN in France; Verkuyten & Zaremba, 2005) would suggest that this may be the case, it is difficult to establish with certainty whether such an increase has taken place. First, referring to an increase requires a point of reference and views on this issue differ (Imhoff & Recker, 2012). Second, referring to an increase requires a reliable and valid measurement. If one relies on a record of hate crimes and discrimination, differences in the record-keeping and in the delimitation of these terms prevent comparisons (Davidov et al., 2015; Koopmans, 1996). An increase in the number of reported incidents may be evidence of an increased willingness to report (Miles, 1994), although the number of unreported incidents is still assumed to be very large (Bayraklı & Hafez, 2018; Unia, 2019). Nevertheless, while it remains unclear whether anti-Muslim sentiment has actually increased, data show that discrimination and prejudice towards Muslims are still very much an issue today.

Of importance, the expression of such stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination appears to be contradictory to the prevailing egalitarian social norms in our society. In the following section, we address the existence of these social norms against overt expressions of racial bias and the way the individual deals with their bias in this context. Notably, we will present research on newer forms of racism and individuals' strategies to express their biased attitudes.

2. New forms of racism

In formerly slave-owning or colonialist countries, where dominant ideologies once justified exploitation (Dovidio et al., 2004), it is now widely frowned upon to be racist or prejudiced. This is because such a stance is considered immoral in the eyes of most people, (Dovidio et al., 2004; Monteith et al., 2010). In many places, it is even illegal, with European countries having signed and enacted legislation intended to eliminate racial discrimination. If the reception and treatment of immigrants across the globe is far from fair today (Thompson, 2023), a number of authors have pointed to a shift in intergroup relations arising notably with the civil rights movement in the United States and the Second World War (Sears & Henry, 2003; Zick et al., 2008). Although most authors have documented this evolution in the context of the United States (Devine & Elliott, 1995), there is abundant evidence to suggest that a similar shift also took place in Europe (Miles, 1994; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). As Pettigrew and Meertens (1995, p. 73) put it, 'Western European countries have developed a norm against blatant prejudice' (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995, p. 73). Although not everyone has embraced or accepted this norm to the same extent, even those who do not fully subscribe to it would be encouraged to act in egalitarian ways and avoid racist or sexist stances.

Rather than concluding that bigotry has fully disappeared, several authors argued that this normative shift has encouraged the emergence of new forms of prejudice. 'Old-fashioned', 'blatant' forms of prejudice still exist, although much less frequent. These are typically expressed in a close, direct and overt way. At the same time, new forms of prejudice, more

covert and difficult to detect, are more prevalent. These new forms of prejudice are no longer rooted in biological heterogeneities. Instead, they rest on the negation of current discrimination experienced by the minority group, and the blaming of the minority group for its inferior status. Several types of modern, also called subtle biases have been described in the literature: symbolic (McConahay & Hough, 1976), modern (Swim et al., 1995), subtle (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995) or aversive (Dovidio et al., 2017) forms of racism.

Although they differ on some aspects (for a full discussion, see Whitley & Kite, 2013), these newer forms of prejudice share the idea that most white individuals are now egalitarian *in principle* and wish to be seen as unbiased, but continue to harbor prejudice acquired from social and cultural experiences. As one illustration of this mechanism, Monteith et al. (2010) showed that the majority of participants who realized that they had behaved in a biased way reported negative self-directed affects, such as shame.

In this context, Crandall and Eshleman (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) proposed a ‘justification-suppression model of the Expression and Experience of Prejudice’, aiming at explaining why and when individuals will express prejudice. Crandall and Eshleman indicate that people acquire various forms of prejudice against outgroups (sexism, racism, etc.) early on in their lives, but that ‘suppression’ forces, such as egalitarian beliefs, norms, mean that prejudice will often remain unreleased. In order to reconcile their genuine prejudice and their motivation to suppress these politically incorrect attitudes, individuals will seek justifications to express their prejudice. In other words, individuals will express prejudice only when it can be justified in socially acceptable ways. We now examine what drives individuals to hide their prejudice and which justifications individuals may use to express them.

Why would people want to hide their prejudice? Research points to a number of reasons. First, concealing one's bias prevents one from having to confront the possibility that one's actions or attitudes are motivated by anti-egalitarian feelings. Indeed, in order to maintain a positive self-image, individuals generally seek to be consistent with their moral standards (Festinger, 1954). It should be noted, however, that this ‘internal motivation to respond without prejudice’, which would result from the internalization of social norms against prejudice, is not equally present in all individuals (Plant & Devine, 1998).

Secondly, the wish to behave in an unbiased way may be driven by a concern to preserve a positive image in the eyes of others, by the fear of social sanctions, as part of impression management. This second form of motivation echoes the concept of ‘external motivation to respond without prejudice’ (Plant & Devine, 1998). In this case, the individual will likely rely on justification to control the image that others form of them and to cast the self or the ingroup in a favorable light (Baumeister, 1982). Here too, inter-individual differences exist. Some individuals have a stronger external motivation to respond without prejudice, and some individuals have a greater tendency to manage their presentation in general (i.e. higher levels of self-monitoring, Snyder, 1974).

A study by Monin and Miller (2001) offers a clear illustration of the will to maintain a favorable image of the self. In their study, individuals who could show that they were not biased (i.e., by being given the opportunity to express their disagreement with sexist

statements), and who had thus been able to forge an unbiased image of themselves, subsequently behaved in a more sexist manner. Interestingly, this effect persisted even when responses were anonymized. That is, the moral credits served not only to make the participant appear less prejudiced in the eyes of the experimenter, but also in their own eyes.

3. Research on justification of prejudice

As proposed above, individuals will act on their anti-egalitarian attitudes as long as they can convincingly justify their actions, whether it is through their behavior, their opinions, or, at a more sophisticated level, their worldviews and ideologies. A significant body of literature provides evidence for this and examines the circumstances in which and the means by which individuals engage in this strategy.

In a now classic study, Snyder and colleagues (1979) offered a telling illustration of the justification in the context of the avoidance of contact with a disabled person. In this experiment, participants were to evaluate a short film and had the choice of watching either a film in the company of a confederate allegedly disabled or a film in the company of a confederate without disability. Interestingly, when the two films on the program were the same, participants sat just as often next to the disabled person as to the non-disabled person. In contrast, when the films were different, participants were much less likely to choose to sit next to the disabled person than next to the non-disabled person. Apparently, when the films were different, participants had a legitimate reason for avoiding the disabled person.

Building on the same basic idea as Snyder et al. (1979), a number of studies have examined the subtle ways in which participants engage in biased attitudes or behavior in the labor market. For example, in a study examining the selection decisions of white and black candidates, Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) found that although participants did not differentiate between white and black candidates when the latter showed unambiguous qualifications (i.e. strong or weak), participants were less likely to recommend black candidates than their white competitors when both showed ambiguous qualifications. Esses et al. (2004) sought to see whether participants modified their evaluation of candidates according to their origin, this time with respect to perceptions of person-job or person-organization fit. As predicted, these authors found that candidates with equivalent qualifications and proficiency were not always evaluated in the same way. Specifically, participants with high levels of prejudice rated the participant who was born and trained in India as having poorer fits compared to candidates from Canada or the UK, whilst participants with low levels of prejudice noted no such difference in fit. Apparently, the fit variable, being sufficiently subtle, provided participants with seemingly legitimate justifications for the discounting of immigrants' skills. Also relying on a subtle measure, Stewart and Perlow (2001) showed that participants with anti-Black prejudice expressed more 'confidence in the decision to hire' a black applicant than a white applicant for a low-status position and were more confident in recommending a white applicant for a high-status position.

Going a step further, Bastart et al. (2020) varied the content of the justifications (justifications rooted in hostile vs. benevolent prejudice) to see how these impacted the perception of discrimination in a situation where a woman or a black person was refused a position. Specifically, when the justifications rested on benevolent (vs. hostile) sexism (e.g., 'he does not think that it's safe for a woman to be alone in the building at 3am') or benevolent (vs. hostile) racism (e.g., 'he does not want him to get assaulted by an intolerant player'), participants perceived less discrimination. These results point to the hierarchy-legitimizing potential of these subtle forms of prejudice. Along with others, such results illustrate the importance of the subtle nature of the justifications for the emergence of inequality in workplace assessments and the perpetuation of discrimination against minorities in the labor market.

Another area in which minorities are victims of discrimination is the legal sphere (e.g., Mesic et al., 2018). Although laws prohibit discrimination and standardize procedures, Hodson et al. (2005) have shown how people who make legal decisions may sometimes be discriminating. For example, inadmissible evidence that is nevertheless presented in the courtroom should not influence jurors' decisions and jurors are indeed instructed to disregard such information. Yet, jurors sometimes are influenced by this evidence (Kassin & Sommers, 1997). For instance, Hodson et al. 2005 examined whether the race of the defendant would play a role in the degree to which jurors would dismiss the evidence incriminating a Black defendant. To test this, authors assigned white participants to a 2 × 2 design manipulating the race of the defendant (white vs. black) and the evidence (admissible vs. inadmissible). Participants who received inadmissible evidence rated the black defendant more guilty and recommended longer sentences compared to what they did for the white defendant.

As a set, these research efforts show how individuals are likely to capitalize on situational ambiguity to establish that their negative attitudes or behaviors were not in fact based on race, disability, or gender, but rather on some other aspect of the setting.

Other research showed that individuals not only exploit situational ambiguity but that they also alter their perceptions, beliefs, and stereotypes of the group in question, in order to be able to express negative attitudes. Immigrants constitute a good example in this respect as they are described sometimes as hard-working individuals threatening local jobs and sometimes as lazy individuals dependent on social security. These stereotypical – and indeed contradictory – descriptions of immigrants are often used by policymakers to appeal to an audience, notably, in a contradictory, hypocritical discourse. In order to capture this phenomenon, Sindic et al. (2018) set up an experiment in which they manipulated the possibility of mobilizing an audience and the nature of the threat associated with immigration (threat for social security vs. threat for job availability). They hypothesized that when given an audience to convince, participants opposed to immigration would modify their stereotypes associated with immigrants according to the type of threat. Their results showed that when the focus was on the threat to social security, participants who supported immigration restriction described immigrants as less hard-working when they had to convince an audience compared to when they had no audience. Conversely, participants who did not support

immigration restriction portrayed participants as working harder when they had to convince an audience than when they did not.

In other words, participants who wanted to restrict immigration portrayed immigrants as workers in order to mobilize their audience and thus exploit the stereotype of the immigrant as a threat to social security, whereas participants who did not want to restrict immigration did the opposite, in order to limit the threat posed by immigrants. They found a mirror pattern when the study made salient the threat to job availability. In this case, participants who wanted to restrict immigration had to convince an audience portrayed immigrants as working harder.

Crandall et al. (2011) showed that this shift in stereotype content by prejudiced participants can occur even when participants do not have pre-existing negative attitudes towards a group, i.e. when negative attitudes are instilled in participants through affective priming. In their study, participants read information about Moldova and Slovenia, accompanied by subliminal stimuli relating to a negative emotion or a positive emotion. The results showed that when a country was paired with a negative rather than a positive affect, the participants felt a greater social distance from that country and perceived its citizens as less warm (but no less competent).

These two studies stress how, in addition to ambiguity in the situation, individuals will also exploit ambiguity in group stereotypes to fit their social goals. Other studies have highlighted the exploitation of stereotypical ambiguity for political purposes: the strategic modification of attributes given to Belgians in a context of (de)colonization (Klein & Licata, 2003), or the depiction of migrants as sick persons seeking to rest on the healthcare system (Geisser, 2019). This reliance on stereotypical ambiguity illustrates the justification function of stereotypes (Crandall et al., 2011).

Beyond the exploitation of ambiguities in situations and in stereotypes, a series of theoretical and empirical efforts suggest that *ideologies* can also serve as a basis for justification. In the next chapter, we look more specifically at the concept of the malleability of ideologies.

Chapter 2.

Malleability of ideologies

Chapter 2. Malleability of ideologies

1. Ideologies

According to common sense, the word ideology comprises a notion of constancy, of fixed components: ‘a systematic scheme of ideas, usually relating to politics, economics, or society and forming the basis of action or policy; a set of beliefs governing conduct’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). In social psychology, the concept of ideology has been employed in various theoretical perspectives such as social dominance theory or system justification theory (Jost et al., 2009). At times, the authors use the construct to refer to political orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance (Satherley et al., 2020) neoliberalism (Azevedo et al., 2019), or, more generally, to contemporary socio-political views serving the needs of individuals to justify the system and to maintain hierarchies between social groups. Although Jost et al. (2008) suggest that ‘ideological outcomes may be more malleable and context dependant than is often assumed’ (p. 178), within the latter ‘system justification’ framework, ideology most often refers to a set of beliefs that is relatively fixed in content, relatively stable in individuals, and that can be used to establish individual differences. Thus, be it its usage in common language, or within the theories of system justification, ideologies are most often considered to be fixed. However, in 2009, Knowles et al (2009) introduced the concept of malleability of ideologies. With their concept, Knowles et al. argue that ideologies can serve opposing purposes and motivations. In fact, the same ideology can take on different meanings and have different applications from one situation or person to another.

2. The ‘original’ malleable ideology

To introduce their concept of malleability of ideologies, Knowles et al. (2009) refer to the case of *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School Dist. No. 1, 2007*. In this case, the Supreme Court was examining a school's racial policy, which aimed to consider a child's race as a basis for determining admission in certain circumstances. Interestingly, both parties invoked the same ideology to motivate their position. The school argued that color-blindness meant that one wanted to achieve racial equality, even if this had to be done through color-conscious policies. In contrast, the Supreme Court saw color-blindness as prohibiting any consideration of an individual's race. In their study, Knowles et al. explored the ambiguity of the concept of color-blindness and the exploitation of this ambiguity by individuals motivated to reject struggles for equality.

Specifically, they argued that people might conceive of color-blindness as a principle of *distributive justice*, whereby race should not affect outcomes. In this sense, color-blindness is not antithetical to unequal treatment if it reduces racial inequality and achieves an outcome in which an individual's race is not synonymous with inequality. As it turns out, people can

also construe color-blindness as a principle of *procedural justice*, whereby race should not influence the way individuals are treated. To study the strategic molding of color-blindness, Knowles et al. examined whether participants having higher levels of social dominance orientation would endorse color-blindness to a greater extent when feeling threatened (vs. not). They also examined whether this increase would be explained by a higher willingness to achieve equal *treatment* between groups, that is, a preference for procedural justice.

To manipulate threat, participants in the threat condition learned that policies of affirmative action had resulted in a reduction in economic opportunities for white people, whereas participants in the control condition did not receive this information. Next, participants indicated their support for color-blindness, their desire for equal treatment between groups (i.e., procedural justice), and their level of SDO. As predicted, high-SDO white participants endorsed the color-blind ideology more in the threat condition, and this moderating effect on endorsement for color-blindness was accounted for by a higher desire for procedural justice. This indicates that white participants who felt threatened by their going down the social ladder supported procedural policies and therefore endorsed color-blindness, an apparently egalitarian ideology, to satisfy their anti-egalitarian motive.

Again addressing the issue of color-blindness, Chow and Knowles (2016) sought to examine whether white anti-egalitarians recruit this principle in order to exclude race from public debate when racial hierarchy is threatened. The authors hypothesized that ‘agenda-setting’ strategies – such as the endorsement of color-blindness and the choice of debate topics - correspond to a *subtle* form of hierarchy-maintenance, and should therefore emerge among participants high in *SDO-E* rather than *SDO-D*. Social dominance orientation indeed includes *SDO-E*, a measurement of opposition to equality, and *SDO-D*, measuring the view that some groups should dominate others. Authors thus argued that agenda-setting, a subtle hierarchy-maintaining strategy, should be observed only among white high in *SDO-E*. In contrast, they expected that high-*SDO-D*, who prefer ‘hard-power’ hierarchy maintenance strategies, would not increase their endorsement of color-blindness in the face of hierarchy threat. In two studies, the authors confirmed that white participants high in *SDO-E* increased their support for color-blind policy when hierarchy was threatened (e.g., via the presence of strong affirmative policies). High-*SDO-D* individuals did not change their endorsement of color-blind policy when hierarchy was threatened, and even decreased it in one of the studies. Authors presumed that their decrease in color-blind endorsement might signal an effort to actually *confront* the issue of race.

In a third study, the authors looked at participants' choice of topics for a presidential debate, specifically, the likelihood of including race as a topic. They expected that the inclusion of race as a topic would depend on the perception of hierarchy (in)stability and on participants' level of *SDO-E* and *SDO-D*. To test this, participants took part in one of two conditions: the first half learned that the social hierarchy in the USA was illegitimate, the second learned that the hierarchy was legitimate. By presenting racial hierarchy as illegitimate, authors hoped to induce a fear that the racial hierarchy would be open to debate, with the predicted outcome that participants would not want to include a debate on race relations. In line with predictions, the data showed that white participants scoring high on the

SDO-E were less likely to include race as a topic for discussion when the hierarchy was described as illegitimate, compared to when the hierarchy was described as legitimate. Interestingly, SDO-Ds wanted to put race on the agenda more when they had been told that hierarchy was illegitimate, which mirrors the results of Studies 1 and 2. Thus, when the racial status quo was threatened, SDO-Es would tend to conceal racial issues, whereas SDO-Ds would rather bring them to the fore.

As a set, Chow and Knowles's (2016) studies provide further evidence of the strategic use of color-blindness as hierarchy maintenance in the United States. Interestingly, high-SDO-D participants did not increase their adherence to color-blindness when the racial hierarchy was shaken. The authors argued that the expected shift does not operate in SDO-D because the maintenance strategy used is too subtle, and therefore not compatible with SDO-Ds' more blunt dominance. Still, this raises the question of why the 2009 study included the complete SDO measure as a moderator: this suggests that all SDOs (SDO-D and SDO-E) would have increased their adherence to the color-blind ideology (although an analysis of the results of this study, based on the sub-dimensions, would be necessary to confirm this). Either way, it appears difficult to identify why the interaction emerged at times with the complete SDO scale and at other times only with the SDO-E subdimension, with the strategies used (agenda-setting, malleable ideology) mobilizing subtle justifications in both cases.

3. Malleable ideologies in other contexts

3.1 Diversity: a question of criteria

Other studies have brought to light this phenomenon of malleability with respect to ideologies. The diversity ideology is a case in point. Diversity, particularly in the workplace, has been commonly conceived as heterogeneity in the representation of various social categories such as race, gender, age or (dis)ability. Unzueta et al. (2012) aimed to explore whether diversity is a malleable concept such that individuals may rely on various criteria to gauge diversity depending on their social motivations. The study tested whether high-SDO participants confronted with an organization showing a low level of organizational heterogeneity would broaden their understanding of diversity to include the criterion of occupational (i.e., job types) heterogeneity and, on this basis, judge the organization as being rather diverse. As a result, they would be in a position to reject positive discrimination policies.

The authors relied on a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design, and presented participants with a description of an organization with a high or low level of racial heterogeneity and a high or low level of occupational heterogeneity. Then, participants indicated their perception of diversity in the organization, as well as their support for race-related affirmative action policies. Their results point towards a malleability of the concept of diversity. Specifically, in the condition where the company showed low racial diversity, high-SDOs described the organization as more diverse when organizational heterogeneity was higher, whereas low-SDOs described the company as not very diverse, whatever the level of organizational heterogeneity. This suggests that in the presence of low racial heterogeneity, the high-SDOs broadened their

conception of diversity and took into account organizational heterogeneity. In contrast, the low-SDOs relied on the racial criterion alone.

Interestingly, the results for the 'racially heterogeneous' condition suggest that both high- and low-SDOs shifted their construction of diversity. Specifically, when racial heterogeneity was high, the high-SDOs no longer took into account the organizational diversity criterion when judging the organization's diversity, whereas the low-SDOs took into account this criterion and judged diversity lower when occupational heterogeneity was low. Follow-up analyses of the measure of 'opposition to affirmative action policies' provide an insight into the underlying motivations: low- and high-SDOs adopted a strategy of supporting their respective motivations. When racial heterogeneity was low, high-SDOs expanded the diversity construct to justify that diversity had been achieved and to justify their opposition to the positive discrimination policy. Low-SDOs shifting criteria served their egalitarian motives: when racial heterogeneity was high, they broadened the construction of diversity and took into account organizational heterogeneity to justify that diversity should be pushed further. This was actually associated with support for affirmative action policies that could possibly contribute to reducing further racial inequalities. The results highlight that both low- and high-SDOs can use ambiguity in the definition of ideologies to achieve their motivations.

3.2 Malleability for vicarious justification: freedom and democracy

Another ideology that has been singled out, that of freedom in general and freedom of speech in particular. Although the United States often defines itself as the land of the free (Pew Research Center, 2015; The Atlantic, 2012), the evidence suggests that the ideology of freedom is used to extend the freedom of some, but to restrict that of others. In a series of experimental studies, White and Crandall (2017) investigated a malleability hypothesis by giving participants the opportunity to justify not their own prejudiced actions but those of others, i.e., engaging in a vicarious justification. Authors also examined the motivations behind the justification of prejudice expressed by others, looking at two hypothetical processes. First, they tested the ego threat hypothesis, whereby racist individuals are motivated to justify others' prejudiced expression in order to maintain a positive self-image. Second, they tested the expressive threat hypothesis, a motivation to justify others' prejudice expression to restore the perception of loss of freedom of expression.

Participants read a vignette describing how a man, who lived in a town where numerous demonstrations had recently taken place, complained about the 'cops' (anti-police condition) or about black protesters (anti-black condition), and insulted them in a Facebook post. Participants learned that the person who had written these statements had been fired from their high-profile job. Participants then had to fill in a free speech scale, measuring the extent to which participants saw that firing the person went against free speech rights. They also reported their level of anti-black prejudice. Authors reasoned that freedom of speech should be fitting for prejudiced participants in contexts where it provides a justification. Thus, they hypothesized that levels of prejudice would predict free speech in the anti-black condition, but would not be related to free speech in the anti-police condition. Results indicated the

presence of the predicted interaction, namely that in the anti-black condition, prejudice was positively associated with the relevance of free speech, whereas in the anti-police condition, prejudice was not associated with free speech.

In the next study, participants again read a vignette about a man getting fired for racist speech (racist condition) or read a story about a neutral topic. Here, findings showed again that participants high in prejudice claimed freedom of speech when the speech was racist, compared to the control condition. Interestingly, participants low in racism moved away from freedom of speech in the 'racist' condition. This pattern indicates that the most racist people exploit free speech to justify their prejudiced position and further suggests that the least racist people know this to be the case.

Then, in subsequent studies, authors investigated whether prejudiced participants engage in a vicarious justification due to a form of 'ego threat' (stemming from the realization that one's beliefs are being sanctioned) or a form of 'expressive threat' (stemming from a perception of decreased expressive freedom). In Studies 4-6, authors aimed to test the ego-threat hypothesis. In these three studies, participants read a vignette about a person getting fired for racist speech. In Study 4, half of participants' sense of self-integrity was manipulated using a self-affirming task (i.e., aiming to buffer against ego-threat). Then, participants read the vignette on racist speech and filled out free speech items. Following the ego-threat hypothesis, authors expected that bolstering participants' self-affirmation would limit their need to endorse free speech. Contrary to the ego-threat hypothesis, taking part in this protective manipulation did not change the relation between prejudice and freedom of speech. In Study 5, half of participants indicated whether they had ever said anything negative about minority groups (i.e., aiming to foster ego-threat) before the vignette. Authors hypothesized that participants whose self-image was threatened would justify another person's prejudice more by endorsing free speech. Results showed that it was not the case, once again not confirming the ego-threat hypothesis. In Study 6, participants read a brief description about a man. Half of participants reflected on their similarities with the man (ego-threat condition) or differences with him (control condition). Only then, participants read a vignette explaining that the man was fired for his racist stances. Then, they indicated their endorsement of free speech. Results showed that participants who felt more similar to Colin did not endorse freedom of speech justifications more than participants who felt different from Colin. These three studies failed to confirm that high-prejudice participants turn to freedom of speech to find reassurance that their prejudiced views should not be punished.

In the next three studies, authors, however, found support for an *expressive* threat hypothesis. In Study 7, participants wrote about times when they could not express their opinion (expressive threat condition) or about their daily routine (control condition). Then, they filled out a scale including items on the perception that free speech values should protect against punishment. As expected, participants in the expressive threat condition endorsed the protective role of free speech to a greater extent. Finally, in Study 8, participants read about a person getting fired for their anti-black or anti-coworker stance, and reported free speech, expressive threat and prejudice levels. Authors showed that anti-black prejudice predicted free speech via expressive threat, but only in the anti-black condition. Together, these results

show that sanctioning prejudiced stances threatens the expressive freedom of racist individuals, who then turn to freedom of speech as a justification.

3.3 Analyzing politicians' strategic reliance on egalitarian ideologies

Other studies sought to analyze the discourse of political figures. Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch far-right Partij voor Vrijheid (Party for Freedom), comes across as a controversial figure, especially on the subject of Islam. He has referred to the Koran as the 'Islamic Mein Kampf' (Wilders, 2014) and, with his party, has proposed a ban on mosques, a ban on the Koran, and a complete ban on immigration from Islamic countries, among other things. His comments have led to accusations of discrimination and legal action, but Wilders and his party continue to be present on the political scene. Verkuyten (2013) looked at Wilders' statements as a 'rhetorically delicate accomplishment that involves various category constructions' (p. 346).

The analysis is a form of empirical application of the Five-step social identity model proposed by Reicher, Haslam, and Rath (2008), which establishes five stages in the development of collective hate. In the first stage, 'identification', the individual defines a distinctive ingroup. Here, Wilders alternatively refers to the Netherlands, Europe, or the Western world, to create a sense of 'us', an ingroup in opposition to Islam. With the second step, 'exclusion', Wilders depicts an essentialist version of Islam that is barbaric and at complete odds with the ingroup ('us', 'our culture'), and that cannot become part of the Dutch tradition. In the third step, 'threat', the outgroup is not only alien and irreconcilable with our culture, but downright dangerous. Wilders announces that 'war has been declared on us' and explains that Islam wants to destroy and dominate Europe and Western civilization. To support his claim, he quotes violent Koran verses and describes them as representative, stating that if these hateful and violent passages were removed, the Koran would be as thin as the Donald Duck weekly magazine. In the fourth stage, 'virtue', he invokes ideologies depicted as core to the ingroup identity, and presumably at odds with Islam: tolerance, equality, and democracy. Islamic values are said to be inherently political, thus encouraging Muslims to confuse the private with the political, as opposed to Western values, which are presumably not political. In the final section, 'the defense of our virtue', Verkuyten highlights how Wilders claims that the defense of our society against the Islamic threat requires that we act against Islam. By portraying Islam as a political ideology rather than a religion, he argues that his proposed anti-Islam measures do not actually impinge on the right to religious freedom. With this fifth step, 'the responsibility for our intolerant behavior is blamed on them. The intolerance comes not from us but from them. We have to learn to act in that way, implying that it goes against our nature, whereas they are inherently intolerant'. (Verkuyten, 2013, p. 356).

In the same vein, and again drawing on the five-step model and the critical discursive approach, Pettersson (2019) explored how Finnish far-right politicians who have been denounced or even punished for hate speech against Muslims justify their positions. She identifies four postures. First, with the 'only human' posture, the speaker employs an

apologetic tone while not explicitly expressing apologies for his or her statements. With the 'voice of reason' posture, the speaker presents himself or herself as honest and merely presenting facts, and appeals to freedom of expression. With the 'victim' posture, they describe themselves as persecuted and the victim of an unjust witch-hunt (i.e., appealing to his black friend to emphasize his lack of racism). Finally, with the 'hero' posture, the speaker presents themselves as a defender of Finnish values and a pioneer wielding the banner of freedom of expression. To embrace these postures, the speakers recruit two principles: freedom of expression (in the manner of White & Crandall, 2017), but also honesty. They draw a distinction between an ingroup formed of honest and authentic people who speak the truth, and an outgroup, either pointing to a politically correct elite depriving the people of its freedom, or to backward-looking Muslims.

These two studies remind us that justification is a process that is heavily influenced by the normative context, in which politicians occupy a prominent and privileged position, given their level of influence. By characterizing the social world as comprising homogeneous, bad, and dangerous outgroups on the one hand and virtuous, threatened ingroups on the other, political figures provide a discourse of justification that makes discrimination not only acceptable but very much necessary.

4. Issues and critical comments on the conceptualization of malleable ideologies

Our overview of the studies that have examined the processes of justification – whether based on stereotypes, on ambiguity in attribution or on ideologies – prompts us to question certain characteristics of the phenomenon in question, i.e., the malleability of ideologies.

4.1 An imprecise shift

Firstly, as early as the initial study (Knowles et al., 2009), malleability was defined as the idea that 'the content of certain socio-political ideologies can be shaped by individuals in ways that satisfy their social motivations'. It has been suggested that 'a malleable ideology exhibits both stability and change, with specific elements of its content shifting even as its core meaning remains the same' (p. 858). However, as far as operationalization is concerned, malleability is sometimes conceptualized as a shift in *ideological content* (i.e., color-blindness as procedural or distributive justice, diversity as heterogeneity in racial or other non-social categories, Knowles et al., 2009; Unzueta et al., 2012), and at other times as a shift in the *attachment* to the ideology, without specification of its content (e.g., Roebroeck & Guimond, 2018). Even so, it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between the presence of one or these two shifts. Indeed, one could argue that a shift in the attachment to an ideology that would occur in specific social contexts *necessarily* signals that a shift in the content of the ideology has occurred in individuals' minds. As one can see, the literature would greatly benefit from clarifying these points so as to operate with concepts and processes whose empirical implications are well-defined (Scheel, 2022).

4.2 Ideologies, principles, values?

Secondly, following the same line of theoretical specification (and falsifiability), it remains unclear what an ideology actually refers to. Although Knowles et al. (2009) refer to ‘socio-political ideologies’ (p. 857) and to ‘philosophical principles’ (p. 866), one can wonder how ideologies differ from *values*, which seem to be akin to the same process of malleability (e.g., ‘value of freedom of expression’, according to White & Crandall, 2017). In this line, White et al., (2021) clearly point to an ideological malleability process, albeit talking about values in their paper: ‘The abstract, normative nature of *values* affords them the ability to be *used as rhetorical justifications for prejudice*, (...) prejudice operates in this *malleability*, and this process is described in the long history of research into political tolerance.’ (p. 3, emphasis is our own). So, as far as values, ideologies or principles are concerned, the concept of malleability refers above all to the endorsement of a normative, egalitarian, political idea by antiegalitarian individuals when social hierarchy is threatened. There seems to be a form of conceptual overlap between these different terms which, once again, needs to be clarified.

4.3 A series of potential moderators

The third issue is that of moderators. Three studies (Chow & Knowles, 2016; Knowles et al., 2009; Unzueta et al., 2012) have tested the hypothesis that high-SDO or high-SDO-E participants will perform a legitimizing maneuver. In these studies, the hypothesis refers to the protection of the hierarchy. Although the authors do not cite the justification-suppression model or the new theories of prejudice, they mention ‘people motivated to protect the racial hierarchy’ and of ‘links between color-blindness, prejudice, and desire to downplay racial disparities’. These references to prejudice, along with the studies on freedom of speech (White & Crandall, 2017) and democratic values of White et al. (2021) which test a moderation based on the level of prejudice, suggest that the mechanism of justifying inequalities by ideologies may emerge among the high-SDOs, among the SDO-Es, but also among the most racist, the most politically right-wing, or even the highest in RWA (if the hierarchy in question has more to do with values than economic resources; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). It may be that the relevance of a specific moderator changes according to cultural context – for example, right-wing political orientation might be particularly relevant in testing a hypothesis of a shift in defense of free speech, if right-wing politicians of a given country frequently adopt this argument. In any case, this question remains relatively unexplored, and the literature would benefit from specifying the contours of the condition of the emergence of malleable ideology.

4.4 A multiplicity of processes

A fourth question is that of the cognitive or motivational process underlying the emergence of malleability. The literature on malleability has done little to answer this question. However, certain processes seem to be able to explain malleability. We propose that such processes are fourfold.

First, the social categorization approach, rooted in particular in the SCT (Turner et al., 1987) holds that (various) social identities can become salient depending on the person and the situation. Specifically, one's social identity could become salient following a perception of distinctiveness with the outgroup, and thus activate the values of the ingroup. Indeed, according to the theory of social identity, 'social categorization can be understood as the ordering of social environment in terms of social categories, that is of groupings of persons in a manner which is meaningful to the subject. (...) the existence of such outgroups at least contributes to, or increases, the intensity of ingroup affiliations' (Tajfel, 1974, pp. 66-67). The salience of a social categorization generates an increase in identification with the values attached to the ingroup, from a perspective of social comparison. In line with this, Dumont et al. (2003) have shown that, a week after the 9/11 attacks, having European students think about a comparison to Arabs, versus to Americans, drastically changed their emotions and behavior with regard to the events (see Yzerbyt, 2006 for a review on social identities effects on emotions and behaviors).

Second, turning to a motivational approach, people may resort to justification to maintain a positive conception of the self (Higgins, 1987; Tajfel, 1974). This motivation is at the heart of numerous theories and concepts, such as the aversive racism, the justification-suppression model or the concept of internal motivation to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998). The internal motivation varies from person to person, that is, is linked to traits specific to the individual. An individual with strong internal motivation will have internalized the egalitarian norms to which he or she seeks to conform. This internal motivation may also be exacerbated in certain situations, for example if the individual is encouraged to enhance their sense of commitment or responsibility (Snyder, 1979).

Interestingly, even those who are intrinsically motivated to avoid racial prejudice may not only inadvertently express prejudice, but be perceived as prejudiced and even encourage others to express more prejudice. In a series of three studies, Jacoby-Senghor et al. (2021) investigated whether White Americans' written claims on belief in race equality could 'signal' their racial attitudes to ingroup perceivers. They showed that American white perceivers were able to detect participants' actual level of modern racism, regardless of participants' motivation to respond without prejudice. Also surprising, perceivers who read written claims of egalitarianism from participants who had high levels of prejudice, then reported higher personal levels of prejudice. This shows that even when explicitly claiming egalitarian values, one may be perceived as racist, and that racist individuals claiming egalitarianism may actually encourage prejudice expression among others. This urge to regulate the expression of prejudice has been the subject of abundant literature, examining cognitive and emotional processes in both interpersonal and social settings (Amodio et al., 2007; Monteith, 1993; Monteith et al., 2010).

Thirdly, and as mentioned above, justification may also stem from a motivation to leave a good impression on others (cf. impression management, self-presentation; Baumeister, 1982). An analysis in latent profile analysis by Bamberg and Verkuyten (2021) on a representative sample of German and Dutch participants, has highlighted the important role of both forms of motivation to respond without prejudice. Indeed, results revealed that a

majority of participants (approximately six out of ten) are driven by both a moderate internal and a moderate external motivation to respond without prejudice.

As is the case for internal motivation, external motivation to respond without prejudice varies between individuals (Plant & Devine, 1998), but may also be exacerbated by situational factors. Experimentation can therefore be used to create situations in which individuals are encouraged to monitor themselves: by producing an impression management environment, by sensitizing them to the perspective of others, to the presence of group norms, or by suggesting the presence of a group audience (Snyder, 1979). The rationale here is that individuals will follow social norms to a greater extent than they would in an anonymous context, and that this increased self-control will be particularly noticeable among people who are mainly externally motivated and among those who are high self-monitors.

Fourth, the weaponizing of ideologies can also be used to mobilize an audience. This interpretation implies a hiatus between the behavior of an individual alone and that of an individual who has an audience. This question has been studied extensively in psychology and beyond. For example, in 1956, Goffman described an individual's interactions with others as a form of representation in which the individual seeks to control the expression of himself and the impression he gives to others, almost depicting a show. In social psychology, works on deindividuation (Diener et al., 1980; Diener & Wallbom, 1976; Le Bon, 1895) have helped to clarify the impact of the group (through real presence or categorical salience) on individual behavior. Deindividuation refers to the decrease or blocking of an individual's self which can be caused by the fact of being part of a group (among others; Reicher et al., 1995). In the first conceptualizations, deindividuation was said to cause the fading of normative boundaries for the individual, potentially leading to primitive or violent urges (Le Bon, 1895; Zimbardo, 1969). Still, later work showed that the presence of a group is not causing the *disappearance* of norms and control, but rather the *emergence* of group norms and standards - whether said norms are violent, harmonious, or of any other kind. Confirming this idea, 'public self-awareness' manipulations, where one's sense of awareness is made salient in front of an audience, showed that the presence of an audience fosters compliance with the perceived norm of the audience (Froming et al., 1982; Reicher et al., 1995).

Next to the fostering of normative standards, audiences and groups also appeal to individuals' sense of self-presentation, what Klein and colleagues (2007) call social identity performances. Social identity performances are 'purposeful expression (or suppression) of behaviors relevant to norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity', in which individuals position themselves with respect to the group identity, allowing the audience to perceive the association between the behavior and the relevant social identity. This may be, for example, a Muslim woman who chooses to renounce to traditional Muslim clothing and to instead wear Western clothing, even around fellow Muslims, to reflect a changed sense of social identity. Such identity performances serve two functions: first, they allow individuals to define group borders and self-concept ('consolidation' function). Second, more relevant to the phenomenon at hand, they allow one to mobilize ingroup members into supporting specific political projects ('mobilization' function). Politicians or 'morale entrepreneurs' can thus claim gender equality as a patriotic value defended by themselves – or the ingroup, in

order to influence the audience into endorsing them as part of their self-definition (Klein et al., 2007).

Finally, we want to highlight that the presentation of separate processes does not mean that they necessarily occur in separate instances. For example, as pointed out by Sindic et al. (2018), in a mobilization context, political motives would have an influence on social identity performances, over and above socio-categorical processes.

4.5 How does malleability differ from motivated reasoning and moral framing?

A fifth question concerns the similarities that ideology malleability shares with other psychological processes. Motivated reasoning is a prime example. It encompasses individuals' strategies to arrive at a particular desired conclusion, while maintaining an illusion of objectivity (Kunda, 1990). These biased perceptions occur because motivated individuals search only for confirming information, or invest more resources in confirming information (Kunda, 1990). A prolific field of research on motivated reasoning has highlighted that individuals' goals affect how they recruit and evaluate evidence. In parallel, research on malleability of ideology has shown how antiegalitarian individuals' motives shape their selection of evidence. Antiegalitarian individuals shifting criteria for diversity and for free speech defense (Unzueta et al., 2012; White & Crandall, 2017) may for example be considered as a case of motivated reasoning.

Also concerned with an effort to persuade a target, the research on moral framing (Feinberg & Willer, 2019) shows commonalities with the work on the malleability of ideology directed at an audience. This line of inquiry is interested in the grounding of political messages in values and moral standards that appeal to a source to ensure effective persuasion. For example, Feinberg and Willer (2013) found that pro-environmental messaging emphasizing purity, a moral value that strongly appeals to conservatives, helped reduce the gap in environmental attitudes between liberals and conservatives. However, while moral reframing focuses mainly on the recipient of the message and its adherence to the reframed message, the malleability of ideology focuses mainly on the source of the message and its shift towards the value.

4.6 Is ideological malleability genuine?

The sixth area of concern relates to the genuine endorsement of ideology felt by individuals engaging in ideological malleability. Knowles et al. (2009) suggest that individuals 'genuinely' endorse the ideology when they engage in ideological malleability: 'It is important to note that for individuals to satisfy their intergroup motives, it is not sufficient for them merely to note the existence of a legitimizing ideology. Rather, they must also endorse it: Ideologies gain force when individuals come to believe in them' (p. 860).

In line with Knowles et al., research has shown that expressing support for an idea might foster an individual's belief in this idea (cf. saying is believing effect; Higgins, 1978). At the same time, some individuals likely engage in the exploitation of socio-political ideologies

they do not adhere to, especially to convince an audience. Therefore, we think that individuals' endorsement of the ideology might vary as a function of individuals' goals.

How to conceptualize what a 'genuine' belief means? How to measure forms of genuine 'belief'? Consider the example of Study 3B by Knowles and colleagues (2009). In this study, participants in the threat condition read that affirmative actions resulted in fewer economic opportunities for white people, while participants in the control condition did not receive this information. Results showed that high-SDO participants showed greater support for procedural justice and endorsed color-blindness more in the threat condition compared to control, while low-SDOs' scores remained unchanged. Based on this experiment, one could wonder whether high-SDO participants genuinely experience a stronger level of attachment to the ideology in this condition. To answer this question, researchers might turn to less controllable forms of attitude measures (such as approach-avoidance paradigms) or to subtle behavioral measurements. This would allow to examine whether participants' representations of the ideology are changed in less controlled settings. However, the interpretation of results produced in less controllable settings is challenging, as measured 'stereotypes' are influenced by various processes and may thus reflect motivations, social norms, etc. (e.g., Blair, 2002). Furthermore, Sindic et al. (2018) argue that 'the existence of a mobilization goal might trigger intra-psychic work affecting the cognitive representation of immigrants' (p. 233). They suggest that mobilization motives might affect the formation of prototypes in individuals' minds, for example affecting representations of 'gender equality'. Thus, the question of measuring 'genuine' beliefs is a complex one in more than one aspect.

Having reviewed the concept of ideological malleability, we will now focus on the two ideologies of interest in this dissertation: *laïcité* and gender equality. In chapter three, we will look at the evolution of *laïcité* in France and Belgium, from an egalitarian *laïcité* to the emergence of more restrictive forms of *laïcité*. Building from research in social sciences and psychology, we will also examine how *laïcité* is conceived by lay individuals and how it is applied, in particular with regard to Islam. In Chapter 4, we will examine the perceived incompatibility between Islam and gender equality. As for *laïcité*, we will consider how gender equality can be used in the service of anti-Islamic views.

Chapter 3.

Laïcité

Chapter 3. *Laïcité*

In modern-day France, as in many other countries, the levels of religious practice are plummeting, although this differs greatly depending on age group (Barthélemy & Michelat, 2007). Meanwhile, immigrants who have come from Islamic countries have brought along their own faith. In France, particularly, by the 1980s, the presence of Islam in the public space and a series of affairs, put *laïcité* to the forefront. Interestingly enough, the meaning of *laïcité* is a matter of debate: ‘We don't really know what it means anymore, but everyone thinks they know what it refers to without there being any need to discuss the description they give themselves’ (our translation, Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015, p.105). And beyond its meaning, its application is not agreed upon either (Hennette-Vauchez, 2016; Martin, 2015; Roy, 2015). Given the complexities of the situation, it is important to start by digging into the history of the notion.

1. *Laïcité* in France: a brief history

1.1 From fighting the dominance of Catholicism to fighting the mere presence of Islam?

The term ‘*laïcité*’ emerged at the end of the 18th century with the French revolution, at a time when freedom of thought was put to the forefront and catholic privileges were revoked. Just a few years later, the 1801 concordat between Napoleon Bonaparte and Pope Pius VII organized the relations between religions and the State in France and constituted a first step for French secularism. In fact, the concordat proposed a historic compromise between two antagonist institutions as the Catholic Church became subordinated to the State (Baubérot, 2012; Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015). In spite of this, tensions between the ‘Deux Frances’ – with one entrenched in Enlightenment humanism and the other one loyal to the Catholic Church – remained at the heart of public debates throughout the nineteenth century. The neutrality of public schools was established in 1882, but it was only in 1905, with the ‘law on the Separation from State and Church’, that France proclaimed a formal *laïcité* law. This law was largely promoted by the political left to counter the influence of Catholicism. The aim was to protect public institutions, especially schools, against religious influence and control (Barthélemy & Michelat, 2007). This law upholds essential principles of freedom of conscience, freedom of worship, equality among citizens regardless of their beliefs. It also entails the non-interference of the State in various religious and philosophical beliefs (often referred to as ‘neutrality’), and the reciprocal non-interference of the beliefs in the State affairs (Lindner, 2019). According to Lindner (2019), freedom of conscience stands higher in the hierarchy of these norms and is prioritized when *laïcité* norms conflict (e.g., adjusting school attendance times for religious events, paying chaplains).

At the end of the 1980s decade, the debate about *laïcité* experienced a form of resurgence. Indeed, several affairs around Muslims' integration spurred the emergence of a new conception of *laïcité* wherein the headscarf, and Islam, created more and more controversy. The September 2001 attacks against the US consolidated perceptions of threat, where Islam is perceived as a political religion that does not grant freedom to individuals (Lindner, 2019; Selby, 2011). Terrorism, sharia, and intolerance were often considered the expression of the genuine Koran and Islam, which clashed with secularism and separation of Church and State (Lindner, 2019; Modood et al., 2006; Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015). In addition to threatening political and mediatic contexts, individuals' sense of threat was probably reinforced by the religiosity of Muslim immigrants. In fact, the majority of them originated from societies where Islam is the prevailing religion, with comparatively high religiosity (Voas & Fleischmann, 2012).

In 2003, former president Jacques Chirac mandated the so-called Stasi Committee to examine the possibility of a law regulating the wearing of religious symbols in French schools. At this moment, sociological data already showed major support for a ban on the headscarf in public schools: 74% of French adults supported it (IFOP-Le Journal du Dimanche, 2003). This support has remained relatively constant since 1989 (75%), when the question arose in the public debate (IFOP, Le Monde, RTL & La Vie, 1989).

1.2 The Stasi report and the emergence of a new *laïcité*

The report of the Stasi Committee set the tone for subsequent laws and deeply framed the discourse around the headscarf in subsequent years (Baubérot, 2012; Selby, 2011). Yet, according to various sociologists, the Committee succumbed to a number of caveats. Jean Baubérot (2008) – himself a member of the commission – claimed that the process had been one-sided. First, the Committee only interviewed teachers in favor of the ban. According to him, their testimonies, however disturbing, were accepted unquestioningly. What is more, the Committee failed to hear other witnesses emanating from the many schools where the headscarf was not an issue or where it was resolved through dialogue.

Second, women wearing the headscarf were barely heard: some sociologists report that the Stasi Committee refused to call in women wearing the headscarf for an interview. Others report that the Committee only interviewed two of them on the very last day, at a time when the committee had established that their testimonies were the result of influence and not that of rational decision-making (Al-Saji, 2018; Delphy, 2006; Selby, 2011). Third, the Committee is said to have based its report on international political contexts where the headscarf is forced on women, such as Iran or pre-colonial Algeria, largely neglecting the impact of the distinct socio-political contexts (Delphy, 2006). As a result, while the Committee formally stated that Islam and secularism are not necessarily opposed, its members were convinced that there was a serious danger stemming from Islam and that it had to be stopped (Baubérot, 2008). Furthermore, the report presented *laïcité*, and particularly its dimension of neutrality, as an antidote against two main shortcomings associated with

Islam, namely, its political posture and its sexist nature. The report also established *laïcité* as a tenet of national identity upon which all citizens must work (Lindner, 2019).

Following the publication of this report, the French representatives voted the law banning the wear of religious signs in schools in 2004. This law embodies a newer version of *laïcité*, in which the requirements of religious neutrality are no longer limited to the public State representatives (e.g., deputies, teachers), but in many situations, to private individuals, such as users of public pools, students, pupils, or even users of public beaches (Hennette-Vauchez, 2016). Indeed, following the 2004 law, the wearing of religious symbols was restricted in a growing number of places, in the name of *laïcité*. Interestingly, the mere fact that representatives of the State should dress in a neutral fashion was not discussed, although this approach was rather singular (Martin, 2015). In countries such as the United Kingdom or Canada, public institutions grant facilities to state representatives to wear religious symbols (e.g., Sikh turban or beard; Hennette-Vauchez, 2016; Martin, 2015).

Various researchers in sociology warned against an emphasis on neutrality at the expense of freedom of beliefs and non-discrimination, particularly for Muslim individuals. They claimed that neutrality was elevated to an end in itself, when it should be a means to equality (Baubérot, 2012; Jacquemain, 2014).

To this day, policies about *laïcité* appear relatively black and white in commission reports and in their legal representations. However, in practice, unspoken compromises abound, such as giving parents notice of the menu to allow opting out in case pork is served (Selby, 2011). Nevertheless, politically, two opposite sides seem to face. On one side, the defenders of a more repressive version of *laïcité*, often called racist or islamophobic. On the other, the proponents of a more inclusive version of *laïcité*, often depicted as naïve and excessively tolerant towards Islamism (Martin, 2015).

In France, the first significant study on *laïcité* (Barhtélémy & Michelat, 2007) confirmed a political divide on this issue: representative survey data revealed that among left-wing French, higher tolerance towards immigrants was associated with higher attachment to *laïcité*. Among right-wing French, the relation was reversed: attachment to *laïcité* was associated with lower tolerance towards immigrants. Since then, studies in social psychology have allowed a better understanding of conceptions of *laïcité* and their relation to intergroup variables, particularly tolerance towards Muslims.

2. Social psychology research on *laïcité*

2.1 A secular critique of Islam

Although most of the social psychology research into secularism has focused on France, a study carried out as early as 2012 in Germany (Imhoff & Recker, 2012) has reported important results on secularism, Islam and prejudice. Authors aimed to differentiate between two separate dimensions: ‘Islamoprejudice’, and ‘secular critique of Islam’. The

Islamoprejudice dimension took up important themes from the stereotypes and beliefs associated with Islam: the belief that Islam is unprogressive, homogeneous, violent, and political. It also aimed to capture the refusal of criticism from Islam against the West, as well as the hostility and discrimination towards Muslims.

Second, the dimension of ‘secular critique of Islam’ tapped into various ideas. First, it measured criticisms made towards Islam: critics about the gender relations in Islam, about the Islamist fundamentalism, and about the relation between religion and State in Islamic countries. This dimension also measured a desire to critique all religions in the face of cultural relativism, with items such as ‘As with any other religion one must criticize Islam and its representative when they interfere with non-religious issues’. In a first study collected on a German student sample, results showed that the dimension of secular critique, unlike Islamoprejudice, was not related to prejudice (explicit or implicit via IAT), nor to the opposition to the building of a mosque. However, it was related to a smaller level of religiosity. In a second study, authors relied on a bigger sample to explore relations between the two scale dimensions and RWA, SDO, and religiosity. First, they found that Secular Critique of Islam was related to lower levels of RWA, and lower levels of religiosity. Then, authors aimed to examine whether Secular Critique might be used as justification for prejudice. Specifically, they hypothesized that Secular Critique and Islamoprejudice would be particularly correlated among high-SDO participants. Their results confirmed this hypothesis: Islamoprejudice was a significant predictor of Secular Critique for high-SDO participants, but not for low-SDO participants.

This paper provides an interesting addition to the current measures of prejudice, often unspecified as to the target, (i.e. ‘immigrants’) and allows establishing an important fact: a critique of Islam does not equate a presence of prejudice. Furthermore, this data does provide evidence that some criticisms of Islam are racially charged. However, the paper does not explore the potential existence of distinct forms of secularism and how they hinge on biases towards Islam.

2.2 Measuring *laïcité(s)*

In France, social psychological research on *laïcité* may be divided into three main lines of research. The first line of research consists in the attempt to delineate the psychological conceptions associated with *laïcité* via scale validation of the concept. In a paper aiming to identify French people’s attitudes towards the French republicanism model, Kamiejski et al. (2012) tested a scale capturing dimensions of republicanism and examined intergroup correlates. The scale revealed the presence of two dimensions named ‘citoyenneté’ (citizenship) and ‘*laïcité*’. Looking at the items, however, it appears that the ‘*laïcité*’ factor reflected the newer conception of *laïcité* rather than the historical 1905 conception, with items such as ‘As far as possible, religious practices should be private and not public’. As to the ‘citizenship’ factor, it tapped egalitarian approaches towards diversity with a decategorization strategy, closer to the idea of historic *laïcité*. Results showed that the two identified dimensions revealed opposite relations with concepts of multiculturalism and prejudice. Specifically, the dimension capturing new *laïcité* was associated with more

prejudice towards North-Africans and less adherence towards multiculturalism, while the reverse was true for the ‘citizenship’ dimension. This first empirical work paved the way for a series of psychology studies on the association of *laïcité* and intergroup relations in France.

Later, Roebroek and Guimond (2017) expanded upon the research initiated by Kamiejski et al. (2012), validating a scale specially designed to capture subdimensions of *laïcité* in France. They partly reused items from Kamiejski and colleagues (2012) which measured two distinct forms of *laïcité*, and added as a third dimension capturing individuals’ attachment to *laïcité* without apriori definition (e.g. ‘*laïcité* is close to my heart’). As expected, factor analyses revealed three conceptions of *laïcité*. A first dimension, which authors named historic *laïcité*, encompassed notions of equality of treatment, freedom of conscience, and individualism (e.g., ‘Every citizen must be free to practice the religion of their choice’; ‘French society is first and foremost made up of citizens, not communities’). A second dimension, named new *laïcité*, captured the preference for a privacy of religions, as well as a reluctance for the public funding of religions (e.g., ‘I think it’s only right that visible religious symbols should be banned from state schools in France’; ‘I am opposed to the government funding the construction of religious buildings’). The third factor of the scale, named ‘attachment to *laïcité*’ tapped individuals’ adherence to the principle in itself (‘*Laïcité* is an important principle’), and not a real conception per se. Similar to what Kamiejski and colleagues observed, the authors found that new *laïcité* went along with prejudice towards immigrants and to social dominance. Opposite relations emerged for historic *laïcité*. Still, the study came with an important caveat. First, because their sample comprised only pupils or students, the authors’ claim regarding general attitudes of French people towards *laïcité* should be taken with caution, especially because attachment to *laïcité* carries various levels of importance and various meanings across age groups (Barthélémy & Michelat, 2007). Despite this limitation and the need to replicate these findings in other samples, this study provided important initial evidence that several dimensions of *laïcité* may well coexist in French people’s minds, with very distinct implications for intergroup relations.

Again, with the goal to measure *laïcité* in France, Cohu and colleagues (2018) created and tested another scale of *laïcité*, this time finding four dimensions, rather than two found by Roebroek and Guimond (2017). While some of their dimensions somehow align, both scales capture unique dimensions that are absent in the other scale. Specifically, the ‘public expression of religious beliefs’ of Cohu et al. is close to the measure of new *laïcité* by Roebroek & Guimond (2017), as it includes items such as ‘expression one’s religion in public is not contrary to the principle of *laïcité*’. Yet, new *laïcité* from Roebroek and Guimond (2017) also encompasses the opposition to public funding of religions. The second dimension found by Cohu and colleagues, ‘equality between religious beliefs’ (e.g., ‘as a principle of *laïcité*, the State should not be more receptive to certain religious faiths than others’), partly reflects the dimension of historic *laïcité* even though it does not include items on individualism/decategorization present in Roebroek & Guimond (2017). The two other dimensions of ‘protection of religious practices’ (e.g., ‘as a principle of *laïcité*, the State must necessarily protect the different religions’) and ‘religious neutrality of the State and its

institutions’ (‘a representative of the State must refrain from putting forward any religious affiliation as a principle of *laïcité*’) seem to be unique to this scale.

Turning to psychosocial correlates, Cohu and colleagues found that the dimension of ‘equality between religious beliefs’ correlated negatively with prejudice towards North Africans. This pattern matched the negative correlation found between historic *laïcité* and prejudice. They also found that the dimension capturing an agreement with the public expression of religious practices and beliefs, had a small negative relation with prejudice. Again, this relation somehow echoes results by Roebroek and Guimond on new *laïcité* and prejudice. The other two dimensions had no or weak links with intergroup variables.

To summarize, this paper expands the understanding of people’s conceptions of *laïcité* in France. In addition, authors explored adherence to the subdimensions based on participants’ religiosity. Although significant, we will not report them here. The paper provides the basis to identify dimensions of *laïcité* contained in legislation that may not have been represented in Kamiejski et al.’s. (2012) and Roebroek and Guimond’s (2017) item selection. However, we may question the relevance of the four distinct factors. Upon close reading, it becomes clear that items within the same dimensions are formulated in a very similar way. This raises concern about whether the intra-factor proximity and the inter-factor distinctiveness are the result of a methodological artefact.

2.3 *Laïcité* as a social norm

Next to the measurement of the dimensions underlying *laïcité*, a second line of research explored the normative force of specific forms of *laïcité* in France. Results showed that a normative climate of new *laïcité* may foster negative attitudes or discrimination towards minorities. Specifically, in a research by Anier et al. (2018), participants read a vignette about the university norm (new *laïcité* vs. historic *laïcité*), and then, a fictional survey about the integration of foreign students (high vs. low adoption of and identification with French culture). Next, participants filled out a measure of discriminatory behavior in which they had to assign a position in a university organization hierarchy to a series of individuals of various origins. The authors hypothesized that the level of discrimination would be higher in the low adoption/identification condition, especially under the induction of a norm of new *laïcité*. In line with the authors’ hypothesis, results showed that the norm of new *laïcité* can foster discriminatory behaviors when individuals perceive a weak adoption of the host culture or a low identification with the host nation.

2.4 *Laïcité* as a malleable ideology

A third line of research aimed to capture how individuals may express adherence to *laïcité* depending on intergroup contexts. For example, Nugier et al. (2016) explored how individuals’ support for new *laïcité* may serve as a justification to derogate and put pressure on a Muslim woman claiming her religious identity. Grounded in the model of suppression-justification (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), authors reasoned that prejudiced participants would rely on the violation of the norm of new *laïcité* to justify and express negative attitudes

against the target. To test this hypothesis, they exposed participants to a vignette wherein a woman was either claiming and expressing her religious identity (counter-normative to new *laïcité*) or claiming that one should not express their religious identity (normative with new *laïcité*). As expected, their study revealed that when facing a Muslim target asserting her religious affiliation, participants' prejudice was related to higher desire to put pressure on the target. Furthermore, they found that this relation was explained by a higher adherence to new *laïcité*. On the contrary, in the normative condition, participants' level of prejudice was not associated with support for *laïcité*. This illustrated how prejudiced participants embrace new *laïcité* differently across scenarios. In a second study, participants read a vignette including either a Muslim woman vs. a Catholic woman expressing their religious belief. Results showed that prejudiced participants devalued and put more normative pressure on the Muslim target, compared to the Catholic target. Surprisingly though, they couldn't find any mediation effect by new *laïcité* adherence.

In line with that previous study, Roebroeck and Guimond (2018) examined the hypothesis of the strategic use of color-blindness and *laïcité* as social justifications in three studies in France. Specifically, in an effort to replicate findings by Knowles et al. (2009) on malleability of color-blindness, they intended to examine whether high-SDO individuals would strategically embrace an egalitarian ideology in the face of intergroup threat. They tested this hypothesis on color-blindness and *laïcité*. In a first study, they compared teachers working in *vocational* high schools (devalued programs with higher rates of immigrants), to teachers working in *general* programs schools. They used the nature of the schools as a proxy for intergroup threat. Results revealed that among high-SDO teachers, those working in vocational schools reported higher attachment to *laïcité* compared to teachers working in general programs with a smaller portion of immigrants. Interestingly, they did not find this interaction for color-blindness. Regrettably, authors did not measure intergroup threat to confirm the underlying mechanism. They also did not measure and/or report results on new *laïcité*, although a shift in new *laïcité* would show a shift in the content of the ideology.

In their second study, they experimentally induced intergroup threat on a student sample. Participants read a vignette about Turkey's possible entry into the European Union, either emphasizing consequences for the labor market (realistic threat condition), cultural and religious differences (symbolic threat condition), or simply presenting a brief history of the EU (control condition). They found that participants in the symbolic threat condition were more attached to *laïcité* than participants in the other two conditions. Authors also found an interaction by SDO, whereby high-SDO participants expressed higher attachment to *laïcité* in the realistic condition, while low-SDO participants remained constant in their attachment to *laïcité* across the three conditions. Again, they did not find this interaction between SDO and condition on color-blindness. In conclusion, this experimental study was not able to support the presence of a malleability of color-blindness in France, but points to a malleability of *laïcité*. Regrettably, once again, authors reported results in attachment but not outcomes on the two dimensions of *laïcité*. This prevents insights into the potential shift in the *content* of the ideology.

In a third study, authors tested the same question using correlation data, this time relying on a representative sample of the French population. They examined the association between the conception of new *laïcité* and other socio-psychological variables such as prejudice towards immigrants and Muslims, political orientation, social dominance orientation, and intergroup threat. With respect to new *laïcité*, results were rather surprising. Authors reported a small negative relation with social dominance, while no correlation emerged with (right wing) political orientation, nor with prejudice towards immigrants or Muslims. However, using hierarchical regression analyses, they found that new *laïcité* positively predicted prejudice towards Muslims and towards immigrants, over and above demographical variables (e.g., education), political orientation, and SDO. Moreover, turning to interaction analyses, they found a significant SDO by symbolic threat interaction predicting support for new *laïcité*. High-SDO participants adhered more to new *laïcité* when they reported higher threat, and low-SDO participants remained constant in their support regardless of the perceived threat. Overall, this set of studies strongly suggests the existence of a weaponization of *laïcité* in France by antiegalitarian participants facing threatening intergroup contexts. However, no experimental study has tested (or reported) results on the malleability of new *laïcité*.

Meanwhile, Troian et al. (2018) aimed at looking at the justification function of *laïcité* in France. They validated a scale of secularism using Social Representations methods comprising two dimensions: ‘new secularism’ and ‘traditional secularism’. Yet, the construction of the scale yielded unsettling results. For instance, although authors acknowledged that ‘this new conception of secularism was the basis for the 2004 act forbidding visible religious signs among pupils in French public schools’ (p.97), the fact that their item ‘school is the place where secularism is taught and where religious signs shall not be seen’ loaded on the ‘traditional secularism’ factor, rather than the ‘new secularism’ factor was not discussed. Similarly, the item ‘Secularism protects public places from religion’, loaded on the ‘traditional secularism’ factor. Nevertheless, authors found, a positive association between their ‘new secularism’ dimension and prejudice towards Arabic people. They presented their results as corroborating the idea that secularism acts as a legitimizing myth for the expression of prejudice among high-SDO individuals.

3. *Laïcité* in Belgium

3.1 Pillars structuring social and political life

The history of Belgian *laïcité* is a history of compromises and counter-powers (Dobbelaere, 2010). Upon Belgium's independence in 1830, Catholics and Liberals sat around the table to organize the State. After a period of alliance, the more radical Liberals, under the influence of anticlerical masonic lodges, sought to secede and restrict the influence of the Church in the country. Liberals first voted a law restricting the impact of the Church in charitable work and poor relief (Dobbelaere, 2010; Martin, 2015). In 1879, each municipality was legally bound to settle at least one school where religious instruction was not compulsory. In reaction, the Church established its own private school system. This resulted in the creation of two ‘pillars’: liberals and Catholics each aimed to propose their

own services to encourage social life, and to limit the influence of the other pillar (e.g., protect the catholic from the anti-Catholic secularized environment). Since then, the socialist initiatives (e.g., trade unions) have led to the creation of a third, socialist pillar. Schools, medical insurances, trade unions, middle-field organizations, universities, youth movements, and even political parties, are organized by (some of) these pillars, financed by the State. Today, it should be noted that Belgian society is still heavily grounded in this idea of pluralism: acknowledged religious beliefs (and their associated services) are subsidized by the State. Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, Protestantism-Evangelicalism, Islam, and *laïcité* beliefs receive government funding. As can be seen, Belgium acknowledges *laïcité* ('organized *laïcité*') as a proper belief. In the next section, we will see that this can be the source of confusion.

3.2 *Laïcité* in Belgium: a nebulous concept

Thus, the question as to what *laïcité* is today in Belgium is an intricate one. In Belgium, the term '*laïcité*' can alternatively refer to three things. First, it can refer to the management of religious diversity, based on the legal principles of neutrality of the State, separation of Church and State, and freedom of conscience. Second, it can refer to the acknowledged 'belief' of *laïcité* receiving money from the State ('organized *laïcité*'). Third, it can actually refer to the system of beliefs attached to the organized *laïcité*. Indeed, according to a survey conducted in 2008, 0.8% of Belgians said they identify with organized *laïcité* as their belief (Baromètre du religieux, 2008). To add to the complexity, the organized *laïcité* often comes across as advocating for atheism and is sometimes confused with it. This confusion about what *laïcité* is might potentially cause low levels of attachment to this principle in Belgium.

From a legal point of view, and similarly to France, Belgium applies principles of separation and neutrality. Yet, there certainly remains a number of grey areas with regard to Belgian *laïcité* (Jacquemain, 2014; Martin, 2015). First, with regard to the separation of State and Church, more specifically the funding of beliefs, some supporters of *laïcité* argue that religions should not receive subsidies (Schreiber, 2014). Others argue that funding may help prevent forms of undesirable forms of funding and fundamentalist influences (Le Vif, 2017). Nevertheless, the reluctance to provide State funding may reflect different motivations: a desire to grant less space for religions in general, for Catholicism, or for Islam. Second, the separation is often described as 'not total', due to the regular attendance of the royal family to a number of official catholic ceremonies.

Third, the relationship of the State with Catholicism on the one hand, and with Islam on the other, has proved disputed. Although neutrality should equate to the absence of privilege (or disadvantage) for any faith from the State, according to Schreiber (2014), the Catholic Church is granted a number of privileges. In parallel, certain forms of state control over Islam are controversial. For example, in October 2022, the Belgian minister of Justice decided that the 'Executive of the Muslims of Belgium' would not be recognized as the official representative of Muslims of Belgium and thereby deleted its funding, after condemning a lack of transparency and democracy (7 sur 7, 2023). Such control by the State on official religious authorities, while being hardly reconcilable with the principle of State neutrality, is

deemed acceptable if considered necessary and proportionate (Schreiber, 2014). More generally, Corinne Torrekens acknowledges a form of difficulty by the Belgian State to apprehend Islam and its funding: ‘in Belgium, at least in the French-speaking part, there is an antagonism between the condemnation of Salafism and Wahhabism – which are not the Belgian Islam of tomorrow that I would like to see - and the difficulty the public authorities have in supporting initiatives by Muslim intellectuals’ (our translation, La Libre Belgique, 2017).

Another grey area concerns the application of *laïcité* to religious symbols. At the moment, policies in Belgium concerning religious and cultural diversity differ greatly across regions, going from blunt assimilationism to forms of multiculturalism. Many institutions (e.g., schools) apply a form of *laissez-faire* allowing for pragmatism or debate, and sometimes leave decisions to the judiciary (Modood et al., 2006). A case in point is the decision of the Constitutional Court to authorize higher education institutions to determine whether to allow or ban religious signs: seven students had introduced an appeal contesting the headscarf ban in their local higher education institution (La Libre Belgique, 2020). Clearly, the enforcement of *laïcité* is a hotly debated issue, despite the absence of a clear state policy on the public expression of religious symbols. As is the case in France, the argument of gender equality is often brought to the fore and the exploitation by the right or the far right has been criticized (Jacquemain, 2014).

Albeit not directly examining *laïcité*, Saroglou et al. (2009) have examined the attitudes towards the headscarf among Belgians. In two correlational studies, they found that subtle prejudice towards foreigners was associated with more anti-veil attitudes. Anti-veil attitudes were also associated with ‘literal anti-religious thinking’, a variable measuring rejection of religions, perceived as irrelevant, taking advantage of people’s gullibility. These results suggest that attitudes towards the headscarf may both stem from racist and anti-religious motives.

In spite of the numerous debates around the concept of *laïcité* and the very unique approach to *laïcité* in Belgium, no research has to our knowledge explored the psychological conceptions of *laïcité* and their correlates among the Belgian population. This is one of the goals of this research.

Chapter 4.

Gender equality

Chapter 4. Gender equality

1. Gender equality and Islam: a perceived incongruency

Numerous sets of data concur to show that American or European samples evaluate Arabs and Muslims rather negatively. They place them alternately into the middle warmth, middle competence category or in the low warmth-low competence category (Cuddy et al., 2009; Fiske, 2018; Fiske et al., 2002). Sociologists also concur to show that they are perceived as particularly sexist, patriarchal, and incompatible with feminism and gender equality (Akkerman, 2015; Cuadrado et al., 2021; Gianettoni & Roux, 2010; Howard, 2012). Additionally, Islam, as a whole, comes across to Westerners as a misogynistic religion (Benelli et al., 2006; Delphy, 2006; Duits & van Zoonen, 2006; Fernandez, 2009; Gianettoni & Roux, 2010; Howard, 2012). Notably, work by Edward Said (1995) on ‘orientalism’, that is, the perception and distorted construction of the East by the West, is often considered the start of the critical examination of the perception of the East by the West. He explored a wide range of themes, such as stereotyping of the East as violent, patriarchal, backward, and primitive, as well as imperialism, or the exaggeration of differences between cultures (Afshar, 2008; Said, 1995). Quantitative data in psychology tends to confirm these claims. For instance, in a study on adults from the US, Moss et al. (2019) found that participants believed that Muslims value gender equality less than Christians. Turning to Belgian participants, a study from Kuppens and Yzerbyt (2012) showed that Belgian participants perceived the statements ‘women can go their own way’ and ‘women can determine their own future’ to be less applicable to Muslim women in Belgium, compared to non-Muslim women in Belgium. Moreover, they found that female participants, whose social identity of women had been activated, reported higher appraisals of threat and negative emotions (i.e., fear) towards Muslims, compared to female participants whose identity as a woman had not been made salient.

These negative perceptions have important consequences for intergroup relations. For example, Moss et al. (2019) found that the perception that Muslims do not value women’s rights is associated with higher levels of prejudice towards Muslims. Interestingly, experimentally inducing a belief that Muslims support gender equality to the same extent as other religious groups in the US, led to a reduction of prejudice and of social distance. This was explained by an increased perception of shared values.

2. Are gender equality and Islam really at odds?

Are Islam and gender equality, or even feminism, ‘incompatible’? Although it may sound surprising to some (Ali, 2012), various forms of Muslim feminisms exist around the world. Their goals vary across cultures and political contexts. Some focus on theological arguments and challenge the interpretation made by men theologians, others aim at tackling political

forms of inequality (Djelloul, 2013; Moghadam, 2002). Yet, one might wonder whether differences in gender equality attitudes exist between Islamic societies, or Muslim individuals, and others. In a 2010 poll, the belief that men and women should have equal rights received almost total support in several countries around the world, *including* various predominantly Muslim societies such as Turkey and Lebanon. However, this survey also showed that five of the six countries in which the support for equal rights for women and men was the lowest were predominantly Muslim countries (Pew Research Center, 2010). In a similar vein, analyzing data from the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey, Norris & Inglehart (2002) found that societies with a Muslim majority (7 countries included) reported lower means of gender equality, measured in terms of gender roles attitudes.

These results raise the question of measurement. Indeed, indices measuring gender equality have been criticized for their emphasis on some dimensions over others (e.g., the Gender Inequality Index; Permanyer, 2013). Furthermore, various sociologists have asserted that aspects present in the Western culture, such as nudity, porn, sexualization, albeit often presented as women's 'agentic' emancipation, are still forms of domination. In this sense, Krivenko (2012) argues that 'The burden [on women] would simply be of a different kind: instead of covering themselves in order not to provoke men as in the conservative Islamic discourse, [Western] women are required (even if it is not a legal requirement) to appeal to this men's desire by dressing, appearing sexually attractive to men.' (Krivenko, 2012, p.25). Some have gone as far as to say that categorizing racialized foreigners as more sexist than the ingroup is a racist process (Gianettoni & Roux, 2010). Such comments reflect the struggle to find a sound balance between a biased form of universalism where comparisons are inappropriate, and a blinded cultural relativism whereby no comparisons can be made.

Nonetheless, we argue that the aim of the present thesis is not to establish whether Islamic societies or Muslim individuals actually achieve lower levels of gender equality. Rather, our aim is to investigate ideological malleability, which implies that antiegalitarians denounce the sexism (whether justified or not) of outgroups (in particular Muslims) when they would not do so in a situation where this intergroup context is not present or when the outgroup is not seen as threatening. As such, this is a measurable phenomenon that goes beyond one's subjectivity.

3. Gender equality as a malleable ideology: an overview

The weaponization of gender equality would go back to colonial times. Indeed, the discourse was deployed to support colonial policies in a disingenuous way. To illustrate this, Lyons (2014) reported how Lord Cromer (a British consul ruling over Egypt between 1883 and 1907) relied on the emerging European feminism to justify colonial policies, while also taking part in the creation of the ‘men’s league for opposing women’s suffrage’ in England. (Lyons, 2014; Volpp, 2001). Lyons further explained that this strategic use of gender-friendly rhetoric has also granted support for wars. This observation is shared by Bader (2023) who explained that the Bush administration built on a preoccupation for Afghan women, presenting them as victims of oppression perpetrated by dangerous Afghan men. Various specialists also accounted of what is coined ‘dévoilement’ (the process of forcibly removing a woman’s headscarf) during the Algerian War, as a political form of domination and colonial project (Al-Saji, 2018; Bentouhami, 2018). This exploitation of gender equality by politicians or institutions to push for an anti-immigration political agenda (e.g., war) has been labeled



Figure 1. Poster from the 5th office of the 10th military region dating from 1956 or 1958, Algeria. <https://www.nouvelobs.com/histoire/20220223.OBS54845/comment-les-algeriennes-luttaient-pour-leur-emancipation-au-temps-de-la-colonisation.html>

‘femonationalism’ by Farris (2017), who defined it as a ‘peculiar encounter between anti-Islam agendas and the emancipatory rhetoric of women’s rights’ (p. 2).

In France and Belgium, this rhetoric came to the fore during the headscarf debates that began in 1989, and escalated with the banning of religious symbols in schools. Although the secularism of 1905 was not at all thought of as the linchpin of gender equality (Baubérot, 2012; Bentouhami, 2018), today, in France, gender equality is presented as the natural consequence of the application of *laïcité* (Bentouhami, 2018). Indeed, the nouvelle *laïcité*, i.e., new secularism, in particular, is very much intertwined with gender equality. Several authors contend that passing the 2004 law banning religious signs would hardly have been possible if the headscarf had not been so inextricably associated with gender oppression. The arguments put forth during the parliamentary debate that took place during around the adoption of the law predominantly revolved around women’s rights (Al-Saji, 2018; Benelli et al., 2006; Delphy, 2006). Muslim women wearing the headscarf were presented as confused women necessitating help, some might even say liberation (Afshar, 2008). In accordance with this view, the Stasi report mentions that ‘equality between men and women (...) is an important element of the republican contract and the State could not remain passive in front of any damage to this principle’ (Stasi, 2003). The report served to foster the notion that gender equality is inherently perceived as an intrinsic value of the Republic (Al-Saji, 2018), and that the French State is a guardian of gender equality and domestic safety (Bentouhami, 2018; Hennette-Vauchez, 2016). In the context of the 2004 law, several political figures contended that the headscarf created a breach in the principle of gender equality, although this principle had never been their main concern (Benelli et al., 2006; Delphy, 2006). Simply put, this commitment to gender equality appeared to be primarily instrumental.

The political situation in France sparked significant criticism from social scientists, directed not only at France but also at the Western world as a whole, notably rooted in Said’s work on Orientalism (Said, 1995). Scholars described a form of bias, a double standard whereby Eastern forms of sexism attract political attention, whereas sexist oppressions in the Western culture remain largely ignored by institutions. The white Western world would portray Muslim women as subjected to severe patriarchal oppression, subjugated to male figures within their families (Howard, 2012). Simultaneously, it would position Western women as emancipated individuals, residing in a Western society ostensibly free from systemic sexism. Instances of sexism or sexual violence within Western contexts would often be attributed to the actions of a minority of deviant individuals, rather than being recognized as inherent elements of a patriarchal system (Benelli et al., 2006). Forms of sexism that manifest in Western societies, such as the injunction to porno-chic (Duits & van Zoonen, 2006) or the objectification of women, would too often be concealed under the guise of women’s emancipation (Al-Saji, 2018; Delphy, 2006; Fernandez, 2009; Howard, 2012; Roux et al., 2006). Conversely, incidents in the East or in immigrant communities would be reflective of their patriarchal culture (Delphy, 2006; Fernandez, 2009; Volpp, 2001).

Volpp (2001) further elaborated on the aforementioned bias: ‘The idea that ‘other’ women are subjected to extreme patriarchy is developed in relation to the vision of Western women

as secular, liberated, and in total control of their lives. But the assumption that Western women enjoy complete liberation is not grounded in material reality. Rather, Western women's liberation is a product of discursive self-representation' (Volpp, 2001, p. 1198). Importantly, Volpp (2001) still insisted that she does not imply that one should refrain from criticizing patriarchies in other communities. Rather, she stressed the necessity of a careful examination of geopolitical contexts. Similarly, Delphy (2006) recognized that the headscarf had historically constituted a marker of women's oppression, but stressed that the issue lied in the fact that it has become the *sole* sign of women's oppression.

This weaponization of gender equality was singled out beyond the French borders. For instance, the Partij Voor Vrijheid, the Vlaams Belang, and the Dansk Folkeparti (respectively, Dutch, Belgian, and Danish far-right parties), have also shown unprecedented interest in gender equality. These parties signified their opposition to 'backward' cultures, particularly Islam, while offering limited attention on initiatives supporting women's rights (Akkerman, 2015).

Two key elements challenge the legitimacy of gender equality as justification for banning headscarves. First, ethnographic accounts uncover a multiplicity of reasons for wearing the headscarf. These motivations encompass an expression of devotion to god, a manifestation of religious identity, an assertion of independence, or an engagement in feminist discourse that challenges prevailing male perceptions of female sexuality, often centered on the physical body (Fernandez, 2009; Lyons, 2014). Second, from a legal standpoint, views on the legitimacy of a prohibition of the headscarf vary. In several instances, the European Court of Human Rights has come out in favor of a ban (Krivenko, 2012), as the French State. However, this same rationale does not meet with unanimous support. The authors highlight a paradox in restricting women's access to certain places, potentially stigmatizing and isolating them, all under the pretense of gender equality (Bentouhami, 2018; Howard, 2012; Krivenko, 2012; Selby, 2011).

Finally, we note that in other parts of Europe, anti-immigration parties do not all rely on similar forms of gender rhetoric. In Austria, for example, the far-right party capitalizes on the protection of women, as child-bearers and essential elements of a family policy against the threat of immigration (Akkerman, 2015). Clearly, the use of gender rhetoric is shaped by the specific normative context.

4. Social psychology research on Gender equality malleability

The question of the mobilization of gender equality among anti-egalitarians, those opposed to immigration and/or Islam, has received extremely little attention in social psychology research. There have, however, been a few correlational studies looking at the association between attitudes towards the headscarf and attitudes towards gender equality. In many cases, the results did not highlight any relationship between attitudes towards the headscarf and progressive ideologies (e.g., Gianettoni & Roux, 2010; Helbling, 2014). A study by Sarrasin (2016) found that the opposition to the full veil in public spaces was

unrelated to three of the four gender equality measures. This outcome could be attributed to a range of factors. First, the difficulty to find suitable measures for assessing gender equality, particularly considering the resistance associated with the term ‘feminist’ (Fitz et al., 2012; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Second, the complexity arising from the intercultural nature of the hypothesis, consisting of the denunciation of sexism in other societies, is a tricky matter. Third, the absence of relation between sexism and attitudes towards a headscarf ban could be indicative of the diversity of positions held by feminists in relation to the headscarf: a ‘pro-choice’ tends to be opposed to a ban, while a universalist approach to feminism is more inclined to support such a prohibition.

Worryingly, in a study on German participants, van der Noll (2014) found that the willingness to restrict Muslims’ religious civil liberties (e.g., Muslim women wearing headscarves in the public sphere; Islamic education in public schools) was not only present among participants having high levels of prejudice towards Muslims, but also among a substantial portion of participants reporting explicitly positive attitudes towards Muslims. These findings illustrate the normativity of Muslims’ civil liberties restrictions, and suggest a significant support for the rhetoric built around it.

In essence, the core of anti-Islam prejudice seems to be intertwined with the question of gender equality. Studies have revealed that Westerners tend to perceive Muslims as particularly sexist. In contrast, many in Western societies would view the West as free from sexism, attributing instances of sexism to individual actions rather than systemic patriarchy. Moreover, scholars assert that gender equality has been strategically weaponized against Islam and Muslims, dating back to colonial times. More recently, the concept of gender equality has been extensively invoked to support the prohibition of headscarves and religious symbols in public spaces. However, despite these developments, there remains a notable gap in research concerning how the principle of gender equality is utilized to rationalize anti-Islam prejudice.

Chapter 5.

Anti-sexism as weaponized discourse against Muslim immigration: A view from social psychology

For fifty years, in general, overt expressions of prejudice and negative stereotyping have substantially declined. Social norms have evolved and racism is now perceived as something wrong or immoral (Whitley & Kite, 2013), and is illegal. In spite of this, it is clear that racist prejudice has not disappeared. Stemming from culturally and historically racist contexts such as the colonial era, it still shapes intergroup relations. Nevertheless, as our egalitarian norms make prejudice undesirable, prejudice is now only expressed in subtle ways and when they can be justified (Crandall & Eshleman, 2013; Knowles et al., 2009). In an attempt to justify racial prejudice, gender equality ideology has been brought to the debate to legitimize a racist discourse against Muslims across different European countries. Thus, politicians who hardly ever showed any sympathies for or even blatantly opposed to gender-rights movements tend to profess gender-based arguments to support an anti-Muslim agenda. Threatened by the sexist and illiberal Islam, the ‘European egalitarian culture’ must be protected, and reasserted. Interestingly, this stands in contrast to other European countries where politicians have both openly anti-gender and anti-immigration rhetoric. This performative and opportunistic support for the gender movement (and the LGBTQ+ movement) on the part of politicians has been pointed out by several authors, in France, in Europe or in the world (Al-Saji, 2018; Delphy, 2006; Derriche, 2015; Farris, 2017; Fernandez, 2009). In this chapter, we explore various social psychological perspectives that have been developed to tackle this paradox. One specific focus is on the concept of ‘ideological malleability’, as originally introduced by Knowles and colleagues in 2009.

Reference

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Chapter 5.

Anti-sexism as weaponized discourse against Muslim immigration:

A view from social psychology

In October 2010, a woman went on trial on the accusation that she attacked and tore a niqab off the face of a Middle-Eastern woman in Paris. At the time, the niqab was still legal in France. The attacker explained her anger and her behavior by her motivation to defend women's rights. More recently, in November 2019, at the march against sexist and sexual violence in Paris, a group of women from the Nemésis collective attracted the attention of the media with such slogans as 'foreign rapists are still there' or '52% of rapes in the Paris region are committed by foreigners' (Le Parisien, 2019). This collective supposedly aims to 'denounce the dangerous impact of mass immigration on Western women' (Collectif Némésis, 2019) and imputes a direct link between immigration and sexual aggressions and violation of women's rights. This group claims to be feminist, apolitical, and denies being racist. Nevertheless, they were excluded from the feminist demonstration that day (Le Parisien, 2019). This collective openly targets migration policies and immigrants as the key problems in women's oppression. Much like these individuals, across different European countries, examples abound of citizens, journalists, or politicians drawing on gender-friendly arguments to support their anti-immigration stances. Research carried out in the US shows that outgroup males are perceived as a sexual threat in comparison to ingroup males (Navarrete et al., 2010). In a series of experiments conducted in Belgium, Kuppens and Yzerbyt (2012) found that young women reported feeling more anger, fear, and disgust toward Muslims when their identity as women had been made salient (i.e., by asking how much they identified with women), in comparison with various control conditions where their identity as young adults, as social sciences students, their personal identity, or no identity had been made salient. In the US, Islam was found to be perceived as distinctly threatening when it comes to gender rights, especially in comparison with other religions. Interestingly, this perception is associated with higher levels of prejudice against Muslims (Moss et al., 2019). According to Howard (2012, p.148), 'this argument that (Islamic) veils go against equality of the sexes and, thus, against one of the fundamental values of Western states, is probably the most widely used – not only by politicians, but also by the media and in general popular discussion – to defend bans on hijabs, burqas and/or niqabs'.

It will not come as a surprise, that this association between immigration and the issue of women's rights penetrates political speeches. Leaders have recognized the potential of such rhetoric and are making use of it to further their own political agenda. During the 2017 French presidential campaign, one of Marine Le Pen's policies was to 'fight against Islamism which reduces women's fundamental rights' (Rassemblement National, 2016). This may sound paradoxical when Front National representatives are predominantly voting against political

policies that would favor gender equality. In Italy, Matteo Salvini stated in an interview ‘In the literal interpretation of the Koran (..), women are worth less than men and Islamic law is worth more than Italian law. And therefore, I don’t want people who believe women are worth less than men to come to Italy’ (Redazione ANSA, 2018). Remarkably, his party wants to revive old-fashioned gender roles and supports the ultra-conservative International Conference of the World Congress of Families, a coalition that promotes anti-abortion positions and opposes same-sex marriage. Similarly, the far-right Partij voor de Vrijheid, led by Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, displays a file named ‘Violence against women in Islam’ (Van Klaveren & Wilders, 2013). In Belgium, Theo Francken, former Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration, and a member of the Flemish nationalist (albeit not extreme-right) party ‘N-VA’, declared that the 2020-elected female mayor of Molenbeek was not welcomed by women because ‘they all had to stay at home’ (Le Soir, 2018). He was accused by feminists who claimed that ‘women will not be an excuse for racism’ (RTBF, 2016). This use of feminist discourse for nationalistic purposes is hardly new. As Lyons (2014) suggests, the strategic use of European feminism amongst British colonial administrators helped support colonial policies. It is also worth noting that this link between gender and immigration discourses takes various forms across European countries. While in some European countries, migrants are portrayed as a group threatening a liberal and emancipated vision of women, in other countries, these migrants are construed as threatening the willingness to go back to traditional family relations and gender roles, or as threatening to women whom men should protect (e.g., Akkerman, 2015; Köttig et al., 2017). In both cases, one witnesses the construction of a symbolic border between them and us, an othering/bordering (Said, 1978), a concept that echoes that of positive psychological distinctiveness, which occurs when people who belong to a certain group build an adequate form of social identity (Tajfel, 1974).

How is it possible that people use an anti-sexist (or feminist) discourse and, at the same time, express anti-egalitarian attitudes towards immigrants? By perceiving – or constructing – Islam as a sexist, paternalistic religion, anti-immigration politicians simultaneously endorse feminist ideology in one of its guises and serve their agenda. This process of ‘othering’ emerges in the political discourse, but is also received and reproduced by the audience. Clearly, a fascinating question thus concerns the mechanisms that may be at work at the psychological level to account for this posture not so much among political leaders but, more importantly so, among the population. Can social psychology shed light on this issue? In this chapter, we consider a series of social psychological perspectives developed to address this paradox. In particular, we focus on the concept of ‘Malleability of ideologies’, first introduced by Knowles and colleagues (2009) in order to understand how one can weaponize an egalitarian ideology to serve an anti-immigration agenda. Indeed, an intriguing possibility is that egalitarian ideologies, and more specifically, anti-sexism, can serve the purpose of providing people the necessary justification for expressing prejudice.

1. From blatant racism to malleable ideologies

Over the course of a century, blatant expressions of prejudice have decreased dramatically in the USA (Whitley & Kite, 2013). In Europe too, although we are not aware of any empirical study conducted to monitor the changes of stereotypes across the century, a cursory look at the evolution since World War II reveals the growing emergence of norms against blatant prejudice, most clearly materialized in anti-discrimination laws (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Zick et al., 2008). Despite the fact that the last twenty years witnessed an escalation of hate crimes against Muslims, a rise of Far-Right Anti-Immigration Parties since the 1980s (Jackson et al., 2001; Mudde, 2013; Pettigrew, 1998), prejudice continues to be largely perceived as politically incorrect, if not immoral. Research indicates that most people wish to regulate their expression of prejudice and experience a negative self-directed affect when they are reminded of a prejudiced behavior they showed in the past (Monteith et al., 2010). Indeed, manifestations of racism or sexism not only come across as problematic but they are also illegal. At the same time, it is obvious that bigotry is far from having disappeared. Rooted in centuries of cultural and individual representations that impinge on everyday habits, racism and sexism perpetuate through a host of factors that reside in structural relations as well as psychological biases.

To address this surprising discrepancy between the public condemnation of prejudiced opinions and discriminatory behavior and the perpetuation of racist views, social psychologists have called upon the notion of modern racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Henry & Sears, 2002; McConahay & Hough, 1976). Modern racism is a recent form of racism that replaces blatant racism. Old-fashioned, blatant racism is expressed directly and includes a bare and open rejection of minorities, based on alleged biological differences (e.g. ‘Black people are generally not as smart as whites’). It implies that white individuals are inherently superior to other races, and that it is legitimate to use political and social power to keep minorities at bay and protect white people (Whitley & Kite, 2013). In contrast, modern racism is the result of a significant shift in social norms. Because stereotypes and racism persist in the culture and current system, individuals continue to be exposed to them on a daily basis. At the same time, people are often unaware of this, and (like to) think that they are devoid of bias (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), seeing that racism is considered immoral. Modern racism offers more socially acceptable forms of racial prejudice by upholding such beliefs as the idea that racism no longer exists today (the problem was solved thanks to legislation), that minorities are accountable for their undesirable social situation, and that minorities are too demanding in their push for equal rights (McConahay & Hough, 1976). Thus, according to researchers working on modern racism, many people claiming to support egalitarian principles and values, and thinking of themselves as non-prejudiced, continue to harbor negative feelings and beliefs about historically disadvantaged and otherwise stigmatized groups.

Building on the abundant empirical work dealing with modern racism, Crandall and Eshleman (2003) suggested that people try to satisfy two competing motivations simultaneously: firstly, expressing their deeply ingrained unflattering attitudes towards outgroups, secondly, maintaining an image of themselves as non-prejudiced, to themselves

and to others. In order to resolve this dilemma, prejudiced people are more likely to express prejudice or to discriminate outgroup members when they can legitimize their attitudes in ways that seem socially acceptable. Whether it concerns their behavior, their opinions, or at a more elaborate level, their worldviews and ideologies, many prejudiced people are therefore likely to experience some level of discomfort when expressing anti-egalitarian stances. As a consequence, will only do so when they can provide a convincing justification for their behavior.

An experiment by Snyder and colleagues (1979) illustrates this mechanism in relation to the discrimination of disabled people. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In the first condition, participants were informed that their task was to watch and evaluate a short movie. They had to do so in the company of another person and, to this end, had to choose between one of two alleged participants (actually, two confederates), one of whom was a disabled person. Interestingly, in the condition in which participants were told that both would see the same film, participants decided to sit next to the disabled person about as often as they selected the other person. In sharp contrast, when participants thought that the two movies would be different, they opted for the disabled person significantly less than for the other person. Additional findings suggest that these results emerge because the participants could use the justification of the film to avoid sitting next to the disabled person. In other words, participants discriminated against the disabled person, but only when they could identify an acceptable reason to do so, that is, when the situation was sufficiently ambiguous to avoid exposing the prejudice driving their behavior.

Besides physical behavior, discourse can also be adapted to justify one's prejudice. As a case in point, Sindic et al. (2018) found that participants who are motivated to justify their stance on immigration in front of an audience modify the content of stereotypes about immigrants. To show this, the authors focused on the contradiction residing in the anti-immigrant discourse: host populations blame immigrants for taking away jobs as well as for being lazy and taking advantage of the health care benefits. Exploring what the authors call a 'politicized use of immigrant stereotypes', they show that stereotypes can be shaped in a strategic manner to mobilize the audience and reach political goals (e.g. convince an audience with respect to immigration restrictions).

In their experiment, Sindic and colleagues (2018) made salient the fact that immigrants were a threat for either job availability ('job availability condition') or for social security resources ('social security threat') and measured participants' support for immigration restrictions. They then provided half of the participants with the opportunity to express their arguments about immigration and mobilize an audience, whereas the other half did not have this opportunity. Finally, participants had to evaluate immigrants on a series of stereotypical traits. The results show that participants who favored more stringent immigration policies changed the content of the stereotypes that they expressed as a function of their experimental condition. Indeed, anti-immigration participants in the 'social security threat' condition described immigrants as less hardworking when they faced an audience than when they did not, thereby justifying the threat immigrants presumably pose for social security. In contrast, participants who opposed greater restrictions on immigration depicted immigrants as more

hardworking when they faced an audience than when they did not. In the ‘job availability threat’ condition, the opposite pattern emerged. Specifically, participants who favored increased restrictions on immigration described the immigrants as more hardworking when they faced an audience than when they did not. Conversely, participants who opposed increased restrictions on immigration described immigrants as less hardworking when facing an audience than when they did not. In conclusion, participants who had the opportunity to mobilize an audience promoted a psychological representation of immigrants compatible with their political views and goals.

In an attempt to understand the psychological mechanisms at work behind the expression of subtle discriminatory behavior, Delroisse et al. (2012) examined whether people justified their decision by selecting specific information to make their decision. The authors suggested that, when individuals end up manifesting discrimination, they not only use information that is relevant to the situation of interest, but also ‘neutral’ information, i.e., information that is not or only slightly relevant to the decision-making process. These authors looked at the hiring situation, a situation known to allow for discrimination against minority groups. Their findings suggest that the person evaluating a résumé first looks to see whether the relevant information (education, job experience) favors their preferred group. If not, they turn to less relevant information (hobbies, interests) to defend the exclusion of a candidate from the stigmatized group, at least as long as this information can be shaped convincingly enough to come across as unbiased evidence. In a similar vein, White and Crandall (2023) show that authenticity serves as a justification for prejudice: Participants with higher levels of prejudice tended to label others’ expressions of prejudice as authentic whenever they agreed with it.

Going a step further, Knowles and colleagues (2009) propose that participants not only adapt their behavior or their discourse to serve their goals but also assert different ideological positions. This major theoretical development holds that ideologies are less fixed than generally assumed. Rather, people alter their ideological beliefs depending on the situation they face and their current motivations. Building on the work on modern racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Henry & Sears, 2002), they suggest that, next to capitalizing on situational ambiguity, individuals can also take advantage of ambiguity in ideologies. For instance, diversity, which refers to heterogeneity in groups, can be construed in terms of race, age or gender, or other categories. According to these authors, the concept of ‘malleability of ideologies’ refers to the fact that people endorse ideologies in ways that benefit their personal (or own group) situation in order to achieve three goals. First, to appear non-prejudiced in their own eyes. Indeed, several studies show that people are aware of their struggle to be non-prejudiced (Plant & Devine, 1998) and are sometimes internally motivated to act in a non-prejudiced way and consciously commit to doing so, although such self-regulation is costly (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Devine & Monteith, 1993). Second, malleable ideologies can allow one to appear unprejudiced in other people’s eyes, serving self-presentation goals. Social psychology work has been able to uncover and measure the extrinsic desire of individuals to present themselves as unbiased, and researchers developed several techniques to bypass participants’ strategic efforts to conceal their prejudice (Plant et al., 2003). Third, as illustrated by politicians, ideologies have a rallying power. Expressing how the ideology

is core to a common group identity and appealing to this group ideology to reject others allows one to mobilize others in the pursuit of their specific political projects (Klein et al., 2007).

All this raises the question of the genuineness of individuals who temporarily tamper ideologies to serve their goals. When juggling between different interpretations of an ideology, do individuals change their endorsement of a value knowingly? Knowles et al. (2009, p.860) suggest that individuals need to be actually convinced of the ideology to endorse it. As they put it, 'It is important to note that for individuals to satisfy their intergroup motives, it is not sufficient for them merely to note the existence of a legitimizing ideology. Rather, they must also endorse it: Ideologies gain force when individuals come to believe in them'. Doing so protects the need for cognitive consistency, a concept recruited in a variety of psychological theories and referring to the fact that individuals have an inner drive to seek coherence between their attitudes and behavior (Festinger, 1957). For instance, studies show that participants will produce negative evaluations of an unknown or unfamiliar social group if they underwent earlier negative subliminal or supraliminal conditioning involving this group. Doing so allows making their description of the group congruent with their negative feelings derived from the conditioning phase (Crandall et al., 2011). At the same time, it may well be that individuals knowingly distort ideologies in pursuit of their goals. To address this question, researchers call upon various indirect measures that limit the control participants exert over their responses and offer a more truthful picture of participants' degree of endorsement of specific viewpoints (Moors, 2016).

Having introduced the concept of malleable ideologies at a theoretical level, we next review a series of empirical efforts conducted both in the US and in Europe that rely on this approach. We examine its application to different types of ideologies.

2. Empirical demonstrations

Since its initial presentation by Knowles and colleagues, researchers relied on the concept of malleable ideologies to account for this shift of attitudes using color-blind ideology (Knowles et al., 2009), freedom of speech (White & Crandall, 2017), freedom (Verkuyten, 2013), diversity (Unzueta et al., 2012) and secularism or *laïcité* (Roebroek & Guimond, 2018). Interestingly enough, these various themes do not have a fundamental ideological connection to prejudice but prejudiced individuals 'tailor' them in order to fit the context. This is exactly what we hypothesize is happening with anti-sexism. Before we turn to anti-sexism, however, we provide a quick overview of the empirical evidence collected on five ideologies known as color-blindness, freedom of speech, freedom, diversity, and secularism.

2.1 Color-blindness

In his 1963 'I have a dream' speech, Martin Luther King (2000) expressed his faith in the ideology of color-blindness. According to this ideology, people should be treated as individuals rather than as exemplars of racial categories (Chow & Knowles, 2016). Not seeing a person's race appears as a means to achieve equality. Indeed, research confirms that

a color-blind ideology has positive implications with regard to reducing stereotypes and prejudice towards other groups (Wolsko et al., 2000). Still, Knowles et al. (2009) showed that this very same notion can be recruited to achieve the exact opposing result. These authors note that it is possible to construe color-blindness in terms of distributive justice (i.e. principles governing the division of outcomes across individuals and groups) or in terms of procedural justice (i.e., principles governing the process through which the distribution is decided, independently of its outcomes). Depending on how one defines color-blindness, both egalitarian and anti-egalitarian white individuals may endorse it. Individuals focused on distributive justice are likely to favor differences in treatment across individuals, so long as these differences help eliminate unjust disparities in outcomes (e.g., affirmative action). In contrast, individuals focused on procedural justice are likely to favor equal treatment across individuals, even if such treatment entrenches existing inequalities.

To test this hypothesis, Knowles et al. (2009; Study 3b) exposed half their north-American white participants to an ‘intergroup threat’ in order to induce the idea that the outgroup (in this case, Blacks) was in a position to harm them. To this end, participants learned that ‘contrary to popular opinion, recent research has found that affirmative action policies have resulted in fewer economic opportunities for whites’. Following this manipulation of intergroup threat, participants completed a questionnaire which assessed their egalitarian preferences, their views about color-blindness, and their desire for procedural justice. Results show that after the ingroup threat manipulation, participants holding egalitarian preferences did not modify their views on color-blindness. More interestingly, and in line with predictions, individuals holding anti-egalitarian preferences modified their attitudes on color-blindness in two ways. First, anti-egalitarian participants shifted their construal of color-blindness from an ideology of distributive justice to one of procedural justice. Second, their support for color-blind ideology increased, in comparison to the control condition, to the point that they endorsed it equally strongly as the egalitarian participants. Taken together, these results suggest that white people may support procedural color-blindness in order to deal with a threat to the racial hierarchy. In a nutshell, they use color-blindness as a malleable ideology. Additional evidence shows that color-blind ideology can serve to deprioritize racial discourse and racial agenda-setting. Indeed, Chow and Knowles (2016) found that anti-egalitarian participants used this ideology to justify their refusal to add race as a topic in the 2016 US presidential debate. This quote by Martin Luther King, in his ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’ written in 1964, (pp.84-109, 2010) is eloquent in this regard:

‘First, I must confess that over the last few years, I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can’t agree with your methods of direct action;’ who paternalistically feels he

can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a 'more convenient season'.

It is worth noting, however, that these results did not replicate in a European replication attempt. In their 2018 study, Roebroek and Guimond tested the hypothesis of the malleable color-blind ideology in France. Republicanism, the core French principle, asserts that the citizen constitutes the very basis of the republic, which does not recognize group memberships (whether based on race, religion or others), and thus parallels the color-blind ideology. In three studies, the authors failed to find support for a malleability of color-blindness in France. As we will see below, however, they were able to show that a similar pattern was at work with the more specific ideology of *laïcité* (secularism).

2.2 Freedom of speech

The US stands as a culture that prides itself on its profound appreciation of speech rights. At the same time, numerous controversies arise from the tension between the desire to ensure freedom of speech and the desire to restrict offensive views (Washington Post, 2022). White and Crandall (2017) examined whether prejudiced people would strategically use freedom of speech as a justification for, or in defense against, punishments for racism addressed to someone else. In their study, the authors presented participants with a fictitious case in which a man had made hateful comments towards the police (control group) or Blacks (experimental group) before measuring participants' endorsement of free speech and their level of anti-black prejudice. Results show that among participants who were assigned to the control, i.e., anti-police, condition, participants' prejudice scores were unrelated to their free-speech endorsement. In contrast, in the experimental, anti-Black, condition, participants' prejudice correlated with a stronger endorsement of free speech. In other words, anti-Black prejudice determined how likely experimental participants were to claim that punishing someone for anti-Black prejudice violated this person's right to freedom of speech. Interestingly enough, low-prejudice people showed the opposite effect as they moved away from endorsing freedom of speech in racialized contexts. This pattern not only supports the hypothesis that freedom of speech is used to justify racist stances among anti-egalitarians but it also suggests that egalitarian participants may well sense that the endorsement of free speech tends to justify racist speech. Turning to a European context, Pettersson (2019) also examined discourses of three Finnish populist radical right politicians convicted of hate-speech, using a critical discursive psychological approach. Pettersson argues that these politicians managed to portray their hate-speech against Muslims as everything from trivial mistakes ('I'm only human') to acts of virtue, using the value of free speech (protecting freedom of speech when criticizing Islam).

2.3 Freedom

The more general idea of freedom can also serve as justification for discriminatory measures. Verkuyten (2013) examined Geert Wilders' contributions to four parliamentary debates and newspaper articles in the Netherlands. The leader of the far-right Party for Freedom has gained popularity since its creation in 2006. The party is known for its harsh

standpoint on Islam (ban on building of mosques, shutting down Islamic schools, putting an end to immigration from Islamic countries, enforcing ethnic registration, etc). Echoing the work by Snyder and colleagues (1979), Verkuyten stresses the context favoring the emergence of justification. During parliamentary debates, which are covered in the media, representatives are required to answer questions from other representatives. Verkuyten conducted a discursive analysis of these debates and his research highlights three steps. First, Wilders creates a distinction between the ‘ingroup’, that is, us, the Western World, Europe, or the Netherlands, defined as a culture of freedom, tolerance, and democracy, and the ‘outgroup, them, that is, a monolithic version of Islam, a ‘barbaric’, ‘uncivilized’, ‘ideology’ – rather than religion –, incompatible with ‘us’. Second, Wilders emphasizes how Islam is a threat to our culture and way of life, to the point of using the metaphor of war and depicts a stark contrast between values of freedom and tolerance, inherent to his cultural community, and the values of Islam. Freedom, in particular, is said to be at the core of Wilders’ ingroup identity and clashing with an ideological and political Islam. Third, by rejecting Islam, Wilders posits himself as a defender of ‘our’ key value, i.e., freedom. In this respect, prejudiced behavior towards Muslims is not in any way the expression of one’s own intolerance but rather the ultimate manifestation of the commitment to the duty to protect the moral values of our society.

2.4 Diversity

Diversity, in its broad definition, refers to the existence of differences, and can point to a wide range of categories. Although its exact meaning often remains somewhat unclear, diversity in the context of organizations typically refers to such features as gender, race, culture or religion, sexual orientation, and ability. Unzueta and colleagues (2012) examined how people embrace distinct definitions of diversity depending on their social agendas. In these authors’ experiment, participants had to read different descriptions of fictitious organizations, varying on two criteria. Organizations were either high or low in racial heterogeneity and either high or low in occupational heterogeneity (with a roughly equal or unequal proportion of different types of professions in the organization). Then, participants had to evaluate whether the organization had a high or low diversity. Results suggest that when confronted with a low racial heterogeneity organization, a higher occupational heterogeneity increased the perception of diversity but only among anti-egalitarian participants. This means that anti-egalitarian participants expanded their construals of diversity so as to include occupational diversity, allowing them to legitimize their negative stance on affirmative action policies in the context of the organization. This research suggests that people can shape diversity, as an ideology, in a manner that satisfies their political goals.

2.5 Secularism (*laïcité*)

In France, controversies surrounding the Muslim headscarf, and more specifically the ban on the headscarf, have been commonplace since the late 1980s. Muslim women are not allowed to wear the headscarf in a number of settings, particularly in the school context. According to many politicians and thinkers, the headscarf conflicts with the ideology of

laïcité (secularism). Some go so far as to say that Islam itself is seen as inherently incompatible with secularism, since it is portrayed as a fundamentalist proselytizing and backward principled religion, less discrete and inclusive than Judaism or Christianity (Allievi, 2012; Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015). Recent research by Roebroek and Guimond (2017) highlights the existence of two conceptions of *laïcité* in France. The first conception derives from its original definition in France and holds that the Republic ensures freedom of conscience and the free exercise of religion while it does not recognize, pay or subsidize any religious movement (the neutrality principle) (Baubérot, 2012; Lindner, 2018). This conception of *laïcité* is associated with greater tolerance towards diversity. The second conception has been emerging since the late 1980s and parallels the debate regarding the headscarf. In this conception, neutrality applies not only to the Republic and its representatives but also to individuals in that the latter should refrain from wearing any religious symbols or expressing religious convictions in public, notably in schools, companies, kindergartens (Hennette-Vauchez, 2016). This second form of *laïcité*, called ‘new *laïcité*’, is associated with lower tolerance towards diversity. Being neutral with regard to religion becomes a goal in and of itself rather than a means to achieve equality. Clearly, secularism, which was once emblematic of left-wing organizations and opposing the power of the Catholic Church, is now also claimed by right-wing political leaders as an antidote to the separatism (*‘communautarisme’*) imputed to immigrant populations. Thus, when announcing the future ‘Law against separatism’ and ‘aiming at reinforcing secularism’ the French Minister of the Interior, Gerald Darmanin (La Voix du Nord, 2020), said:

‘When you are ill, either you consider that you are not ill and your life expectancy is limited, or you become aware of it and you have to put a name to the illness and find a medication. The country is sick of its separatism and now of a political Islam that wants to overturn the values of the Republic.’ (our translation)

As can be seen, *laïcité* is associated with a higher or a lower tolerance with regard to cultural and religious diversity and, consequently, can appeal to individuals with various political views depending on how it is defined. One may therefore wonder whether *laïcité* qualifies as a malleable ideology. If so, prejudiced individuals should modify their understanding of the ideology as a function of the specifics of the situation. Roebroek and Guimond (2018) tested this hypothesis in several studies conducted in France. In one of their experiments, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In the control condition, participants simply read an introductory text about the aim of the study and a brief history of the European Union. In the second condition, participants read an introductory text with an additional section presenting the negative economic consequences of Turkey’s entry into the European Union (lower salaries, extra cost for the social security system, etc.). In the third condition, the additional paragraph about Turkey provided negative information regarding cultural compatibility (emphasizing cultural and religious differences and jeopardy for the EU cultural identity). Participants harboring anti-egalitarian preferences became stronger supporters of *laïcité* in the third condition, that is, when exposed to what has been defined in the intergroup relations literature as symbolic threat (for a review, see Yzerbyt &

Demoulin, 2019). In stark contrast, egalitarian participants (i.e. individuals with low ‘social dominance orientation’, ‘SDO’, scores) did not endorse *laïcité* differently as a function of the condition (Figure 1). These results show that the intergroup ideology known as *laïcité* in France is not inherently tolerant or not but that the form that it has taken in recent years can be seen as a sign of growing intolerance towards Muslims.

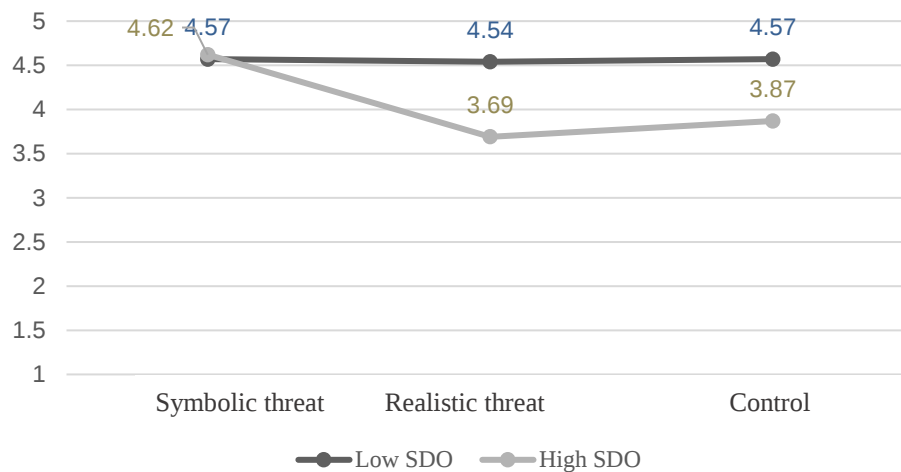


Figure 1: Attachment to *laïcité* as a function of type of threat and social dominance orientation

2.6 Anti-sexism

Having examined the phenomenon of malleable ideologies through different examples, the question arises as to whether the anti-sexism that surfaces in the public debate ought to be seen as a manifestation of malleability. Research efforts in sociology and law already seem to give us clues in this direction. Several scholars suggest that feminism is instrumentalized to cover prejudice, particularly among far-right politicians, in Europe (Al-Saji, 2018; Benelli et al., 2006; Bentouhami, 2018; Delphy, 2006; Duits & van Zoonen, 2006; Roux et al., 2006) as well as in the USA (Volpp, 2001) and in Canada (O’Neill et al., 2015). Both among feminists and in the general population, the position adopted in relation to religion, particularly Islam, is a source of controversy. Regarding the Muslim headscarf in particular, the regulations and bans generate a lot of conflicts. In the public debate, women’s rights are presented as a core Western value and the argument of women’s oppression is often brought up. Many are prompt to see the headscarf as a violation of the dignity of women, based on the assumption that women who wear headscarves are always pressured to do so (Howard, 2012), and point to the oppression of women in other cultures while simultaneously ignoring the oppression of women within the (own) dominant culture (Fernandez, 2009). This viewpoint overlooks the testimonies of women who report a wide variety of reasons for this clothing choice. Whether it is an act of modesty and devotion, or whether it is to protect

oneself from the male gaze, to resist sexual objectification and take control of one's own body, to affirm one's Muslim identity and combat assimilation, the reasons are many (Afshar, 2008; Delphy, 2006; Djelloul, 2013; Howard, 2012; O'Neill et al., 2015; Roux et al., 2006). In a study conducted in Belgium, right-wing and anti-egalitarian participants asked to describe European lifestyle values brought up the issue of women's status significantly more than other participants (Van Oost et al., in press), despite the fact that a large body of literature shows that anti-egalitarianism and right-wing political orientation correlates negatively with such concerns (Pratto et al., 2000).

In a similar vein, Muslims are often perceived to hold negative attitudes towards the LGBT community. Research suggests that a link between Islam and anti-gay attitudes exists but that it is largely dependent upon individuals' religious orientations and fundamentalism level (Anderson & Koc, 2015). Nevertheless, much like in the case of femonationalism, 'pink-washing' or 'homonationalism' (Puar, 2013) would consist in the construction of a dichotomy between the LGBTQ-friendly West and the homophobic non-West, especially by Western politicians who wish to glorify the West and exclude the East. Although Puar (2007) originally situates homonationalism in the United States, the phenomenon also develops in Europe (Ammaturo, 2015). For instance, Marine Le Pen, a far-right French politician, declared: 'The homophobia that is developing in our country is mainly due to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Am I going to be the only one who dares to say this again? Let us give the names of the aggressors!' (our translation, Le Pen, 2018). In Belgium, a major LGBT rights association has issued a press release to declare its opposition to the presence of the NVA, a Belgian Flemish right-wing party, at the Pride parade (RainbowHouse, 2019). The association denounces the intolerant immigration policies of the party as well as the transphobic statements by some party members, while the party is attending the Pride parade and claiming to promote values of tolerance. In the Netherlands, a comparable debate took place after an imam made homophobic comments, which were quickly condemned by the political establishment, while various ethnic minority voices argued that homophobic comments made by Catholics never caused such a stir (Hekma, 2002). Nevertheless, Ammaturo (2015) acknowledges the 'existence of a thin demarcation line between genuine commitment to human rights and subtle instrumentalization of these same issues for political purposes' (p.1154). Clearly, these matters call for further research.

3. Conclusion

In spite of a recent resurgence of derogatory speech, the general trend in Europe and in the US over the last decades has been one of lower acceptance of blatant prejudice. This evolution shows not only in the message underlying a series of important legal decisions, but also in the trend observed in public discourse. At the same time, various example in the public discussion and the stances taken by citizens, organizations and extreme right-wing leaders in parts of the Western world reveals a surprising combination of anti-migrant and indeed anti-sexist views. The present chapter sought to dig into recent theoretical and empirical efforts in social psychological research in order to account for this paradox.

We started by building on the notion of modern racism whereby people can simultaneously hold tolerant opinions while nurturing prejudiced beliefs and emotions against religious, racial, and gender minorities. We reviewed a series of efforts showing that prejudiced people only manifest their opposition to stigmatized groups, either in their judgment or in their behavior, in a context where they can justify their position and make it impervious to criticism. Next, we explored the work on the malleability of ideology. This line of research proposes that prejudiced people recruit commonly accepted ideologies but turn them to their advantage. We presented evidence of this strategy with respect to the ideology of color-blindness, freedom of speech, freedom, diversity as well as secularism (*laïcité*). Building on these efforts, we conjectured that anti-sexist views could similarly serve an anti-migrant and nationalist agenda. Several scholars point to a weaponization of gender equality to promote an anti-immigration or anti-islam agenda. In parallel, recent results seem to indicate that the population deploys similar processes (Van Oost et al., in press).

In recent years, it has become more and more difficult to associate some ideologies with clearly defined positions on the political spectrum, on key issues as prejudice against outgroups, particularly those related to Arabic-Muslim communities. The concept of malleable ideologies, as it has emerged in social psychology, offers some interesting possibilities for conceptualizing the complexity of the attitudes. This chapter aimed to present the efforts available to this point and to outline a series of avenues for future research.

Because these ideologies, whether they revolve around issues of justice, freedom or *laïcité*, are widely seen as moral truths or common sense (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2004; White & Crandall, 2017), they are particularly tricky to deconstruct. Therefore, they provide efficient tools to prejudiced people because they allow covering up for, and indeed legitimizing, what would otherwise come across as unmistakable manifestations of prejudice or discrimination. As Reicher et al. (2008) argue, 'Where 'they' are defined as not being of 'us' and as being against 'us', and where, in addition, we create a Manichean view of the world in which we represent good and they represent evil, then their defeat – if necessary, their destruction – becomes a matter of preserving virtue' (p.1336). This reminds us of the very mobilizing yet treacherous and complex character of malleable ideologies, an effective means of creating and perpetuating boundaries between us and them, whom we want to exclude.

In this theoretical introduction, we have explored the socio-political context that fosters the emergence of subtle biases. Our particular focus has been on the utilization of ideologies to rationalize prejudicial attitudes. We have then reviewed how and why *laïcité* and gender equality – two ideologies inextricably linked in their association to Islam – could serve as malleable ideologies against Islam, in French and Belgian contexts.

Having completed this theoretical introduction, we will now dwelve into the empirical investigation of our research question. We will present and analyze the empirical findings to shed light on the practical manifestations of ideological malleability.

In Chapter 6, we present a subset of our empirical efforts aimed at testing the malleability of *laïcité* and gender equality in multicultural contexts. While these studies did not yield the anticipated outcomes, providing an overview of these efforts holds considerable relevance for several reasons. First, to ensure a representative depiction of the work conducted during this PhD. Second, because the experimental methodology proves particularly pertinent for assessing the emergence of interaction hypotheses, as is the focus here. Third, disclosing such non-significant results aligns with the recent drive towards transparency in scientific research.

In Chapter 7, we look at Belgians' conceptions of *laïcité*, and their relations to intergroup outcomes. In a first, correlational study, we rely on confirmatory factor analysis to delineate the dimensions of *laïcité* and their associations with sexism, racism and anti-Islam attitudes. In a second, experimental study, we explore endorsement of *laïcité* dimensions in situations where Islam or Catholicism have been activated.

In Chapter 8, we explore the malleability of gender equality against Islam, using textual data. With the statistical software Iramuteq, we explore significant occurrences of words, or group of words within participants' discourses. For instance, we examine whether gender-equality related terminology is more prevalent among individuals holding anti-egalitarian perspectives.

Finally, Chapter 9 contains the discussion.

Chapter 6.
**Experimental studies testing malleability
of ideology with gender equality and
*laïcité***

Chapter 6. Experimental studies testing malleability of ideology with gender equality and *laïcité*

In this chapter, we present a small selection of the studies conducted for this thesis. The chapter includes six studies that aim to capture the phenomenon of ideological malleability with gender equality and *laïcité* in an experimental setting.

Although the results proved non-satisfactory, we believe that presenting a short inventory of our experimental efforts is justified for three main reasons:

First, although dissertations need not be an exhaustive account of thesis work, experimental research (including the following six studies) accounted for a substantial proportion of the research undertaken in this PhD thesis. As such, the aim of this chapter is to provide a more accurate picture of the research effort that was undertaken throughout the PhD process.

Second, the use of experimental methods is the preferred approach to studying ideological malleability. Indeed, the concept of malleability is rooted in the intersection between anti-egalitarian perspectives and threatening immigration, statistically represented by an interaction. This chapter therefore adds to the accumulation of evidence on the malleability of the ideology of *laïcité* and gender equality through an experimental test of the malleability thesis.

Thirdly, disseminating unsuccessful attempts at empirical research contributes to promoting the principles of open science and transparency. In the context of the replication crisis, several authors have raised concerns about the failure to replicate published findings. A range of factors have been proposed as possible explanations. For instance, according to Scheel (2021), claims in psychological research are frequently vague, leading to ambiguity at all research stages, inconsistencies in conclusions, and difficulties in executing accurate replications. Next to this, journals' preference for significant findings, coupled with the emphasis on publication in academic career evaluations, has incentivized researchers to suppress their reporting of non-significant effects – a phenomenon commonly referred to as the 'file drawer problem'. While publication bias is a complex and multi-layered issue, sharing data and results can help to address the problem of truncated scientific knowledge representation. In this way, this chapter aims to be consistent with the principles of transparency and open science.

The subsequent studies investigate whether individuals with antiegalitarian inclinations (including higher SDO levels or other proxy variables such as political orientation) weaponize gender equality or *laïcité* when they are introduced to immigration-related contexts. For each study, we describe methods, results, and discuss the findings. A general discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter 9 (General Discussion) of this thesis.

The studies presented here rely on various paradigms and processes. As mentioned in the introduction, malleability may be the result of a number of different cognitive or motivational processes:

With the social categorization approach, social identities and intergroup differences become salient, such that individuals may adhere more to values attached to their own social identity (Tajfel, 1974). Study 6, in particular, tests this mechanism, although the cognitive process of categorization and subsequent heightened attachment to the ingroup value may be at play in other studies.

With the mobilization approach, individuals purposely position themselves towards norms and values associated with the ingroup in front of an audience in order to appeal to the audience (mobilization; Klein et al., 2007). Study 2, specifically, relies on this mechanism.

With the motivational approach, the individual is tempted to find justification for antiegalitarian stances, via the endorsement of normative values, either to maintain a positive image to the self (self-presentation) or to others (impression management). Individuals may also seek justification for others' people prejudiced stances or behaviors (e.g., White et al., 2021; White & Crandall, 2023).

- In Study 3, we examined whether antiegalitarian participants may endorse the normative value of gender equality when facing a threat from immigrants and their progressive supporters. In line with Knowles et al. (2009), we argue that antiegalitarian participants may endorse this value to promote their intergroup goals (e.g., oppose immigration) while satisfying self-presentation and impression management needs.
- In Study 1, we examined whether antiegalitarian participants would rely on gender equality when they support prejudiced stances from others.
- In Studies 4 and 5, we examined whether antiegalitarian participants would endorse gender equality in order to justify their prejudiced action against an immigrant target.

We argue that the processes that contribute to the malleability of ideology may coexist in individuals' minds. For example, aligning oneself with ingroup values before an ingroup audience may serve both mobilization and impression management motives. Therefore, although we present these approaches separately, they may overlap and reinforce each other.

The presented studies also draw on different measures of gender equality and *laïcité*. As previously mentioned in the general introduction, it is ambiguous whether ideological malleability pertains to a change in attachment or in content. We argue that the two must coexist – individuals alter the egalitarian ideology into a less egalitarian one (i.e. by claiming that *laïcité* demands bans) and consequently become attached to this modified ideology. Accordingly, we measure ideologies using both types of dependent variables: measures of attitudes and beliefs (e.g. adherence to new *laïcité*, acceptance of rape myths, attitudes towards gender policies) and measures of attachment (attachment to *laïcité*, gender equality or feminism). While the latter is not specific in content, it may enable participants to more

clearly proclaim their attachment to a normative ideology, thus reaching the justificatory function of ideology's malleability.

Next to attitudes, beliefs or attachment, in several studies, we measure ingroup and outgroup evaluation (e.g., perception that the ingroup or outgroup is sexist; evaluations of ingroup or outgroup members' sexist comments). Although differences in intergroup evaluations are relevant, they alone do not signal malleability, but rather ingroup bias or outgroup derogation. In order to infer the presence of malleability, differences in attitudes, beliefs or ideological commitment are required.

We have used various moderators in our research. As previously outlined, social dominance orientation, prejudice, and threat are commonly utilized to uncover justification mechanisms. Notably, the literature on malleability typically draws on SDO, while the 'justification-suppression' model focuses on prejudice. However, we argue that the selection of a moderator should be contingent upon the specific issue under investigation. For instance, the consideration of intergroup threat may be pertinent when the ideology in question has historically been utilized to address real or symbolic threats posed by other societies. To explore this further, we will therefore use multiple moderators.

Finally, all the studies reported below present unsatisfactory results, i.e. they do not largely confirm our hypotheses. In this context, a number of alternative explanations can be proposed. In Table 1, we provide these alternative explanations to facilitate comprehension of inconsistent findings.

Table 1. *List of effects and corresponding potential explanations*

<i>Effect</i>	<i>Potential interpretations for the effect</i>
In immigration-related contexts, <i>antiegaltarian</i> participants show <i>higher</i> levels of attachment, beliefs, or attachment to the ideology	Participants engage in malleability of ideology
In immigration-related contexts, <i>antiegaltarian</i> participants show <i>lower</i> levels of attachment, beliefs, or attachment to the ideology	Participants self-categorize as antiegaltarian and activate associated beliefs system and social norms (Tajfel, 1974; Turner et al., 1987)
	Participants affirm their collective self as antiegaltarian (Badea, 2022)
	Participants experience feelings of reactance towards the research (possibly perceived as politically oriented) (Brehm, 1966)

	Participants experience feelings of intergroup threat, leading to increased stereotyping (Stephan & Stephan, 2017)
In immigration-related contexts, <i>egalitarian</i> participants show <i>lower</i> levels of attachment, beliefs, or attachment to the ideology	Participants perceive an antiegalitarian weaponization of ideology and consequently experience less proximity to the ideology
	Participants perceive the weaponization of ideology and want to temporarily distance themselves from it
	Participants move closer to outgroup perceived norms, in order to reduce intergroup norm incongruence
In immigration-related contexts, <i>egalitarian</i> participants show <i>higher</i> levels of attachment, beliefs, or attachment to the ideology	Participants self-categorize as egalitarian and activate associated beliefs system and social norms (Tajfel, 1974; Turner et al., 1987)
	Participants affirm their collective self as egalitarian (Badea, 2022)

1. Gender equality as vicarious justification for prejudice (Study 1)

In this study, we wondered: do antiegalitarian people use gender equality as a defense against punishment for racism? Drawing on White and Crandall (2017), we exposed participants to a concrete conflict scenario and asked them to take part, with the aim to examine whether they would justify the behavior of one of the parties by appealing to a malleable ideology.

In their study, White and Crandall (2017) investigated how and why individuals will tend to justify the intolerant stances made by others. Specifically, participants read a vignette depicting how a man was fired by his company after he had spoken out on social media about protests against police brutality in the United States, either insulting the police (anti-police condition), or insulting the protesters with racist language (anti-black condition). After being exposed to the situation, participants evaluated whether firing the person was a violation of free speech. Results showed that participants' level of prejudice predicted greater perception of freedom of speech violation, but only in the anti-black condition, not in the anti-police condition. This suggests that prejudiced participants relied on freedom of speech to justify and excuse racist speech against black people.

Building on this paradigm, the goal of this study was to see if participants would appeal to women's rights to defend a female presenter making somewhat objectionable remarks about an imam (vs. bishop) target. Specifically, participants were to be introduced to a conflict situation between a female presenter and an imam (vs. bishop). The vignette described the supposed conflict, during which the female presenter is interrupted by the male interviewee and argues that she should not be interrupted simply because she is a woman, thus appealing to gender equality. Following the vignette manipulation, we looked at the extent to which participants defended the woman and her gender equality claim, depending on the condition (imam vs. bishop) and their level of antiegalitarianism. Defending the woman and her gender equality stance to a greater extent in the conflict against the imam, rather than the bishop would suggest that gender equality is used as justification for prejudice.

1.1 Participants

Participants (N=237) were recruited from Prolific. This sample represented the full French sample available on Prolific at the time. Among these participants, those who did not complete or did not pass the attention check measures were removed, as well as participants who identified as Muslim or who spoke Arabic at home. A total of 174 participants were retained, their mean age was 29.98 years old ($SD=9.74$), 56% were female, 42% were male and 2% chose the 'other' category. A large majority of the participants (80%) had a higher education degree, the rest had no schooling, lower or high school degrees.

1.2 Procedure

After giving consent, participants provided their demographic information. They then indicated their political orientation and completed an Economic System Justification (ESJ) scale. The manipulation consisted of reading a vignette depicting a conflict between a journalist and an imam (imam condition) or between a journalist and a bishop (bishop condition). The vignette was intended to be ambiguous in terms of assigning blame and support, thereby affording participants the latitude to advocate for either the woman journalist or the interviewee (i.e., the bishop or imam). A partial excerpt of the vignette is presented below for reference:

On the set, among other guests, were bishop Benoît Loschleither (imam Abdelwahab Mahjoub), as well as political experts. It was between the presenter and the latter that matters got heated and that the tone gradually rose. While the debate started smoothly, the exchanges became tense between Benoît Loschleither (Abdelwahab Mahjoub) and the presenter at the end of the first quarter of an hour. The presenter, addressing her guest, then misspells his name for the third time, and asks him ‘How many times a day do you pray?’ A question that surprised the panel of guests and that Mr. Loschleither (Mr. Mahjoub) clearly did not appreciate, who then retorted ‘It’s about my private life. I don’t see what this brings to the debate’. The latter then declared himself ‘indignant’ by her words. A few minutes later, Benoît Loschleither (Abdelwahab Mahjoub) interrupts Mrs. Pertin while she was asking a question. Particularly annoyed, she declared ‘It is not because I am a woman that you can treat me in such a way, Sir’. A little later, as the show came to an end, the presenter closed by thanking all the guests, except Benoît Loschleither (Abdelwahab Mahjoub). After leaving the set, Mr. Loschleither (Mr. Mahjoub) expressed himself on social networks by deploring ‘the lack of professionalism’ of the presenter Marie Pertin. This dispute has, unsurprisingly, provoked reactions in various directions in the local media and political world. On Twitter, users quarreled over who was to blame. The incident went all the way to the channel’s executive committee. The channel’s spokesperson said that it would decide as soon as possible whether or not there were any unusual difficulties during the debate, and what action to take.

The full vignette text can be found in the Appendices. Following the vignette manipulation, participants completed two manipulation check items, a series of items on support for the presenter, a series of items on gender equality, and a prejudice scale. Finally, they were thanked and debriefed.

1.3 Hypotheses

With regard to support, we hypothesized an interaction between ESJ and condition (H1). Precisely, we hypothesized that high-ESJ participants would tend to support the woman presenter more in the imam condition compared to the bishop condition. Conversely, we hypothesized that low-ESJ participants would make no difference in their levels of support to the presenter depending on the conditions.

With regard to gender equality, we also hypothesized an interaction between ESJ and condition (H2) such that participants reporting a high level of Economic system justification would tend to express more gender equality in the imam condition compared to the bishop condition. No such difference was expected for low-ESJ participants.

Although literature on malleability of ideologies has relied solely on SDO, for which ESJ is a close proxy, literature on the justification of prejudice has also relied on prejudice as a moderator (e.g., White & Crandall, 2017). For this reason, we also examined our interaction hypotheses relying on prejudice in addition to the SDO variable.

Furthermore, we explored whether gender effects might be at play in the interactions of interest.

1.4 Measures

For all scales, participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree).

Economic system justification. Participants indicated their agreement with 8 items from the 17-item Economic system justification scale from Jost and Thompson (2000) Economic system justification measures the tendency to legitimize economic inequality. A sample item was: ‘If people work hard, they almost always get what they want’. The selection of items was made based on psychometric properties from this scale in a past study we conducted. We relied on ESJ to measure egalitarianism in order to have a subtler measure of antiegalitarianism and limit the risk of skewed distribution that we sometimes encountered with the SDO scale. Alpha reliability was satisfactory ($\alpha=.85$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 1).

Support for the presenter. Following the measurement from White & Crandall (2017), we created five items to measure the extent to which participants supported the woman presenter in the name of gender equality rather than the interviewee, e.g. ‘The presenter has the right to defend gender equality and should not be sanctioned by the channel’, ‘The guest should be treated in a more respectful way, even if it seemed difficult for the presenter’(reverse-coded). While factor analyses suggested that a one-factor solution was optimal, reliability analyses showed poor reliability ($\alpha=.46$). Removing any of the items would not have increased the reliability sufficiently. Therefore, we relied on an item-per-item approach. The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 2).

Gender equality. To measure the extent to which participants would express a concern for gender equality, we created three items: ‘I care deeply about women's rights’, ‘The fight for women's rights is taken seriously enough’ (reverse-coded), ‘Even in France, women’s freedoms are constantly threatened’. Here too, factor analyses suggested that a one-factor solution was optimal and loadings were acceptable ($>.64$) but the reliability of this scale was very poor ($\alpha=.38$). We again relied on an item-per-item approach.

Prejudice. To measure participants’ prejudice, we relied on the generalized prejudice scale Dambrun and Guimond’s (2001) and adapted it to the French context. The scale consisted of eight items, such as ‘Immigrants of Muslim faith who live in France should have the right to vote in local elections’ (reverse-coded) and showed good reliability ($\alpha=.92$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 3).

1.5 Results

For all studies, we conducted analyses using R (R Core Team, 2013).

1.5.1 Correlations

Economic system justification was negatively related to the first item of gender equality (‘I care deeply about women's rights’, $r=-.25$, 95% CI $[-.38, -.10]$, $p=.001$) and positively to the second item of gender equality (‘The fight for women's rights is taken seriously enough’, $r=.22$, 95% CI $[-.36, -.08]$, $p=.003$) but surprisingly, not to the third one (‘Even in France, women's freedoms are constantly threatened’, $r=-0.06$, 95% CI $[-.21, .09]$, $p=.41$).

Turning to support to the presenter, the first item was negatively related to ESJ (‘the presenter has the right to defend gender equality and should not be sanctioned by the channel’; $r=-0.15$, 95% CI $[-.30, -.01]$, $p=.04$), but other than that, none of the items of support to the presenter were related to neither ESJ, political orientation or prejudice. This absence of relation is in line with the hypothesis that ESJ participants could withhold their support to the presenter depending on the condition they were assigned to.

1.5.2 Regressions

We conducted analyses using R (R Core Team, 2013) and the *lm* and *lme4* packages (Bates et al., 2015).

Participants’ ESJ scores were centered around the mean. Condition was coded -1 (Bishop) and 1 (Imam). Because the psychometric characteristics of our dependent variables scales were suboptimal, we did not test H1 and H2 per se, but rather relied on an item-per-item approach.

For each dependent variable, we test a model with ESJ, condition and their interaction as predictors (‘Model 1a’), and a second model using prejudice instead of ESJ as the moderator (‘Model 2a’).

As our research question pertains to sexism, we investigated whether our effects would vary in regressions including gender as a predictor. We reasoned that women and men might

not engage in an ideological shift in gender-equality to the same extent. Hence, we conducted additional regression models with gender as a control variable.

To be clear, we tested models including ESJ, condition, participants' gender as well as the first and second-order interactions ('Model 1b') for each DV. We also test the interaction model with prejudice as the moderator for each DV ('Model 2b'). For the sake of brevity, we do not report all tested models. We report results on models controlling for gender in two cases: (1) when interaction effect of condition $\times$ ESJ (or condition $\times$ prejudice) was significant and (2) when the interaction of condition $\times$ ESJ $\times$ gender (or condition $\times$ prejudice $\times$ gender) was significant. Because very few of our participants chose the option 'other' for their gender, we coded two categories: men = -0.5; women = 0.5.

Support for the presenter and her claim for gender equality

Table 2 includes a summary of regressions on items of support for the presenter.

1. First item of support for the presenter

Looking at the first item of support ('The presenter has the right to defend gender equality and should not be sanctioned by the channel'), we regressed the item scores on ESJ, condition, and their interaction (Model 1a). Economic system justification emerged as a negative predictor, such that higher ESJ predicted less agreement with the idea that the presenter had the right to defend gender equality and should escape sanctions ($b = -0.24$, $t(170) = -2.07$, $p = .04$, $Rsq = .025$). The condition was not significant ($b = -.26$, $t(170) = -1.89$, $p = .06$). Contrary to what was expected, the interaction did not emerge as a significant predictor either ($p = .79$).

In a second model, we examined the same model using prejudice as the moderator (Model 2a). Because prejudice was measured after the manipulation, we first checked that the prejudice levels did not differ across the conditions, which was indeed not the case ($p = .82$). In this model, condition was a negative predictor ($b = -0.27$, $t(170) = -1.98$, $p = .0499$, $Rsq = .022$). Participants in the bishop condition tended to believe more that the presenter had the right to defend equality and should not be sanctioned, compared to participants in the Imam condition. Prejudice was not significant ($p = .08$). Contrary to what we expected, we did not find any interaction effect ($p = .25$).

2. Second item of support for the presenter

Looking at the second item ('The guest should be treated in a more respectful way, even if it seemed difficult for the presenter'), we expected that ESJ participants would agree more with this item in the bishop condition, compared to the imam condition. Results showed that a main effect of condition, such that participants in the Imam (vs. Bishop) condition agreed more to the idea that the guest should have received better treatment from the presenter ($b = 0.29$, $t(170) = 2.197$, $p = .03$, $Rsq = .028$). No effect of ESJ emerged ($p = .18$) and, contrary to what was expected, no interaction effect emerged either ($p = .16$).

Using prejudice as the moderator to predict this item ('model 2a'), we found the same positive effect of the manipulation ($b = 0.30$, $t(170) = 2.27$, $p = .02$, $Rsq = .030$), but also an

interaction effect between participants' prejudice level and the condition ($b=-0.23$, $t(170)=-2.46$, $p=.01$, $Rsq = .034$), such that low-prejudiced participants adhered more to the idea that the guest should have been treated better in the Imam condition, compared to the bishop condition ($b=0.63$, $t(170)=3.29$, $p=.001$, $Rsq = 0.060$). High-prejudiced participants made no difference between the conditions with regard to this item, contrary to what was expected ($b=-0.027$, $t(170)=-0.15$, $p=.88$). This interaction is represented in Figure 1.

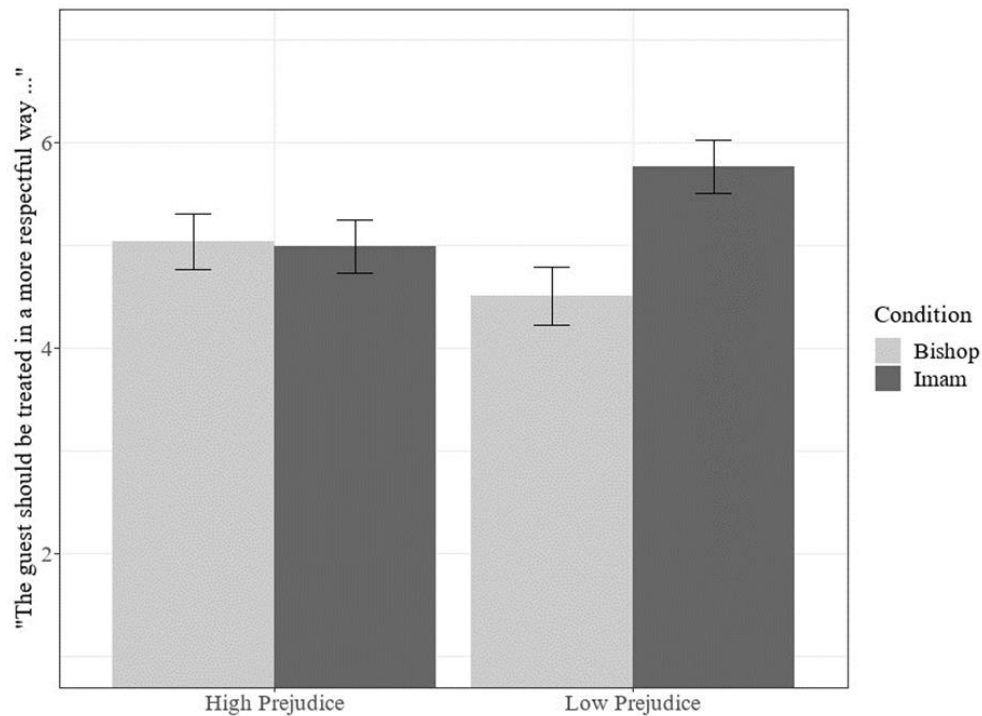


Figure 1. Adherence to the second item of support for the presenter depending condition and prejudice levels

In a model including gender as the control variable, as well as condition, prejudice, and their first and second-order interactions ('model 2b'), we found again the interaction between prejudice and condition ($b=-0.19$, $t(163)=-2.00$, $p=.047$, $Rsq = .024$). Among low-prejudice people, adherence to this item asking for more respect was stronger in the Imam condition compared to the bishop condition ($b= 0.53$, $t(163)=2.63$, $p<.01$, $Rsq = .041$) whereas high-prejudice participants did not change their adherence to this item ($b=-0.02$, $t(163)=-0.08$, $p=.93$).

3. Third item of support for the presenter

For the third item of support ('Firing the presenter from her job is an attack on the principle of gender equality that she has defended'), we again relied on ESJ, condition and their interaction to predict adherence to the item (Model 1a). Neither ESJ and condition, nor the expected interaction were significant ($p > .16$).

When we relied on prejudice instead of ESJ (Model 2a), we found no effect of prejudice, no effect of condition, and no interaction effect ($ps > .07$).

4. Fourth item of support for the presenter

Turning to the fourth item, condition was a significant predictor ($b = 0.44$, $t(170) = 3.45$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .066$), such that participants in the Imam condition agreed more with the idea that 'The TV channel should sanction the presenter because she obviously slipped up during the program'. However, we found no main effect of ESJ, neither the expected interaction effect of $ESJ \times$ condition. When using the model with prejudice as the moderator, we found the same condition effect only.

We also found relevant gender effects in the model including ESJ, gender and their interactions (Model 1b). First, we found again the effect of condition: participants in the Imam condition tend to agree more with the need for sanctions ($b = 0.43$, $t(163) = 3.27$, $p < .01$, $Rsq = .061$). Interestingly, we also found a second-order interaction of condition $\times$ ESJ $\times$ gender ($b = -0.67$, $t(163) = -2.90$, $p < .01$, $Rsq = .049$). Simple slopes analyses revealed that the interaction of condition $\times$ ESJ was significant among women ($b = -0.46$, $t(163) = -2.65$, $p < .01$, $Rsq = .041$), but not among men ($p = .18$). That is, women low in ESJ agreed more with the sanction of the presenter in the imam condition, compared to the bishop condition ($b = 0.77$, $t(163) = 2.63$, $p < .01$, $Rsq = .041$), whereas high-ESJ women were not influenced by the condition ($p = .27$).

5. Fifth item of support for the presenter

Finally, the fifth item 'The presenter made a mistake by placing the interactions in the realm of male-female relations from the start' was not predicted by ESJ, condition, or the interaction, nor by any of these predictors in a model using prejudice.

Table 2. Summary of regression analyses on items of support for the presenter.

Item used as Criterion	Model	Model Predictors	Sig
'The presenter has the right to defend gender equality and should not be sanctioned by the channel'	1a	ESJ	*
		Cond	
		$ESJ \times$ cond	
	2a	Prejudice	*
		Cond	
		$Prej \times$ cond	
	1a	ESJ	

‘The guest should be treated in a more respectful way, even if it seemed difficult for the presenter’		Cond	*
		ESJ × cond	
	2a	Prejudice	
		Cond	*
		Prej × cond	x
	2b	Prejudice	
		Cond	
		Genre	x
		Prej × cond	x
		Prej × genre	
		Cond × genre	
		Prej × cond × genre	
‘Firing the presenter from her job is an attack on the principle of gender equality that she has defended.’	1a	ESJ	
		Cond	
		ESJ × cond	
	2a	Prejudice	
		Cond	
		Prej × cond	
‘The TV channel should sanction the presenter because she obviously slipped up during the program’	1a	ESJ	
		Cond	*
		ESJ × cond	
	2a	Prejudice	
		Cond	*
		Prej × cond	
	1b	ESJ	
		Cond	*
		Genre	
		ESJ × Cond	
		ESJ × genre	
		Cond × genre	
		ESJ × cond × genre	x
‘The presenter made a mistake by placing the interactions in the realm of male-female relations from the start’	1a	ESJ	
		Cond	
		ESJ × cond	

2a	Prejudice
	Cond
	Prej $\times$ cond

Note. * indicates significance. For interaction effects, x indicates unexpected interaction patterns, and $\checkmark$ indicates expected interaction patterns (among antiegalitarian participants, higher support for the presenter and gender equality in the Imam vs. Bishop condition).

Gender equality

Table 3 includes a summary of regressions on gender equality.

1. First item of gender equality

First, we entered a regression in which the first item of gender equality was the criterion ('The defense of women's rights is very dear to my heart'), with ESJ, condition, and their product as independent variables (model 1a). Economic system justification negatively predicted this gender equality item ($b=-0.37, t(170)=-3.13, p<.01, Rsq = .054$). Condition was not a significant predictor ($p=.17$). The interaction was significant, but not in the expected direction ($b=-0.33, t(170)=-2.81, p<.01, Rsq = .011$). Simple slope analyses revealed that participants with higher levels of ESJ (at +1SD) tended to express less gender equality in the imam condition compared to the bishop condition ($b=-0.58, t(170)=-2.96, p<.01, Rsq = .049$), while we expected the opposite. Among low-ESJ participants, condition had no impact on gender equality ($p=.31$).

In the model including gender predictors (ESJ, condition, gender and their interaction, model 1b), we found again the first-order interaction of ESJ $\times$ condition ($b=-0.35, t(170)=-2.88, p<.01, Rsq = .048$). Simple slopes analyses revealed again that ESJ participants felt less attached the defense of women's rights in the imam condition compared to the bishop condition ($b=-0.65, t(170)=-3.31, p=.001, Rsq = .063$), and that low-ESJ participants made no differences across conditions ($p=.10$).

When using the same model, but including prejudice instead of ESJ ('model 2a'), prejudice was negatively associated with gender equality ($b=-.22, t(170)=-2.25, p=.03, Rsq = .029$). The expected interaction was not significant ($b=-.18, t(170)=-1.85, p=.07$).

2. Second item of gender equality

Using the same model, we examined the adherence to the second item of gender equality ('The fights for women's rights are taken seriously enough' (reverse-coded)). We report the results on the reversed item, thus having higher scores capturing higher gender equality. Economic system justification was again a negative predictor ($b=-0.32, t(170)=-2.80, p<.01, Rsq = .044$). The condition and interaction terms were not significant ($ps>.06$). Similarly, in the model using prejudice instead of ESJ (model 2a), we found that prejudice was a negative predictor of this concern for women's rights ($b=-0.26, t(170)=-2.79, p<.01, Rsq = .044$).

3. Third item of gender equality

The analysis using the same models to predict the third item of gender equality ('Even in France, women's freedoms are constantly threatened'), did not reveal any significant predictor ($ps > .07$).

Table 3. *Summary of regression analyses on items of gender equality*

<i>Item used as Criterion</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Model Predictors</i>	<i>Sig</i>
'The defense of women's rights is very dear to my heart'	1a	ESJ	*
		Cond	
		ESJ $\times$ cond	x
	2a	Prejudice	
		Cond	
		Prej $\times$ cond	
	1b	ESJ	
		Cond	
		Genre	
		ESJ $\times$ Cond	x
		ESJ $\times$ genre	
		Condition $\times$ genre	
'The fights for women's rights are taken seriously enough.' (reverse-coded)	1a	ESJ	*
		Cond	
		ESJ $\times$ cond	
	2a	Prejudice	*
		Cond	
		Prej $\times$ cond	
'Even in France, women's freedoms are constantly threatened'	1a	ESJ	
		Cond	
		ESJ $\times$ cond	
	2a	Prejudice	
		Cond	
		Prej $\times$ cond	

Note. * indicates significance. For interaction effects, x indicates unexpected interaction patterns, and $\checkmark$ indicates expected interaction patterns (among antiegalitarian participants, higher support for the presenter and gender equality in the Imam vs. Bishop condition).

1.6 Discussion

In this study, we aimed to capitalize on situational ambiguity from a fictitious situation to examine whether participants would use gender equality as justification to side with claims of gender equality in front of a Muslim man (vs. a European man). We hypothesized that the antiegalitarian participants would be more likely to defend the woman presenter and her stance on gender equality in the Imam condition compared to the bishop condition. We expected that more egalitarian participants would assess the conflict in the same way and be equally concerned about gender equality, regardless of the name and religion of the man who was facing the presenter.

Inspired by the studies of White and Crandall (2017), we created a vignette depicting a situation as realistically as possible, still leaving ambiguity to enable participants to defend one or the other protagonist. The vignette material was satisfactory. Specifically, it allowed for ambiguity in terms of support for both parties, with a mean level of the support items at 3.40 on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 7 (here, a higher level of agreement meaning higher support for the presenter). However, and despite our material being strongly inspired by the protocol from White and Crandall (2017), our scales were psychometrically weak. This forced us to rely on a piecemeal approach, looking at each item separately.

First, we examined support for the presenter or the interviewee. Results suggested that participants in the imam (vs. bishop) condition agreed more with the idea that the presenter ought to be punished, and the guest should be treated better. Thus, participants expressed greater concern about the handling of the imam than that of the bishop. Gender and antiegalitarianism qualified this condition effect in two models: low-prejudice participants were even more concerned about the treatment of the Imam (compared to the bishop), and low-ESJ women wanted more sanction for the presenter in the imam condition. In sum, participants, but even more so, egalitarian ones, expressed concern about the treatment of the imam and called for the presenter be sanctioned. These unexpected effects are likely driven by internal or external motivation to follow egalitarian social norms (Plant & Devine, 1998).

Second, we looked at levels of gender equality following the manipulation. Unsurprisingly, ESJ and prejudice were major predictors of gender equality. That being said, interactions between the condition and ESJ or prejudice were either absent or opposite to the expected direction. Specifically, we found that high-ESJ participants, and high-ESJ women in the imam condition felt less attached to the defense of women's rights, compared to the bishop condition. That is, antiegalitarian participants (and women) felt less attached to women's rights in the imam condition. Several factors can explain this effect found on antiegalitarian participants, as explained in the introduction of this chapter. First, the exposure to egalitarian ideologies and minorities (i.e., Islam, gender equality) could activate a categorization as antiegalitarian and activate an antiegalitarian response and belief system (Turner et al., 1987). Second, exposure to minorities could lead antiegalitarian individuals to affirm group-identity values (Badea, 2022). Third, it could foster a form of reactance (Brehm, 1966), or fourth, a sense of threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2017). Note that this decrease in

gender equality was only found on one of three items tapping the concept. Results should be taken carefully, as they might reflect a false positive.

In conclusion, although a very similar paradigm was used in a study before, and although this paradigm allowed for a more ecological approach to malleability, results were largely beneath our expectations. Participants' concern for women's rights and for the presenter was not fostered in the Imam condition. Conversely, we observed across various items an enhanced concern for the interviewee when he was an Imam, results that were interesting but did not fit our hypothesis.

2. Gender equality and *laïcité* as arguments against the immigration of Muslims in Belgium (Study 2)

In the first study, we did not manage to properly elicit the emergence of a strategic endorsement of gender equality in the face of Islam. In the present study, we capitalize on the mobilization function of malleability to foster the emergence of a strategic emergence of gender equality and *laïcité*. To do so, we encouraged participants to elaborate an argument against immigration for a fictitious and unopinionated audience.

Our paradigm was grounded in the SIDE model (Reicher et al., 1995), and particularly in the concept of ‘social identity performance’ (Klein et al., 2007). Close to the concept of self-presentation (Baumeister, 1982), social identity performance involves situations in which the presence of an audience (be it real or psychological) affects the way individuals behave and express their social identity. In this vein, Sindic et al. (2018) showed how the presence of an audience led individuals to mobilize opposing stereotypes about migrants, with the goal of defending their anti-immigration views. Indeed, results showed that when participants were told the study focused on the threat that immigrants pose to the job market, anti-immigration participants depicted immigrants as hard-working. On the other hand, when the study was said to be about the social security system, participants who wanted to restrict immigration depicted them as lazy. This showed that individuals might adjust their outgroup stereotypes when placed in an argumentative setting.

Thus, based on the identity performance research (Klein et al., 2007; Sindic et al., 2018), we hypothesized that participants attempting to mobilize an audience might strategically adjust their ideological stances. Our objective was to have participants state their stance on immigration before assessing their adherence to gender equality and *laïcité* principles. Indeed, we anticipated that asking participants to discuss their views on immigration would activate stereotypes on immigrants, notably those regarding sexism and *laïcité* (e.g., sexist Muslim immigrants), especially among less egalitarian participants. Consequently, we expected these activated stereotypes to reflect in their responses to the subsequent scales evaluating gender equality and *laïcité*.

Moreover, in order to differentiate between different forms of feminism, we created three separate scales of gender equality, capturing gender equality attitudes, attachment to feminism, as well as inclusive feminism. In doing so, we aimed to unveil the relations between different forms of feminism and their weaponization for racist purposes.

2.1 Participants

Participants were recruited via Facebook ads targeting individuals above 18 living in the French-speaking parts of Belgium. A total of 640 participants took part in the questionnaire. Among these participants, participants who did not complete or succeed the attention check measures were removed, as well as participants who identified as Muslim or who spoke Arabic at home. A total of 246 participants were kept, 70% were female, 29% were male, 1%

other. Participants' mean age was 41 ($SD=11.71$), 61% had a higher education degree (bachelor or higher).

To verify the absence of an attrition bias, we examined whether participants who did not complete the attention checks or did not reach the DVs were significantly different from participants who completed the questionnaire, in terms of age, gender, and education. Results showed that the two groups of participants did not differ in age and education level. However, gender proportions were different in the two groups. Specifically, the proportion of men (vs. women and other) was bigger among participants who have not completed, compared to participants who completed the questionnaire. However, this difference in gender participation is anything but surprising, as numerous other studies have reported that women are more likely to participate (see Becker, 2022).

2.2 Procedure

After filling in demographic information, participants responded to an identification scale. Doing so, we aimed to make Belgian identity salient, as done in Sindic et al. (2018). Thus, participants' identification levels were not analyzed. Participants were then assigned to one of two conditions. The complete task description can be found in the Appendices. In the immigration condition, participants read the following:

‘The media often deals with the issue of the Muslim religion and it is sometimes the subject of debate. We would like to know and understand your opinion on this subject. We would like to ask you to give a series of arguments concerning your personal position towards the immigration of Muslims in Belgium. Imagine that the different arguments serve to convince someone who is uncertain and wants to know more about the immigration of Muslims to Belgium. Like a significant part of Belgians, this person would not have an opinion on this issue. Feel free to use different themes in each argument. We would like to encourage you to provide as many arguments as possible, at least 5. This is important for the study’.

The manipulation aimed at fulfilling the four criteria proposed by Klein et al. (2007) for the emergence of an identity performance, that are identification with and salience of a social identity, psychological presence of an audience and belief in one's visibility to the audience (p. 38).

In the control condition, participants read a text about the environmental crisis to also elicit threat and negative feelings in both conditions. In both conditions, we instructed participants to generate a list of arguments using 10 text blocks. We reasoned that providing several arguments would maximize the odds that the issue of gender and immigration would be cited by participants. Indeed, while Muslims tend to be perceived negatively in terms of gender equality among Belgian participants (Kuppens & Yzerbyt, 2012), requiring various arguments reduced the odds that participants would focus exclusively on other unrelated arguments (e.g., realistic threat).

Then, participants responded to a series of items about feminism (Attitudes towards Gender Equality Issues, Attachment to feminism, Inclusive feminism), a *laïcité* scale, an intergroup threat scale, a social distance scale, political orientation and a prejudice scale. Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed.

2.3 Hypotheses

We hypothesized that the interaction between intergroup threat and condition would significantly predict positive gender equality attitudes (H1). Specifically, we hypothesized that high-intergroup threat participants would be more positive towards gender equality when they have engaged in an argument about immigration (immigration condition) compared to high-intergroup threat participants in the environmental condition. We expected that low-intergroup threat participants would not report different levels of gender equality attitudes across conditions.

Similarly, we hypothesized that the same intergroup threat $\times$ condition interaction would predict attachment to feminism (H2), new *laïcité* (H3), and attachment to *laïcité* (H4).

To test our interaction hypotheses, we also conducted exploratory analyses using moderation by political orientation, prejudice and social distance, making the same predictions as for threat.

Turning to inclusive feminism, we expected a main negative effect of intergroup threat, such that high- intergroup threat participants would endorse it less than low- intergroup threat participants (H5). We expected no interaction effect, thus proving that the malleability of gender equality is not present in all conceptions of feminism.

Similarly, we expected that historic *laïcité*, a concept largely described as egalitarian and related to tolerance towards minorities in the literature (e.g. Roebroeck & Guimond, 2017), should be negatively associated with threat (H6).

2.4 Measures

Identification to Belgium. To make Belgian identification salient, we relied on the five-item scale by Klein et al. (2011), with items such as: ‘I feel Belgian’, ‘Being Belgian is an important aspect of how I define myself’. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.89$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 4).

Gender Equality attitudes. First, we measured participants attitudes towards a series of issues of gender equality typically associated with immigrants in the femonationalist discourse: harassment, women’s financial independence, household tasks distribution, freedom in clothing choice, possessiveness. In line with malleability, these items aimed to capture forms of sexism that would be deemed unequivocally unacceptable by non-threatened, egalitarian participants; but that would be evaluated differently by threatened, antiegalitarian participants, depending on the immigration context. That is, forms of sexism that antiegalitarian participants would potentially condemn more if associated with

immigrants and immigration (vs. environmental condition). The scale consisted of five items, e.g., ‘The authorities should be much more concerned about the issue of insistent flirting and inappropriate looks from certain men on public streets’, ‘The possessiveness and jealousy of some men towards their partner is often an expression of their love’ (reverse-coded). Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree). Higher scores depicted more positive attitudes towards gender equality ($\alpha=.64$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 5).

Attachment to feminism. Second, we measured participants’ agreement with feminism. Here, we refrained from asking attachment to ‘gender-equality’, to avoid a ceiling effect. The scale consisted of four items: ‘I feel attached to the values defended by feminism’, ‘Feminism is important to me’, ‘Feminism is an important part of my life’, ‘I feel close to the values defended by feminism’. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree). ($\alpha=.93$)

Inclusive Feminism. These items aimed at measuring a form of feminism inclusive of women wearing the headscarf, in line with the will for diversity in the third-wave feminism (e.g., Delphy, 2006). Participants indicated their agreement with three items: ‘Women should be able to wear the clothes they want regardless of their religion’, ‘Feminism must focus on giving voice to all women, including veiled women’, ‘It is completely normal for non-white women to ask to have as much visibility as white women’. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale ($\alpha=.70$).

Laïcité. Participants completed the *laïcité* scale by Roebroek and Guimond (2017) capturing three aspects of *laïcité*: new *laïcité*, historic *laïcité*, and attachment to *laïcité*. New *laïcité* ($\alpha=.78$) denotes the fact that religion and State are separate and requires citizens to keep religious practices private. A sample item is ‘Religious symbols must be prohibited for anyone working in an administration’. Item 3 was removed from this scale due to cross loadings in the principal component analysis. Historic *laïcité* ($\alpha=.77$) reflects the adherence to the principles of equality of religious beliefs and freedom of worship and is in line with the historical meaning of *laïcité* set forth in the 1905 law. A sample item is ‘For the good functioning of the country, individuals must be considered as citizens before being considered as native Belgians or immigrants, women or men, homosexual or heterosexual, etc’. Attachment to *laïcité* ($\alpha=.92$). refers to the degree to which one views *laïcité* as important, without the concept being previously defined and was measured with two items (e.g. ‘*Laïcité* is a principle that is very close to my heart’). The scale was slightly adapted to fit the Belgian context. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 6).

Intergroup threat. To measure outgroup threat towards Muslim immigrants, we relied on items from Stephan et al. (1999) scale: three items from tapping the realistic threat, and three items tapping symbolic threat. A sample item was: ‘Immigrants of Muslim faith benefit from this country more than they contribute to it’. Participants indicated their level of agreement

using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.91$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 7).

Social Distance. To measure social distance, participants responded to the Social Distance Scale from Mather et al. (2017). Participants indicated to what extent they agreed to a series of items reflecting growing social distance, e.g. ‘I would be willing to accept an immigrant of the Muslim faith as a close relative by marriage’ or ‘I would be willing to accept an immigrant of the Muslim faith as a citizen of my country’. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree). Then, the intensity score was calculated by using the social distance rank of the items as multiplier, giving more weight to item reflecting a bigger distance. The scale showed good reliability ($\alpha=.94$) The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 8).

Political orientation. To assess participants’ political orientation, we asked: ‘In terms of political orientation, would you say that you are rather on the left or on the right? To answer, please move the slider at the spot where you would situate yourself’ (from 1, completely left to 7, completely right).

Prejudice. To measure participants’ prejudice, we relied on the generalized prejudice scale from Dambrun and Guimond’s (2001) and adapted it to the Belgian context. The scale consisted of eight items (e.g., ‘immigrants of Muslim faith who live in Belgium should have the right to vote in local elections’, (reverse-coded), ‘Belgian nationality should not be granted easily’) and showed good reliability. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.92$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 3).

2.5 Results

2.5.1 Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are shown in Table 4. Positive gender equality attitudes were associated with attachment to feminism ($r=.60$, 95% CI [.51, .67], $p<.001$), with inclusive feminism ($r=.48$, 95% CI [.38, .57], $p<.001$). Unsurprisingly, they were negatively associated with right-wing political orientation ($r=-.42$, 95% CI [-.52, -.31], $p<.001$), intergroup threat ($r=-.47$, 95% CI [-.56, -.37], $p<.001$), prejudice ($r=-.50$, 95% CI [-.59, -.40,], $p<.001$) and social distance ($r=.16$, [-.28, -.03], $p=.01$).

Attachment to feminism was related to inclusive feminism ($r=.52$, 95% CI [.43, .61], $p<.001$). Interestingly, it was positively associated with attachment to *laïcité* ($r=.17$, 95% CI [.05, .29], $p<.01$). Again, unsurprisingly, it was negatively associated with antiegalitarian variables, namely right-wing political orientation ($r=-.50$, 95% CI [-.59, -.40], $p<.001$), intergroup threat ($r=-.59$, 95% CI [-.66, -.50], $p<.001$), prejudice ($r=-.65$, 95% CI [-.72, -.58], $p<.001$) and social distance ($r=-.26$, 95% CI [-.37, -.14], $p<.001$).

Inclusive feminism showed negative associations with new *laïcité* ($r=-.23$, 95% CI [-.34, -.11], $p<.001$), right-wing political orientation ($r=-.38$, 95% CI [-.48, -.26], $p<.001$),

intergroup threat ($r=-.52$, 95% CI $[-.60, -.42]$, $p<.001$), prejudice ($r=-.52$, 95% CI $[-.61, -.43]$, $p<.001$) and social distance ($r=-.28$, 95% CI $[-.39, -.16]$, $p<.001$)

New *laïcité* was negatively associated with attachment to feminism ($r=-.26$, 95% CI $[-.38, -.14]$, $p<.001$) and to inclusive feminism ($r=-.23$, 95% CI $[-.34, -.11]$, $p<.001$). It was positively related to attachment to *laïcité* ($r=.43$, 95% CI $[.33, .53]$, $p<.01$) but not related to historic *laïcité* ($p=.32$). New *laïcité* was also positively associated with right-wing political orientation ($r=.21$, 95% CI $[.09, .33]$, $p<.001$), threat ($r=.41$, 95% CI $[.30, .51]$, $p<.001$), prejudice ($r=.38$, 95% CI $[.27, .48]$, $p<.001$) and social distance with Muslim immigrants ($r=.26$, 95% CI $[.13, .37]$, $p<.001$)

Finally, attachment to *laïcité* was positively associated with both the new ($r=.43$, 95% CI $[.33, .53]$, $p<.001$) and the historic form of *laïcité* ($r=.19$, 95% CI $[.07, .31]$, $p=.002$) and was unrelated to political orientation, threat, prejudice or social distance ($ps>.60$).

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender equality	4.80	1.26									
2. Attach. feminism	4.14	1.83	.60** [.51, .67]								
3. Inclusive feminism	6.11	1.26	.48** [.38, .57]	.52** [.43, .61]							
4. New <i>laïcité</i>	4.56	1.47	-.10 [-.23, .02]	-.26** [-.38, -.14]	-.23** [-.34, -.11]						
5. Attach. <i>laïcité</i>	5.34	1.77	.09 [-.03, .21]	.17** [.05, .29]	.01 [-.11, .14]	.43** [.33, .53]					
6. Historic <i>laïcité</i>	6.08	1.01	.37** [.26, .48]	.36** [.24, .46]	.52** [.42, .61]	-.06 [-.19, .06]	.19** [.07, .31]				
7. Right-w. pol.	3.59	1.56	-.42** [-.52, -.31]	-.50** [-.59, -.40]	-.38** [-.48, -.26]	.21** [.09, .33]	-.02 [-.15, .10]	-.25** [-.37, -.13]			
8. Threat	3.30	1.72	-.47** [-.56, -.37]	-.59** [-.66, -.50]	-.52** [-.60, -.42]	.41** [.30, .51]	-.03 [-.16, .09]	-.52** [-.61, -.42]	.60** [.51, .67]		
9. Prejudice	3.71	1.70	-.50** [-.59, -.40]	-.65** [-.72, -.58]	-.52** [-.61, -.43]	.38** [.27, .48]	-.02 [-.15, .10]	-.44** [-.54, -.33]	.63** [.55, .70]	.86** [.83, .89]	
10. Social dist	41.48	28.47	-.16* [-.28, -.03]	-.26** [-.37, -.14]	-.28** [-.39, -.16]	.26** [.13, .37]	-.03 [-.16, .09]	-.45** [-.55, -.35]	.30** [.19, .41]	.59** [.50, .66]	.48** [.37, .57]

Note. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$

2.5.2 Regressions

We conducted analyses using R (R Core Team, 2013) and the `lm` and `lme4` packages (Bates et al., 2015).

Participants' intergroup threat scores, political orientation scores, prejudice scores and social distance scores were centered around the mean. Condition was coded -1 (environmental crisis) and 1 (immigration).

As a condition for using intergroup threat as a moderator, we first checked whether the threat scores did not differ depending on the experimental condition. As hoped, we found no significant difference ($p=.78$). Similarly, we found no effect of condition on social distance ($p=.84$), political orientation ($p=.91$) and prejudice ($p=.23$).

Thus, for each dependent variable, we first tested a multiple regression model using condition, intergroup threat and their interaction ('model 1a'). Then, we proceeded to test a model relying on other antiegalitarian variables: prejudice ('model 2a'), political orientation ('model 3a') and social distance ('model 4a') instead of threat.

Furthermore, we again ensure to control for participants' gender. Specifically, we tested our interaction models including gender as a control variable. In order to keep the results section reasonably long, we report results of models in which the interaction effect of condition $\times$ threat is significant or in which the interaction of condition $\times$ threat $\times$ gender is significant for variables for which we expected the interaction effect of malleability. As was done before, the second-order interaction models are labeled 'b' (e.g. model 1b).

Note that because very few of our participants chose the option 'other' for their gender, we coded these two categories (women = -0.5; men = 0.5).

We present a summary of the regressions in Table 5.

Table 5. *Summary of regressions on the variables of interest.*

<i>Variables used as Criterion</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Model Predictors</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Gender equality attitudes</i>	1a	Threat	*
		Cond	
		threat $\times$ cond	
	2a	Prejudice	*
		Cond	
		Prej $\times$ cond	
	3a	Political orientation	*
		Cond	
		Political ori. $\times$ cond	
	4a	Social distance	
		Cond	
		Social dist. $\times$ cond	
	1b	Threat	*
		Cond	
		Gender	*
		Threat $\times$ Cond	
		Threat $\times$ gender	*
		Condition $\times$ genre	
		Threat $\times$ cond $\times$ gender	✓
	4b	Social distance	
		Cond	
		Gender	*
		Soc. Dist $\times$ Cond	
		Soc. Dist $\times$ gender	
		Condition $\times$ genre	
		Soc. dist. $\times$ cond $\times$ gender	x
<i>Attachment to feminism</i>	1a	Threat	*
		Cond	
		threat $\times$ cond	
	2a	Prejudice	*
		Cond	
		Prej $\times$ cond	
	3a	Political orientation	*
		Cond	
		Political ori. $\times$ cond	
	4a	Social distance	*
		Cond	
		Social dist. $\times$ cond	
<i>Inclusive feminism</i>	1a	Threat	*

		Cond threat × cond	
<i>New laïcité</i>	1a	Threat Cond threat × cond	*
	2a	Prejudice Cond Prej × cond	*
	3a	Political orientation Cond Political ori. × cond	*
	4a	Social distance Cond Social dist. × cond	✓
<i>Attachment to laïcité</i>	1a	Threat Cond threat × cond	
	2a	Prejudice Cond Prej × cond	
	3a	Political orientation Cond Political ori. × cond	
	4a	Social distance Cond Social dist. × cond	*
			x
<i>Historic laïcité</i>	1a	Threat Cond threat × cond	*
			x

Note. * indicates significance. For interaction effects, x indicates unexpected interaction patterns, and ✓ indicates expected interaction patterns (among antiegalitarian participants, more gender equality attitudes, higher attachment to feminism, higher endorsement of new *laïcité* and higher attachment to *laïcité*, in the immigration vs. environment condition).

Gender equality attitudes

On Gender Equality attitudes, we regressed the condition, the outgroup threat and the interaction of both (model 1a). Outgroup threat was significant ($b=-0.37$, $t(242)=-6.29$, $p<.0001$, $Rsq = .141$), such that higher perceived threat from Muslim immigrants was associated with more negative attitudes towards gender equality. The condition was not significant ($p=.09$). Contrary to what was expected for H1, the interaction was not significant ($p=.45$). Results are represented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Multiple regression coefficients of predictors of Gender Equality Attitudes.*

Predictor	<i>b</i>	Standard error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	4.67	0.10	46.75	<.001***
Threat	-0.38	0.06	-6.29	<.001***
Condition	0.24	0.14	-1.69	.09
Threat $\times$ condition	0.06	0.08	0.75	.45

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$.

When using a model including gender as the control variable (model 1b), we found relevant interactions. The model is presented in Table 7 below. A negative threat effect emerged ($b=-0.25$, $t(236)=-3.81$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .058$), as well as a negative effect of gender ($b=-0.86$, $t(236)=-3.74$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .056$), with men adhering less to the gender equality stances. We also found a threat $\times$ gender interaction ($b=-0.43$, $t(236)=-3.35$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .045$), such that women's adherence to gender equality attitudes items did not differ according to their level of threat ($p=.79$), whereas among men, immigration threat predicted less adherence to these items ($b=-0.46$, $t(236)=-6.65$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .158$). Finally, we found an interaction between threat, condition and gender ($b= 0.45$, $t(236)= 2.55$, $p=.01$, $Rsq = .027$). Simple slope analyses revealed very interesting results. Indeed, the interaction between threat and condition was significant among men ($b= 0.20$, $t(236)= 2.06$, $p=.04$, $Rsq = .018$), but not among women ($p=.09$). More precisely, among threatened men, the immigration condition fostered higher adherence to gender equality attitudes ($b= 0.48$, $t(236)= 2.25$, $p=.03$, $Rsq = .021$), whereas among less threatened men, condition did not affect gender equality attitudes ($p=.42$). This effect, albeit dependent on gender, fitted our malleability of ideology hypothesis. It is represented in Figure 2.

Table 7. Multiple regression coefficients of predictors of Gender Equality attitudes

Predictor	<i>b</i>	Std. error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	4.95	0.12	42.90	<.001***
Threat	-0.25	0.06	-3.81	<.001***
Condition	0.05	0.16	0.34	.74
Gender	-0.86	0.23	-3.74	<.001***
Threat × cond	-0.03	0.09	-0.32	.75
Threat × gender	-0.43	0.13	-3.35	<.001***
Cond × gender	0.18	0.32	0.56	.58
Threat × cond × gender	0.45	0.18	2.55	.01 *

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$.

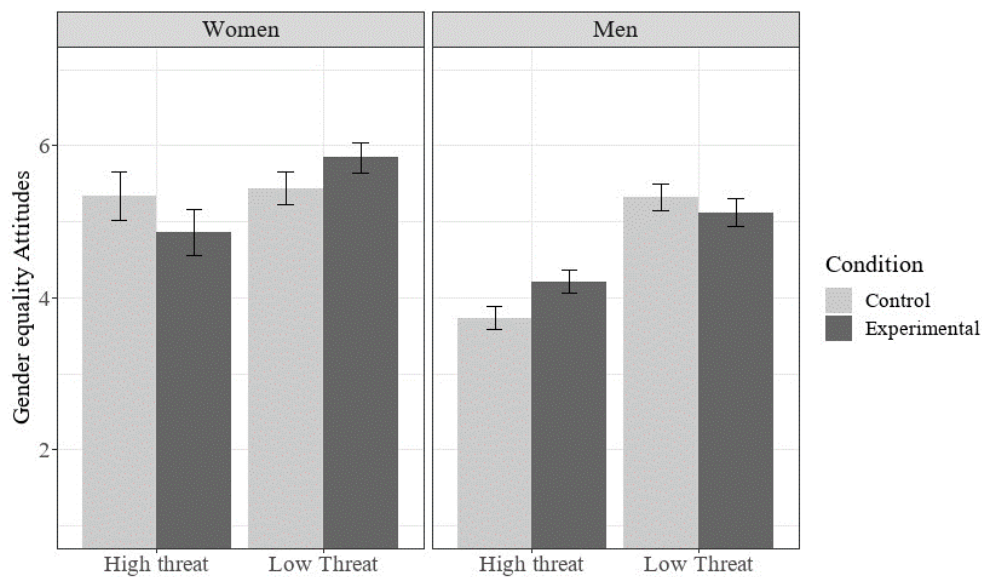


Figure 2. Gender equality attitudes depending on gender, condition and threat levels.

We then entered the same model, now using prejudice as a moderator instead of SDO (model 2a). We found a main negative effect of prejudice on gender equality attitudes ($b = -0.38$, $t(242) = -6.60$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .152$) but no effect of condition ($p = .25$) and no interaction effect ($p = .70$).

When using right-wing political orientation as a moderator instead of SDO (model 3a), we found a main negative effect of right-wing political orientation on gender equality

attitudes ($b=-0.36$, $t(242)=-5.46$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .11$). We found no effect of condition ($p=.09$), and no effect of the interaction between political orientation and condition ($p=.70$).

Finally, using social distance as a moderator in the same model (model 4a), we found no effect predicting gender equality attitude, neither from social distance ($p=.12$), nor from condition ($p=.11$) or from the interaction ($p=.77$).

Yet, in the model including gender as a control variable (thus using social distance, condition, gender and their interactions, model 4b), we found again the same negative effect of (men) gender on gender equality attitudes ($b=-1.00$, $t(236)=-4.09$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .066$), and an interaction effect of social distance, condition and gender ($b= 0.04$, $t(236)= 2.20$, $p<.01$, $Rsq = .032$). The model is displayed in Table 8 below. Unfortunately, here, the interaction did not take the expected shape. The interaction of social distance and condition was significant among women only ($b=-0.03$, $t(236)=-2.59$, $p=.01$, $Rsq = .028$). Women with high social distance towards immigrants reporting less gender equality attitudes in the immigration condition compared to the control condition ($b=-1.07$, $t(236)=-2.00$, $p=.046$, $Rsq = .017$) whereas women with a small social distance reported more gender equality attitudes in the immigration condition ($b= 0.90$, $t(236)= 2.18$, $p=.03$, $Rsq = .02$). As was the case for Study 1, the decrease in gender equality attitudes among antiegalitarian individuals exposed to immigration might be attributed to various factors. Again, the exposure to immigration issues might have activated a categorization as antiegalitarian and associated belief system (Turner et al., 1987). It might have also encouraged antiegalitarian individuals to affirm group-identity values (Badea, 2022), or fostered a form of reactance (Brehm, 1966), or feelings of threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2017).

Table 8. Multiple regression coefficients of predictors of Gender Equality attitudes

Predictor	<i>b</i>	Standard error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	4.93	0.12	40.36	<.001***
Socdist	-0.0007	0.0049	-0.15	.88
Condition	0.04	0.17	0.25	.80
Gender	-1.00	0.24	-4.09	<.001***
Socdist × cond	-0.01	0.01	-1.96	.05
Socdist × gender	-0.01	0.01	-1.33	.19
Condition × gender	0.26	0.34	0.76	.45
Socdist × cond × gender	0.04	0.01	2.80	<.01 **

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$.

Attachment to feminism

Continuing on gender equality, we then regressed the condition, the outgroup threat and the interaction of both, this time to predict attachment to feminism (model 1a). Intergroup

threat emerged as a significant negative predictor of attachment to feminism ($b=-0.65$, $t(242)=-8.09$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .213$), but neither the experimental manipulation ($p=.76$), nor the interaction ($p=.67$) played a significant role, thus not validating H2.

Using prejudice, right-wing political orientation and social distance as moderators, we found the same pattern of results: a main negative effect of the antiegalitarian moderator on attachment to feminism ($ps<.01$), but no effects of condition ($p>.61$) and no interaction effects ($p>.51$).

Inclusive feminism

Turning to inclusive feminism, we expected that only intergroup threat would (negatively) predict inclusive feminism. Here, results confirm our expectations about the role of threat ($b=-0.34$, $t(242)=-5.81$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .12$), confirming H5. Also confirming our expectations, condition ($p=.71$) and the interaction did not predict inclusive feminism ($p=.38$).

New laïcité

Turning to *laïcité*, we started by examining the possibility of malleability on the new *laïcité* variable. We created a model with new *laïcité* as criterion and with condition, outgroup threat and the interaction as predictors (model 1a). Results showed that outgroup threat positively predicted endorsement of new *laïcité* ($b=0.34$, $t(242)=4.625$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .081$), but the manipulation and the interaction did not, with respectively $p=.84$ and $p=.85$. Once again, we could not validate H3.

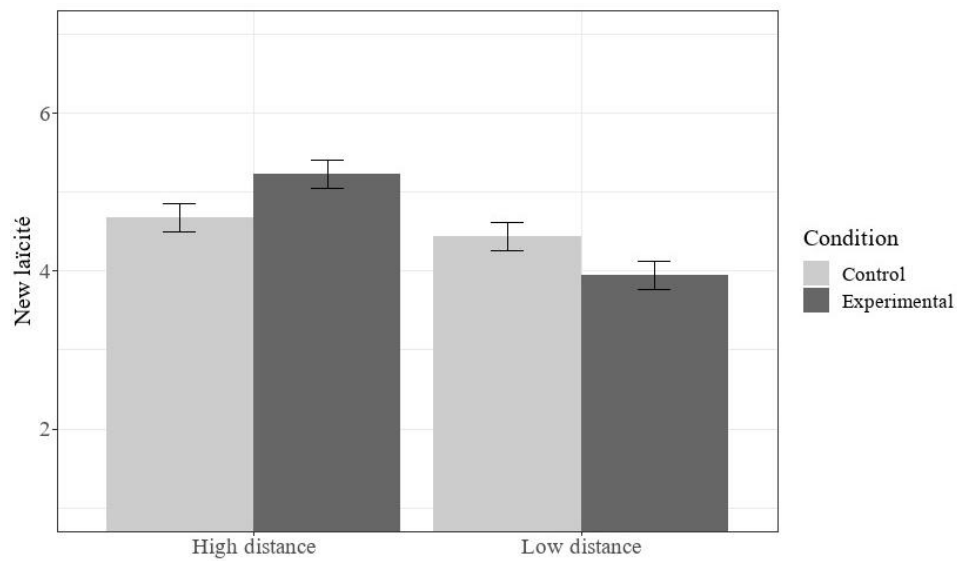
Entering the same model, but using prejudice (model 2a), we found the same pattern, with prejudiced participants adhering more to new *laïcité* ($b=0.36$, $t(242)=4.98$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .093$), but no condition or interaction effect. The same pattern emerged with the model relying on political orientation, right-wing participants adhered more to new *laïcité* ($b=0.21$, $t(242)=2.52$, $p=.01$, $Rsq = .026$), but again, no condition or interaction effect emerged ($ps>.90$).

Surprisingly, when using social distance towards Muslims as a moderator, social distance was not associated with new *laïcité* ($p=.34$), there was no effect of condition, but we found an interaction effect ($b=0.02$, $t(242)=2.92$, $p<.01$, $Rsq = .034$). The model is represented in Table 9. Among participants having a high social distance, the immigration condition (vs. environment condition) was associated with higher adherence to new *laïcité* ($b=0.55$, $t(242)=2.17$, $p=.03$, $Rsq = .019$), which is in line with the hypothesis of malleability. Participants having a low social distance did not shift their adherence to new *laïcité* in both conditions ($p=.05$). Figure 3 represents the interaction.

Table 9. Multiple regression coefficients of predictors of New *laïcité*

Predictor	<i>b</i>	Std. error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	4.56	0.13	36.13	<.001***
Social distance	0.004	0.01	0.95	.34
Condition	0.03	0.18	0.17	.87
Socdist × cond	0.02	0.01	2.92	.004**

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$. ‘.’ indicates $p < .10$.

Figure 3. Adherence to new *laïcité* depending on condition and social distance levels.

Attachment to *laïcité*

Looking at attachment to *laïcité*, we also hypothesized interactions effect, following the literature on malleability. Yet, in the model using intergroup threat, condition, and their interaction as predictors, none of the predictors reached significance ($p > .26$). Based on this, H4 was not validated.

We also found no significant predictors when using political orientation as the moderator in the model, or when using prejudice.

However, when using social distance, social distance emerged as a negative predictor of attachment to *laïcité* ($b = -0.01$, $t(242) = -2.29$, $p = .03$, $Rsq = .021$), and although condition was not significant, the social distance × condition interaction was significant ($b = 0.02$, $t(242) = 2.72$, $p < .01$, $Rsq = .03$). Here, contrary to what was expected, participants who felt more social distance to Muslims remained constant across conditions ($p = .26$). Interestingly, though, participants who felt less social distance to Muslims felt less attached to *laïcité* in the

immigration condition ($b=-0.86$, $t(242)=-2.73$, $p<.01$, $Rsq = .03$). This might suggest that participants were aware of the weaponization of *laïcité*, and experience less proximity to *laïcité*, or wanted to temporarily distance themselves from it. The pattern is represented in Figure 4.

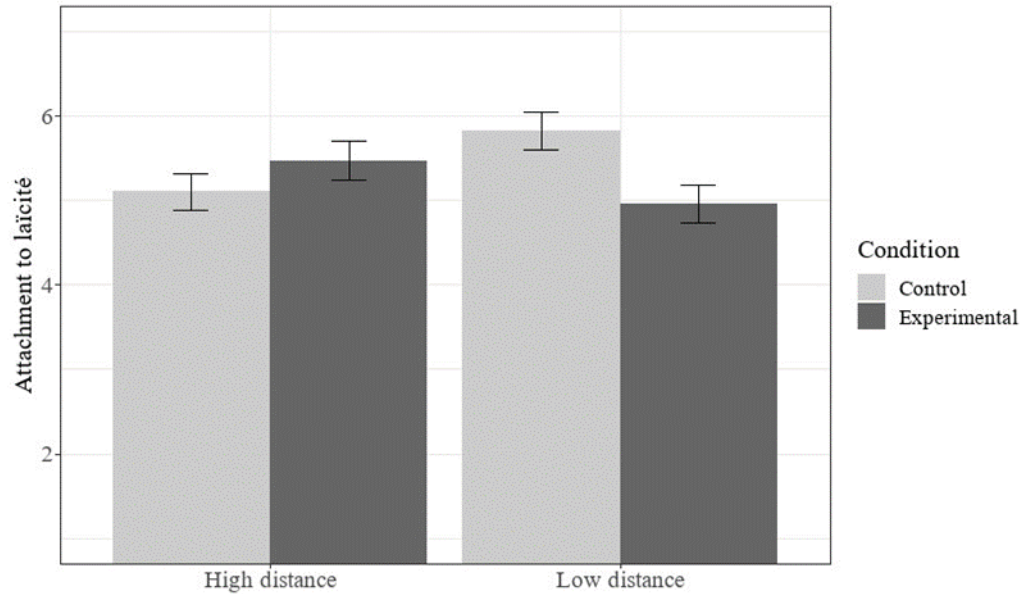


Figure 4. Attachment to *laïcité* depending on condition and social distance levels.

Historic *laïcité*

Finally, turning to historic *laïcité*, following H6, we expected that intergroup threat would be a negative predictor but that condition and the interaction would not play a role. Results partly confirmed this hypothesis. Threat was indeed a strong negative predictor ($b=-0.23$, $t(242)=-4.91$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .091$), condition was not ($p=.74$), but surprisingly, the interaction between threat and condition reached significance ($b=-0.15$, $t(242)=-2.36$, $p=.02$, $Rsq = .023$). Looking at simple slope analyses, the effect of condition at +1SD and -1 SD were not significant, but the slopes changed direction. Specifically, among threatened participants (at +1SD), the condition slope was descriptively negative *laïcité* albeit not significantly ($b=-0.30$, $t(242)=-1.89$, $p=.06$), while the condition slope was descriptively positive among less threatened participants, again not significantly ($b=0.22$, $t(242)=1.45$, $p=.15$). Descriptively, this suggests that participants who felt threatened and who were asked to defend their position about immigration reported a smaller adherence to the idea of historic *laïcité*, while participants who felt much less threat increased their adherence to this egalitarian principle.

2.6 Discussion

In this study, we bridged the literature on identity performance and the literature on ideology malleability, focusing on the issue of immigration and sexism. While this question had already been studied through the lens of politicians' discourse analyses, to our knowledge, no experimental study had studied how *lay individuals* will shift their attitudes towards gender equality and *laïcité* depending on the audience situation they are in. To explore this question, we borrowed from a paradigm from Sindic et al. (2018). We asked our participants to present a series of arguments explaining their stance on Muslim immigration in Belgium, with the aim to convince an uncertain person. We expected that participants who were placed in the immigration condition, and who felt threatened by immigration, would rely on gender-related and *laïcité*-related arguments to defend their position. Indeed, research has shown that Muslims are typically associated with sexism and proselytism (e.g., Cesari, 2002; Kuppens & Yzerbyt, 2012), and that mobilizers typically seek to capitalize on shared stereotypes in making their case (Klein et al., 2007). In turn, we expected that these participants would shape and endorse *laïcité* and gender equality.

Results did not confirm our hypotheses. First, with regard to gender equality, we did not find the expected interaction between condition and threat, neither for gender equality attitudes, nor for attachment to gender equality. Although we found second-order interactions between antiegalitarian variables, gender, and condition, the patterns were inconsistent. Specifically, the pattern differed according to participants' gender. Among high-threat men, we found a malleability pattern, showing higher gender equality attitudes in the Islam condition. In contrast, high-social distance women decreased their levels of gender equality in the Islam condition. However, interaction patterns were incongruent and intermittent, which prompted again caution. In sum, this study could not unveil a malleable endorsement of gender equality by threatened participants.

Second, with regard to *laïcité*, results were also largely disappointing. Unsurprisingly, intergroup threat, prejudice, and right-wing political orientation were important predictors of new *laïcité*. However, when looking at the interaction of condition and antiegalitarian variables, results were again inconsistent: we only found the expected differences across conditions when using social distance as the moderator. That is, we found that participants who had reported higher social distance towards Muslims endorsed new *laïcité* more in the immigration condition, compared to the environmental condition. While this supported our malleability hypothesis, we were unable to find this expected pattern with other – ideologically close – hypothesized moderators.

Third, concerning attachment to *laïcité*, results could again not confirm our malleability hypothesis. However, we found that *low*-social distance participants reported *less* attachment to *laïcité* in the immigration condition, compared to the environmental condition. This detachment among egalitarians might translate an awareness that *laïcité*, in the realm of immigration, tends to be restrictive.

Fourth, with regard to the more tolerant conception of historic *laïcité*, we did not expect any interaction between threat and condition. Nevertheless, participants with higher levels of

intergroup threat adhered less to historic *laïcité* in the immigration condition. As was aforementioned, this decrease in egalitarian values can be attributed to various factors. The immigration condition may have encouraged antiegalitarians' categorization and activate their group values (Turner et al., 1987), encouraged individuals to affirm their antiegalitarian group-identity values (Badea, 2022), or led to a form of reactance (Brehm, 1966) or threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2017).

Various reasons might explain these incongruent – largely insignificant – results. First, threatened participants might not have associated the social category with the relevant content. It is possible that participants in the immigration condition did not associate Muslims with problematic conceptions of gender and *laïcité*, despite our efforts to make Belgian identity salient and despite recurring stereotypes associated with Muslims. For example, participants might have relied on other themes to defend their positions, such as realistic threats posed by immigration. To gain insight into this, we analyzed participants' written responses using Iramuteq, a software allowing to study textual data through a series of lexicometric analyses (Loubère & Ratinaud, 2014; Ratinaud, 2009). The specificity analysis enabled us to look at the distribution of words within part of the corpus. We found that the word 'woman' (and its derived forms, such as 'women') was used significantly more by participants in the immigration condition ($p < .001$) compared to the control condition. Other participants in the immigration condition relied on similar themes, with words such as rape, violence, aggression. Although these results were reassuring, not *all* participants used such words.

A second reason might be that participants did not translate the activated intergroup stereotypes and categorizations in their responses to the scales measuring gender equality and *laïcité*. While we hoped that participants would answer cohesively throughout the questionnaire, the writing of femonationalist arguments did not reflect in subsequent gender equality scales.

In conclusion, the present research sought to unveil the strategic endorsement of gender equality in the context of an audience setting. While past research has confirmed the existence of a weaponization of gender equality in politicians' discourse (Farris, 2017), this study did not allow to confirm the existence of such a mechanism among lay participants.

3. Gender equality and *laïcité* weaponized against threat from immigrants and their supporters (Study 3)

In this study, we aimed to elicit a sense of threat, but shifted the focus from highlighting minority threats to exploring the threat posed by the majority's alleged excessive progressivism and willingness to meet minority demands. Indeed, while our threat manipulations were often inspired by paradigms developed in the United States (e.g., Knowles et al., 2009; White et al., 2021; White & Crandall, 2017), the proportion of Muslims in Belgium and Europe is in no way comparable to the proportion of Black/African-American individuals in the United States. Thus, we hypothesized that presenting the threat as emanating from not just the (minority) Muslim population in Belgium, but also from the majority, could increase participants' perception of threat. In order to achieve this, we drew on the discourse highlighting the belief held by a segment of the population that minority groups and their allies frequently overstep boundaries. This belief is well illustrated by the universalist feminist Caroline Fourest who claimed that a part of the left exhibits complacency towards radical Islam. She called them 'Islamism's useful idiots' (Le Monde, 2006). The goal of this study was to induce a sense of threat among participants by presenting elements indicating that a significant number of Belgians endorse minority demands for 'unreasonable' accommodations.

3.1 Participants

In this study, 400 participants were recruited using a Facebook ad targeting French-speaking Belgians. The effect size was not estimated in advance and was determined based on the cost of Facebook advertising. Twenty participants were removed from the dataset due to incorrect completion of attention checks or Muslim religion. The mean age was 44.16 ($SD=12.26$), 66% were female, 33% were male and 1% identified to another gender. Sixty-seven percent of participants had a higher education degree (bachelor or more).

3.2 Procedure

Participants completed an online questionnaire. After providing informed consent, they were invited to respond to a series of demographic questions, to a social dominance orientation scale and a political orientation scale. Then, they were assigned to one of two conditions: in the experimental condition, they read a vignette about debates and concerns surrounding the tolerance that some Belgians show towards requests from minorities and Muslims in Belgium. The goal was to induce a feeling of threat stemming from an excessive willingness to accommodate minorities and their allies, thereby jeopardizing Belgian traditions and values. In the control condition, participants read a vignette about the climate and ecological crises (climate change, extinctions, rising temperatures, etc.). Inducing a feeling of negativity (i.e., threat) in both conditions would allow us to discard a valence explanation. In both conditions, the vignette was one page long, and participants were asked to indicate what came to their mind upon reading the text in a minimum of 3 lines. This was

intended to ensure that participants embraced the subject they were exposed to. The complete vignette texts can be found in the Appendices. An excerpt of the vignettes is presented here:

‘Moreover, current events are full of examples of citizens actively campaigning for greater tolerance towards Islam and, more globally, towards cultural and religious minorities. For example, these pressure groups have spoken out against the ban on ritual slaughter (‘halal’ slaughter). Recently, they have also campaigned for the authorization of ‘single-gender’ events (events authorized only to ‘non-white’ people or only to Muslim women, in this case). Calling for greater openness and tolerance towards minorities, many have also taken a stand in favor of the removal of statues of historical figures such as Leopold II. In reaction to these movements, some people denounce the excesses and fear that social unity and cohesion are being undermined. By constantly referring citizens to an identity based on their origin or religion (for example, ‘non-white’ or ‘Muslim’), we would divide ourselves and forget the common Belgian identity and values that bring us together.’

‘In addition, research is pointing to an increase in extreme weather events with the potential to produce catastrophic impacts. We can cite the example of an increase in the frequency of hurricanes, major storms, violent thunderstorms or heat waves causing more widespread and destructive fires. The increase in the number of heat waves will lead to a significant increase in heat-related deaths, the incidence of allergies and respiratory and cardiovascular diseases (especially among young children, the elderly and the most fragile). At the agricultural level, productivity will be disrupted, increasing the risk of famines (especially in the arid regions of the tropics and subtropics).’

After the manipulation, participants answered a manipulation check question, gender equality measures (i.e., acceptance of myths about sexual aggression, ranking of political issues, ranking of political measures, sentencing for sexism-related offenses), a *laïcité* scale, a prejudice scale and to a right-wing authoritarianism scale. Finally, they read the debriefing.

3.3 Hypotheses

We hypothesize that the interaction between social dominance orientation and condition would significantly predict rape myths acceptance (H1), ranking of gender equality (H2), ranking of street harassment (H3) and penalty for sexism-related offenses (H4). Specifically, participants with a low SDO score would not change their support according to the condition they are in. Conversely, high-SDO participants would show more support for gender equality in the experimental (tolerant Belgians) condition, compared to the control condition: lower myth rape acceptance, higher ranking of gender equality issue, higher ranking of street harassment, lower rape myths and longer sentencing for sexism-related offenses.

We also hypothesized that the interaction between SDO and condition would predict support for new *laïcité* and attachment to *laïcité*. Again, high-SDO participants would

express higher support for new *laïcité* and higher attachment to *laïcité* in the experimental condition compared to the control condition, while low-SDO participants would not shift.

Finally, in an explorative approach, we examined whether political orientation and RWA could be potential moderators of the interaction with the condition. We made the same prediction for these two moderators as for SDO.

3.4 Measures

Social Dominance Orientation. To measure social dominance orientation, we used the French version of the SDO scale from Duarte et al. (2004), originally developed by Pratto et al. (1994). The scale consisted of 10 items (e.g., ‘Lower groups should stay in their place’). Participants answered on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). This scale showed excellent reliability ($\alpha=.88$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 9).

Political Orientation. To assess participants’ political orientation, we relied on three items: ‘In terms of political orientation, would you say that you are rather on the left or on the right’ (from 1, completely left to 7, completely right), ‘Would you say you are more progressive or conservative?’ (from 1 completely progressist, to 7, completely conservative), and ‘would you say you are rather open to change or rather traditional?’ (from 1, completely open to change, to 8, completely traditional). This unidimensional scale had a good reliability ($\alpha=.83$).

Manipulation check. In order to verify that a sense of threat to ingroup tolerance was induced to a greater extent in the experimental condition, participants responded to the item ‘To what extent do you feel concerned about the tolerance that some express towards immigrants in Belgium?’ using a scale from 1 (not at all concerned) to 7 (extremely concerned).

Gender equality ranking. Participants ranked a list of eight political issues in terms of personal importance (1= most important, 8=least important). Within this list, was ‘equality between men and women’, but also ‘war in Ukraine’, ‘treatment of Uighurs in China’, ‘Mass surveillance (systematic collection of informatic data)’, ‘protection of older people’, ‘health care access and cost’, ‘Unemployment in Belgium’, and ‘inflation and purchasing power’. The list items were presented in a random order. We examined how high this specific issue was ranked across conditions. The other issues were not treated.

Street harassment ranking. Participants ranked a list of policies from the most important (=1) in their opinion, to the least important (=8). This time, we looked at the ranking of ‘greater prevention and punishment of street harassment against women’. The rankings of the other five of the list were not treated (‘Guarantee universal health cover’, ‘Increase the Belgian minimum wage’, ‘Regulate Walloon arms export licences’, ‘Increase funding for higher education’, ‘Reduce public transport fares for young workers’). The list items were presented in a random order.

‘Sentencing for Sexism-related offenses. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they would want to extend judicial sentences for various sexism-related offenses and crimes: sexual harassment, street harassment, rape and domestic violence. Responses were made on a 7-point Likert scale (1= ‘Leaving the sentence unchanged’, 2= ‘increase it by 10%’, 3= ‘increase it by 25%’, 4= ‘increase it by 50%’, 5= increase it by 75%’, 6= increase it by 90%’, 7= increase it by 100% (double it)’ ($\alpha=.90$).

Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression. Participants responded to the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression scale from Helmke et al., (2014), translated in French. Participants indicated their agreement with eleven items (e.g., ‘Many women tend to misinterpret a well-meant gesture as a ‘sexual assault’’) using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.90$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 10).

Laïcité. Participants completed the *laïcité* scale by Roebroeck & Guimond, capturing three aspects of *laïcité*: new *laïcité* ($\alpha=.79$), historic *laïcité* ($\alpha=.84$), and attachment to *laïcité* ($\alpha=.92$), using a scale ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). The tenth item was removed from the new *laïcité* scale for reliability reasons. The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 6).

Prejudice. To measure participants’ prejudice, we used the same scale as in the previous study. It showed good reliability ($\alpha=.92$) The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 3).

Right Wing Authoritarianism. Right-Wing-Authoritarianism (RWA) was measured using 6 items from Bizumic and Duckitt’s scale (2018) (e.g., ‘The facts about crime and recent public disturbances show that we must get tougher on troublemakers if we are to preserve law and order’). Participants answered on a scale ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). This scale showed good reliability ($\alpha=.67$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 11).

3.5 Results

3.5.1 Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are shown in Table 10. As expected, social dominance orientation was correlated with higher support for new *laïcité* ($r=-.29$, 95% CI [.17, .40], $p<.0001$), lower support for historic *laïcité* ($r=-.52$, 95% CI [-.61, -.43], $p<.0001$). It was unrelated to attachment to *laïcité* ($p=.84$).

Turning to gender equality variables, SDO was related to acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression ($r=-.37$, 95% CI [.26, .47], $p<.0001$), to a lower ranking of gender equality as an issue ($r=-.22$, 95% CI [-.33, -.09], $p<.0006$). It was not correlated to the ranking of street harassment ($p=.10$), neither to the sentencing for Sexism-related offenses ($p=.52$), nor to attachment to *laïcité* ($p=.85$).

Table 10. Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Rank Gender equality	5.11	2.14										
2. Rank street harassment	3.69	1.53	.22**									
3. Rape Myths	2.40	1.16	[.09, .33] -.33** [-.44, -.21]	-.09 [-.21, .03]								
4. Sentencing sex. crimes	5.04	1.88	.10 [-.02, .22]	.26** [.14, .38]	-.11 [-.23, .02]							
5. New <i>laïcité</i>	4.95	1.63	-.11 [-.23, .02]	.01 [-.12, .13]	.33** [.22, .44]	.05 [-.08, .17]						
6. Attachment <i>laïcité</i>	5.66	1.77	.15* [.02, .27]	-.03 [-.16, .09]	.00 [-.12, .13]	-.02 [-.14, .10]	.38** [.27, .48]					
7. Historic <i>laïcité</i>	6.18	1.04	.10 [-.03, .22]	-.05 [-.17, .08]	-.28** [-.39, -.16]	.01 [-.11, .14]	-.09 [-.21, .04]	.20** [.07, .31]				
8. SDO	2.11	1.14	-.22** [-.33, -.09]	.11 [-.02, .23]	.37** [.26, .47]	-.04 [-.16, .08]	.29** [.17, .40]	-.01 [-.14, .11]	-.52** [-.61, -.43]			
9. Political orientation	3.03	1.37	-.27** [-.38, -.15]	.04 [-.08, .17]	.37** [.26, .48]	.08 [-.04, .21]	.23** [.11, .34]	-.13* [-.25, -.00]	-.43** [-.53, -.32]	.51** [.41, .60]		
10. RWA	2.85	1.06	-.24** [-.35, -.12]	.17** [.05, .29]	.27** [.15, .38]	.25** [.13, .36]	.14* [.02, .26]	-.18** [-.30, -.05]	-.30** [-.41, -.18]	.39** [.28, .49]	.45** [.34, .54]	
11. Prejudice	3.67	1.73	-.24** [-.35, -.12]	.08 [-.04, .21]	.53** [.44, .62]	.13* [.00, .25]	.44** [.33, .54]	-.04 [-.17, .08]	-.53** [-.62, -.44]	.55** [.45, .63]	.66** [.59, .73]	.51** [.41, .60]

Note. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$

3.5.2 Regressions

We conducted analyses using R (R Core Team, 2013) and the *lm* and *lme4* packages (Bates et al., 2015).

First, we centered participants' SDO scores, political orientation and RWA scores around the mean. Condition was coded -1 (climate and environmental crises condition) and 1 (tolerant Belgians condition).

We first tested a multiple regression model using condition, intergroup threat and their interaction, then proceeded to test a model relying on other antiegalitarian variables (prejudice, political orientation and social distance) instead of threat.

For each DV, we tested a model including SDO, condition and their interaction (model 1a), but also models including RWA (model 2a) and political orientation (model 3a) instead of SDO, thus considered as proxies of antiegalitarianism.

Furthermore, for the variables concerned with a hypothesis of malleability, we also ran models in which the gender of participants was controlled. Again, we reported only models in which the interaction between the antiegalitarian moderator and condition (first-order interaction) or on the interaction between the antiegalitarian moderator, condition, and the gender (second-order interaction) emerged.

We present a summary of the regressions in Table 11.

Table 11. *Summary of regressions on the variables of interest.*

<i>Variables used as Criterion</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Model Predictors</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression</i>	1a	SDO	*
		Cond	
		SDO $\times$ cond	x
	2a	RWA	*
		Cond	
		RWA $\times$ cond	
	3a	Political orientation	*
		Cond	
		Political ori. $\times$ cond	
<i>Ranking of 'gender equality'</i>	1a	SDO	
		Cond	
		SDO $\times$ cond	
	2a	RWA	
		Cond	
		RWA $\times$ cond	x
	3a	Political orientation	*
		Cond	

	2b	Political ori. $\times$ cond RWA Cond Gender RWA $\times$ cond RWA $\times$ Gender Gender $\times$ cond RWA $\times$ Gender $\times$ cond	x
<i>Ranking of street harassment</i>	1a	SDO Cond SDO $\times$ cond	
	2a	RWA Cond RWA $\times$ cond	
	3a	Political orientation Cond Political ori. $\times$ cond	
<i>Sentencing for sexism offenses</i>	1a	SDO Cond SDO $\times$ cond	
	2a	RWA Cond RWA $\times$ cond	*
	3a	Political orientation Cond Political ori. $\times$ cond	
<i>New laïcité</i>	1a	SDO Cond SDO $\times$ cond	*
	2a	RWA Cond RWA $\times$ cond	*
	3a	Political orientation Cond Political ori. $\times$ cond	*
<i>Attachment to laïcité</i>	1a	SDO Cond SDO $\times$ cond	
	2a	RWA	*

		Cond	
		RWA $\times$ cond	
	3a	Political orientation	*
		Cond	
		Political ori. $\times$ cond	
<i>Historic laïcité</i>	1a	SDO	*
		Cond	
		SDO $\times$ cond	

Note. * indicates significance. For interaction effects, x indicates unexpected interaction patterns, and $\checkmark$ indicates expected interaction patterns (among antiegalitarian participants, in the immigration vs. environment condition: less acceptance of rape myths, higher ranking of gender equality and street harassment, higher sentencing for sexism-related offenses higher endorsement of new *laïcité* and higher attachment to *laïcité*).

Manipulation check

First, we assessed whether the manipulation created an effect on participants' level of threat towards majority's tolerance against immigrants. Results revealed that that was not the case, $b = -.30$, $t(256) = -1.163$, $p = .25$. Although these results were not encouraging, we proceeded with the regressions as we reasoned that participants might act upon the feeling of threat without acknowledging it in the manipulation check.

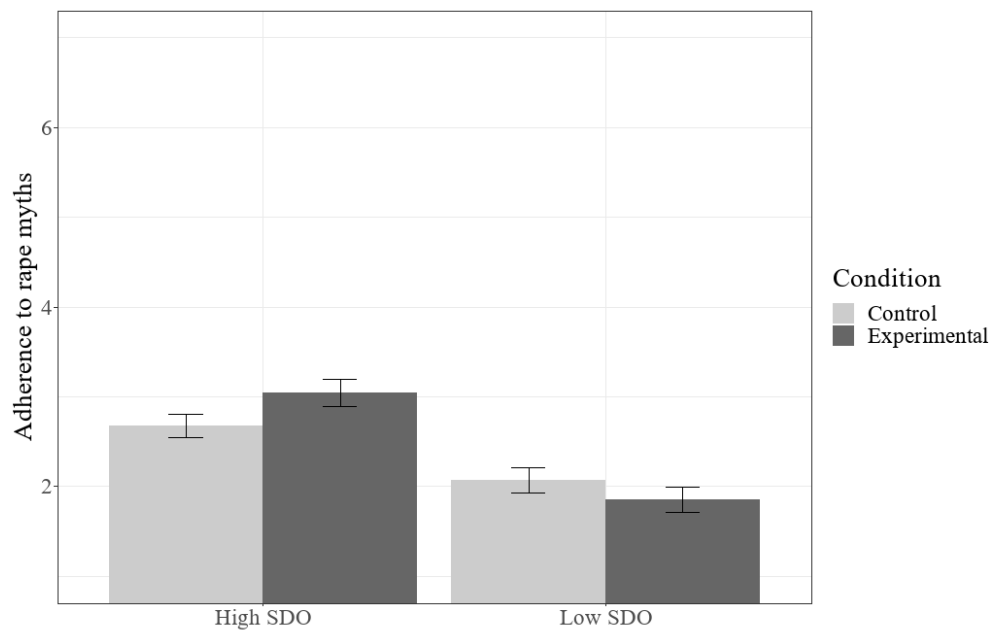
Rape myths

Following our hypothesis of gender equality malleability, we had hypothesized that antiegalitarian participants would endorse less this victim-blaming scale, in the experimental condition, compared to the environment condition. To test this, we conducted a regression with the variable of Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression as the criterion and SDO, condition, and the product of these two variables as predictors (model 1a). SDO was a significant predictor ($b = .27$, $t(244) = 3.27$, $p = .001$, $Rsq = .148$) such that people having higher levels of SDO expressed higher acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression. The condition factor was not significant ($p = .63$), and the interaction between the two factors was significant but not in the expected direction ($b = .26$, $t(244) = 2.12$, $p = .04$, $Rsq = .018$), thus not validating H1. Indeed, simple slope analyses revealed that among high-SDO participants (at +1SD), the slope of the condition factor was descriptively, but not significantly positive ($b = .18$, $t(244) = 1.84$, $p = .07$), while among low-SDO participants, the condition slope was negative, albeit again not significant ($b = -.11$, $t(244) = -1.15$, $p = .25$). This suggested that among high-SDO participants, the experimental condition fostered higher levels of myth acceptance, while among low-SDO participants, the manipulation did not foster a shift in levels rape myths acceptance. The results are reported in Table 12 and represented in Figure 5.

Table 12. *Multiple regression coefficients of predictors of Rape Myths Acceptance.*

Predictor	b	Std.error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	2.37	0.09	25.22	<.001***
Condition	0.07	0.14	0.49	.62
SDO	0.27	0.08	3.27	.0012**
SDO× cond	0.26	0.12	2.11	.035*

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$.

Figure 5. *Acceptance of rape myths depending on condition and social dominance levels.*

Next, we aimed to enter the same model, thus time using RWA instead of SDO. Before doing that, we checked that RWA levels were not impacted by the condition, which was indeed not the case ($p = .30$). Looking at the model comprising RWA, condition and their interaction as predictors (model 2a), we found a positive association between RWA and acceptance of the rape myths (i.e., victim-blaming) ($b = .31$, $t(244) = 3.40$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .07$) but no effect of condition ($p = .90$) and no interaction effect ($p = .80$).

Using political orientation as the moderator, we found a positive effect of right-wing political orientation, such that right-wing participants adhered more to rape myths blaming the victim ($b = .24$, $t(244) = 3.57$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .146$), no effect of the manipulation ($p = .93$) and no interaction effect ($p = .10$).

Ranking of 'equality between men and women' among other political issues

Then, we looked at the ranking measures. We conducted a regression with the ranking of 'equality between men and women' as the criterion. Here, a higher number in the dependent variable meant a higher importance for participants. SDO level, condition, and the product of these two variables were entered as predictors (model 1a). No significant predictor emerged ($p > .10$).

Using RWA as the moderator (model 2a), we found an interaction between condition and RWA ($b = -.52$, $t(244) = -2.06$, $p = .04$, $Rs^2 = .017$). However, when looking at +1SD and -1SD, simple slopes were not significant. Among high-RWAs, the condition slope was positive, suggesting that participants ranked gender equality as descriptively less important in the experimental condition ($b = .36$, $t(244) = 1.91$, $p = .06$). Conversely, among low-RWA participants, the slope was positive, but again, not significant ($b = .19$, $t(244) = 1.01$, $p = .31$). This pattern was not in line with our malleability hypothesis.

Using the same model, but controlling for gender (model 2b), we found again the interaction effect of condition and RWA ($b = -.52$, $t(238) = -1.99$, $p = .047$, $Rs^2 = .016$) whereby high-RWA participants ranked gender equality as *less* important in the experimental condition ($b = -.40$, $t(238) = -2.10$, $p = .04$, $Rs^2 = .004$), whereas low-RWA participants did not make any differences ($p = .48$).

Using right-wing political orientation in the same interaction model (model 3a), we only found a main effect of right-wing political orientation, with right-wing participants overall placing gender equality lower in their priorities ($b = -.28$, $t(244) = -2.20$, $p = .03$, $Rs^2 = .076$).

Ranking street harassment

We then proceeded to examine participants ranking of the 'Preventing and punishing street harassment' among a series of other policies. Introducing SDO, condition and their interaction in a regression model, we found that none of the predictors were significant predictors. We found no effects either when entering models including RWA and with political orientation.

Sentencing for sexism offenses

Our last variable related to gender equality was the sentencing for sexism-related offenses. Again, neither SDO, condition, nor the product of the two were significant ($p > .21$). Thus, we could not validate H4.

When introducing the same model with RWA, we found a main positive effect of participants RWA on the will for higher sentencing of sexism-related offenses ($b = .37$, $t(244) = 2.46$, $p = .01$, $Rs^2 = .062$), but no interaction effect.

Using political orientation, we found no effects either ($p > .21$).

New *laïcité*

We conducted a regression with new *laïcité* as the criterion and SDO level, condition, and the product of these two variables as predictors (model 1a). SDO was a significant predictor ($b = .41$, $t(244) = 4.63$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .081$) such that participants with higher levels of social dominance orientation adhered to a stronger extent to the principle of new *laïcité*. The manipulation did not yield a significant effect on new *laïcité* ($p = .81$), and, contrary to what was expected for H5, neither did the interaction ($p = .82$).

Using right-wing authoritarianism (model 2a), we found a positive effect of right-wing authoritarianism on adherence to new *laïcité* ($b = .22$, $t(244) = 2.23$, $p = .03$, $Rsq = .02$).

Using political orientation instead of SDO (model 3a), we again found an effect of political orientation ($b = .27$, $t(244) = 3.68$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .052$) but no condition effect ($p = .62$) and no interaction effect ($p = .90$).

Attachment to *laïcité*

Turning to attachment to *laïcité*, in model 1a, we found that none of the predictors were significant, neither the condition ($p = .91$), nor the SDO ($p = .82$), or the interaction of both ($p = .70$). Thus, we did not validate H6 either.

Using right-wing authoritarianism, we found an unexpected negative association between participants' level of right-wing authoritarianism and their attachment to *laïcité* ($b = -.29$, $t(244) = -2.75$, $p < .01$, $Rsq = .03$), but did not find the expected interaction ($p = .69$).

In the same model, but using political orientation, we found that right-wing participants were less attached to *laïcité* than left-wing participants ($b = -.16$, $t(244) = -1.99$, $p = .047$, $Rsq = .016$). However, we did not find the expected interaction ($p = .89$).

Historic *laïcité*

Finally, using the same predictors, we looked at historic *laïcité*. As expected, SDO was a strong negative predictor ($b = -.48$, $t(244) = -9.54$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .272$) but condition ($p = .91$) and the interaction were not significant ($p = .98$).

3.6 Discussion

In this study, our aim was to examine the perception of Islam and immigration as a potential threat. However, on this occasion, instead of singling out Muslims, we insinuated that the danger emanated from a substantial portion of the Belgian population who endorse their requests, thus showcasing a considerable number of people espousing (possibly) threatening ideas.

The findings did not align with our initial predictions. The manipulation failed to induce a sense of threat stemming from excessive lenience towards immigrant. Furthermore, the results on the dependent variables were absent or incongruent with our hypotheses.

With regard to malleability on gender ideology, we had expected that antiegalitarian participants would express more gender-friendly views in the threat condition. When looking at rape myths acceptance, results showed quite the opposite: among high-SDO participants, the manipulation of threat resulted in higher levels of rape myths acceptance, and not less. When examining the ranking of gender equality among social issues, we found that high-SDO and high-RWA participants rated gender equality as less important (rather than more important) in the threat condition. These findings suggest an enhancement of antiegalitarian stances. These may arise from categorization or self-affirmation, reactance or threat processes, as discussed above.

With regard to *laïcité*, we could not conceptually replicate findings by Roebroek and Guimond (2018). Indeed, we found no interaction effects on attachment of *laïcité*, contrary to what they had found after exposing participants to Turkey's entrance in the European Union. Moreover, we did not find the expected shift of new *laïcité* either.

In conclusion, this study aimed at evoking a greater sense of threat among participants by capitalizing on news briefs depicting (supposedly overly) tolerant Belgians towards ethnic and religious minorities. While this kind of threat induction might be grounded in perhaps more ecological premises, it did not produce the expected outcomes.

4. Gender equality to justify biased evaluations of an immigrant (Study 4)

There is a lack of consensus among the population about what precisely constitutes prejudice or bias (Wang et al., 2021). While this lack of consensus is said to impede efforts at prejudice reduction, allegations of prejudice depend not only on time, place or target but also on who expressed it. Wang et al. (2021) showed that participants labeled others' attitudes more often as 'free speech' rather than 'prejudice' when the source of the expressed attitudes was an ingroup member, rather than an outgroup member. This tolerance, or complacency for ingroup members reflects ingroup favoritism (Turner et al., 1979).

In line with Wang et al.'s work, the present Study aimed to examine the evaluation of sexist remarks emanating from either an ingroup member (Benoît) or an outgroup member (Abdel Karim). Additionally, we explored whether participants would not only disapprove remarks made by Abdel Karim to a greater extent, but also whether they would subsequently express greater attachment to gender equality. This manipulation provided participants with a more direct link between gender equality and Islam or immigration, allowing for a less subdued approach.

4.1 Participants

For this study, we conducted a power analysis using PANGAEA (Westfall, 2015). We entered a design with two between-subjects factors (SDO: high vs. low, and condition: Abdel Karim vs. Benoît) in which the effect of interest was the interaction effect. Because no prior research relied on a similar paradigm, we adopted a conservative approach and computed a power analysis using a small effect size (Judd et al., 2017).

Furthermore, to ensure the best management of resources both in terms of participants' time and finances, we made use of sequential analyses (Lakens, 2014). Based on our computations, and aiming for 80% power, 200 participants were needed in each cell, with a total sample of 800 participants. We thus planned to collect a maximum of 800 participants and to use an intermediate sample size of 400 ($n_1=400$, $n_2=800$) at which we would conduct interim analyses. For each sample, we planned to rely on a p-value threshold of 0.0294, as recommended in the Pocock boundary method (Lakens, 2014; Pocock, 1992). Furthermore, we planned to terminate the data collection after our interim analyses if (1) predicted effects were significant (2) observed effects were going in the opposite direction as what was predicted or if when duplicating our sample (of $n=400$), to reach $n=800$, our effect remained non-significant.

Following our sequential analyses plan, we proceeded to collect 400 participants on Foule Factory. Because none of the three aforementioned criteria were reached, we continued the data collection. Unfortunately, due to difficulties encountered with the Foule Factory platform (i.e., important numbers of individuals participating several times, during several data collections), we were able to reach a maximum of 741 participants.

From this sample, we excluded 153 participants who did not meet our inclusion criteria: seventy-seven participants missed at least one of the three attention checks, forty-two participants reported being Muslim or speaking Arabic at home and thirty-four participants had no variance in their responses on dependant variables of interest. In total, the sample now comprised 588 participants. The study preregistration can be found on osf: <https://osf.io/4zfyq>.

This sample included 52% women, 48% men, and one person did not wish to disclose or identified as other. Participants mean age was 42 years old ($SD_{age} = 12.70$). About 48% of participants had a higher education degree.

4.2 Procedure

After providing consent, participants responded to a series of demographic questions (gender, age, education level, nationality, language spoken at home, religion, political orientation). Participants filled out scales measuring social dominance orientation, right wing authoritarianism, and identification to France. Participants' sense of identification was measured only to enhance intergroup-based processes, following Sindic et al.'s procedure (2018). For the manipulation, participants read that they were asked to react to a series of sentences to help us understand the way people express themselves on social media and how their words are perceived. Then, we showed participants a (fake) Facebook group from where we (supposedly) gather the online comments. This aimed at ensuring that participants get acquainted with the material, but also that participants build confidence in the materials. After that, we showed each participant 4 sexist comments (in the form of screenshots of fake Facebook comments), from a pool of seven comments, participants seeing and evaluating each comment separately. Participants saw either comments made by a man named 'Abdel Karim' (Abdel Karim condition) or by a man named 'Benoît' (Benoît condition). Following the manipulation, we asked participants to openly react to the comment, with the goal to foster impressions and engagement with the material. Then, we evaluated participants' gender equality using a scale of gender equality attitudes and a scale of rape myths. Finally, participants filled out an intergroup threat scaled, and were debriefed. The material can be found in the Appendices, under section 'Tasks'.

4.3 Hypotheses

We hypothesized that higher social dominance orientation would go hand in hand with a more positive evaluation of sexist comments (H1), a lower defense of gender equality (H2), and higher beliefs in rape myths (H3).

Turning to our malleability hypothesis, we hypothesized that the interaction between SDO and condition would significantly predict evaluation of sexist comments (H4). Specifically, we hypothesized that high-SDO participants would condemn sexist comments more when they were exposed to sexist comments made by a person with an Arabic name (i.e., experimental condition) compared to a condition where comments were made by a

person with a French name (i.e., control condition). Low-SDO participants would condemn the comments equally regardless of the condition.

Similarly, we expected that the interaction between SDO and condition would significantly predict gender equality attitudes (H5). Specifically, high-SDO participants would express more positive gender-equality attitudes when they were exposed to sexist comments made by a person with an Arabic name (i.e., experimental condition) compared to a condition where sexist comments were made by a person with a French name (i.e., control condition). Low-SDO participants would express equal gender-equality attitudes, regardless of the condition.

Finally, and along similar lines, we expected that the interaction between SDO and condition would significantly predict rape myths (H6). Specifically, high-SDO participants would express less beliefs in rape in the experimental condition compared to the control condition. Low-SDO participants would express equal beliefs in rape myths, regardless of the condition.

Following the literature on malleability of ideologies, our main moderator was SDO. However, and because the issue at hand concerns an ideological deviance from the perceived norm (that is, a perception of sexism), we also looked at moderation by RWA for exploratory purposes, making the same prediction as for SDO.

4.4 Measures

Political orientation. To assess participants' political orientation, we asked: 'In terms of political orientation, would you say that you are rather on the left or on the right?' (from 1, completely left to 7, completely right).

Social dominance orientation. To measure social dominance orientation, we relied again on the French version of the SDO scale from Duarte et al. (2004), originally developed by Pratto et al. (1994). The scale consisted of 10 items (e.g., 'Lower groups should stay in their place'). Participants answered on a scale ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). This scale showed excellent reliability ($\alpha=.86$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 9).

Right wing authoritarianism. To measure Right wing authoritarianism, we used the very short version of the RWA scale by Bizumic & Duckitt (2018) containing 6 items. A sample item was 'What our country needs most is discipline, with everyone following our leaders in unity'. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree). The scale showed excellent reliability ($\alpha=.68$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 11).

Identification to France. To measure identification to France, we relied on five items by Klein et al. (2011) and created two others items tapping into participants perception that France is an outstanding country, having a total of seven items. The two items we created were the following: 'There are many things that France can be proud of' and 'the reputation of France in the world is well established'. Participants indicated their level of agreement

using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.92$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 12).

Evaluation of sexist comments Participants were asked to provide their perception of the comments using a scale ranging from one ('completely trivial, normal, harmless') to ten ('completely problematic, shocking, condemnable'). A description of the task can be found in the Appendices.

Open reaction to comments. Participants were invited to 'write what they think about the comments and what they think about the type of person that would write such comments, in order to consolidate their attitudes.

Gender equality attitudes. To measure participants' attitudes towards gender equality, we relied on the items used in Study 2. ($\alpha=.51$) The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 5).

Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression. To measure participants' adherence to rape myths, we presented participants with 3 items of the French validation of the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression scale from Helmke et al. (2014). A sample item was: 'As long as they do not go too far, the suggestive comments and allusions simply tell a woman that she is attractive'. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.74$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 10).

Intergroup threat. To measure intergroup threat, we again relied on six items from Stephan et al. (1999) scale: three items from tapping the realistic and three items tapping symbolic threat. Sample items are: 'Immigrants of Muslim faith should learn to conform to the rules and norms of Belgian society as soon as possible after they arrive.' and 'The presence of Muslim immigrants makes it more difficult for other Belgians to access the labor market'. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.92$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 7).

4.5 Results

4.5.1 Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are represented in Table 13. Positive gender equality attitudes were negatively related to rape myth ($r=-.42$, 95% CI [-.48, -.35], $p<.001$), to SDO ($r=-.29$, 95% CI [-.37, -.22], $p<.001$), threat ($r=-.20$, 95% CI [-.28, -.12], $p<.001$), political orientation ($r=-.22$, 95% CI [-.29, -.14], $p<.001$) and RWA ($r=-.21$, 95% CI [-.29, -.13], $p<.001$). Mirroring these associations, adherence to rape myth (i.e., a tendency to place guilt on rape victims) was positively associated with SDO ($r=.32$, 95% CI [.25, .39], $p<.001$), threat ($r=.36$, 95% CI [.29, .43], $p<.001$), right wing political orientation ($r=.25$, 95% CI [.17, .33], $p<.001$) and RWA ($r=.27$, 95% CI [.20, .35], $p<.001$).

Table 13. Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender equ.	4.74	1.04					
2. Rape myth	2.99	1.32	-.42** [-.48, -.35]				
3. SDO	2.41	1.04	-.29** [-.37, -.22]	.32** [.25, .39]			
4. Threat	3.76	1.65	-.20** [-.28, -.12]	.36** [.29, .43]	.48** [.42, .54]		
5. Right-wing pol.	3.92	1.46	-.22** [-.29, -.14]	.25** [.17, .33]	.44** [.37, .50]	.57** [.51, .62]	
6. RWA	3.37	1.03	-.21** [-.29, -.13]	.27** [.20, .35]	.41** [.34, .47]	.55** [.49, .61]	.57** [.52, .63]

Note. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

4.5.2 Regressions

We conducted analyses using R (R Core Team, 2013) and the *lm* and *lme4* packages (Bates et al., 2015). We centered participants' SDO scores, RWA, political orientation and intergroup threat scores around the mean. Condition was coded -0.5 (Benoît condition) and .5 (Abdel Karim condition).

As preregistered, because we made use of sequential analyses, we relied on a *p*-value threshold of 0.0294, as recommended in the Pocock boundary method (Lakens, 2014; Pocock, 1992), instead of the usual .05 threshold.

As was the case for previous studies, we also ran models controlling for participants' gender. Because only one participant did not identify as woman or man, we coded the gender variables using two levels (men=-.05, women=.05). Thus, we entered models with main effects of condition, SDO (or RWA, political orientation, threat), gender, as well as the first and second order interactions between these variables. For regressions on evaluation of comments, we also included participants and comments as random intercepts, as was done before. In the interests of conciseness, we again only report if the relevant interactions effects were found, using again a *p*-value threshold of 0.0294.

A summary of regression findings can be found in Table 14.

Table 14. *Summary of regressions on the variables of interest.*

<i>Variables used as Criterion</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Model Predictors</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Evaluation of sexist comments</i>	Model 1a	SDO Cond	*
	Model 2a	SDO $\times$ cond	*
		RWA Cond	
	Model 3a	RWA $\times$ cond	*
		Political orientation Cond	
	Model 4a	Political ori. $\times$ cond	✓
		Threat Cond	
	Model 3b	Threat $\times$ cond	✓
		Political orientation Cond	
		Gender	*
		Political ori. $\times$ cond	
	Model 3b	Political ori. $\times$ Gender	✓
		Gender $\times$ cond	
		Political ori. $\times$ Gender $\times$ cond	
		Threat	
		Cond	
		Gender	
		Threat $\times$ cond	
		Threat $\times$ Gender	
		Gender $\times$ cond	✓
		Threat $\times$ Gender $\times$ cond	
<i>Gender equality attitudes</i>	Model 1a	SDO Cond	*
	Model 2a	SDO $\times$ cond	*
		RWA Cond	
	Model 3a	RWA $\times$ cond	*
		Political orientation Cond	
	Model 4a	Political ori. $\times$ cond	*
		Threat Cond	
		Threat $\times$ cond	

<i>Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression</i>	Model 1a	SDO	*
		Cond	
		SDO × cond	
	Model 2a	RWA	*
		Cond	
		RWA × cond	
	Model 3a	Political orientation	*
		Cond	
		Political ori. × cond	

Note. * indicates significance. Random effects of mixed models are not reported here. For interaction effects, x indicates unexpected interaction patterns, and ✓ indicates expected interaction patterns (among antiegalitarian participants, in the Abdel Karim vs. Benoît condition: more condemnation of sexist comments, higher gender equality attitudes, lower acceptance of rape myths).

Evaluation of sexist comments

In this series of analyses, we will examine whether participants' evaluation of sexist comments depended on their level on the experimental condition (control Benoît condition = -.05, Abdel Karim experimental condition = .05), on their level of antiegalitarianism (as well as RWA, political orientation and intergroup threat) and on the interaction of these two factors. Furthermore, because participants were exposed to four comments among a pool of seven comments, we will rely on mixed models analyses to account for variance differences stemming from participants and from comments.

In a first model, we regressed participants evaluation of comments on their SDO score, their experimental condition (Abdel Karim vs. Benoît), and included participants and comments as random intercepts (model 1a). Social dominance had a negative effect on the evaluation of sexist comments ($b = -0.51$, $t(582.18) = -6.445$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .036$), confirming H1. The condition had no effect ($p = .26$), and most importantly, the interaction did not either ($p = .24$). Thus, we could not confirm H4.

We entered the same model using right-wing authoritarianism instead of SDO (model 2a). Results are represented in Table 15. In this model, right-wing authoritarianism had a negative effect on the evaluation of comments ($b = -0.50$, $t(582.98) = -6.16$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .033$), condition had no effect ($p = .13$), and the interaction neither ($p = .06$).

Table 15. *Multiple regression coefficients of predictors of Condemnation of Sexist Comments.*

<i>Fixed effects</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	5.89	0.29	6.78	20.52	<0.001 ***
Condition	0.25	0.164	582.42	1.53	.13
RWA	-0.50	0.08	582.98	-6.16	<0.001 ***
RWA*condition	0.30	0.16	582.69	1.88	.06
<i>Random effects</i>		<i>Variance</i>	<i>Std Dev.</i>	<i>N. Obs.</i>	
Participant	(Intercept)	2.9765	1.7252	588	
Comment	(Intercept)	0.5292	0.7274	7	

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$.

When using political orientation as a moderator (model 3a), we found that political orientation had an effect ($b = -0.32$, $t(582.03) = -5.68$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .028$), meaning that right-wing participants felt that the sexist comments were less condemnable, but condition had no effect ($p = .23$). Most importantly, the political orientation effect was qualified by an interaction with the condition ($b = 0.36$, $t(582.22) = 3.16$, $p = .002$, $Rsq = .009$), with right wing participants showing higher scores of condemnation in the Abdel Karim condition compared to the Benoît condition ($b = 0.72$, $t(582.5) = 3.08$, $p = .002$, $Rsq = .033$), while left-

wing participants expressed no differences across both conditions ($p=.16$). The pattern is shown in Figure 6.

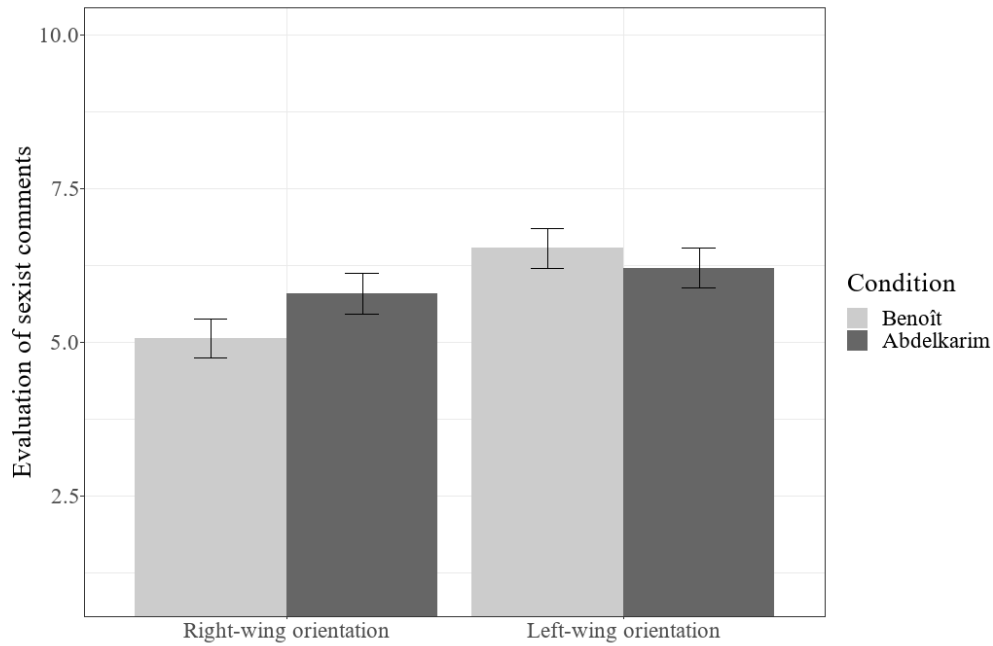


Figure 6. Evaluation of sexist comments depending on condition and political orientation levels

In the model using political orientation, condition, gender, and the first and second-order interactions as fixed effects (model 3b), we found again the negative effect of political orientation ($b = -0.31$, $t(576.81) = -5.6$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .027$). We also found an effect of gender with women condemning more ($b = .81$, $t(577.21) = 5.01$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .022$). We also found again the interaction effect of condition $\times$ political orientation ($b = .36$, $t(576.99) = 3.19$, $p = .0015$, $Rsq = .009$). Right-wing participants showed higher levels of condemnation in the Abdel Karim condition than in the Benoît condition ($b = .72$, $t(577.35) = 3.12$, $p = .002$, $Rsq = .001$) whereas left-wing participants showed no differences ($p = .16$). No other interaction was found. The condition $\times$ political orientation was thus found with and without the inclusion of gender in the regression model.

Finally, we examined the same model, this time using intergroup threat as a moderator, following malleability conceptualization by Knowles et al. (2009) (model 4a). Before entering the model, we made sure that intergroup threats scores did not depend on the condition, because threat was measured after the manipulation. Results confirmed that there were no differences ($p = .29$). The multilevel regression analysis showed an effect of intergroup threat ($b = -0.34$, $t(582.13) = -6.92$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .041$), such that participants who felt threatened by Muslim immigration tended to condemn sexist comments to a smaller

extent. The condition had no effect ($b = 0.26$, $t(582.11) = 1.61$, $p = .11$), but as hypothesized, the condition $\times$ threat interaction was significant ($b = 0.25$, $t(582.55) = 2.48$, $p = .01$, $Rsq = .005$). Simple slope analyses revealed that participants feeling threatened by Muslim immigration condemned sexist comments by Abdel Karim more than they condemned the same comments when made by Benoît ($b = 0.67$, $t(582.19) = 2.90$, $p = .004$, $Rsq = .007$), whereas less threatened participants did not show a difference in evaluation ($p = .54$). The pattern is shown in Figure 7.

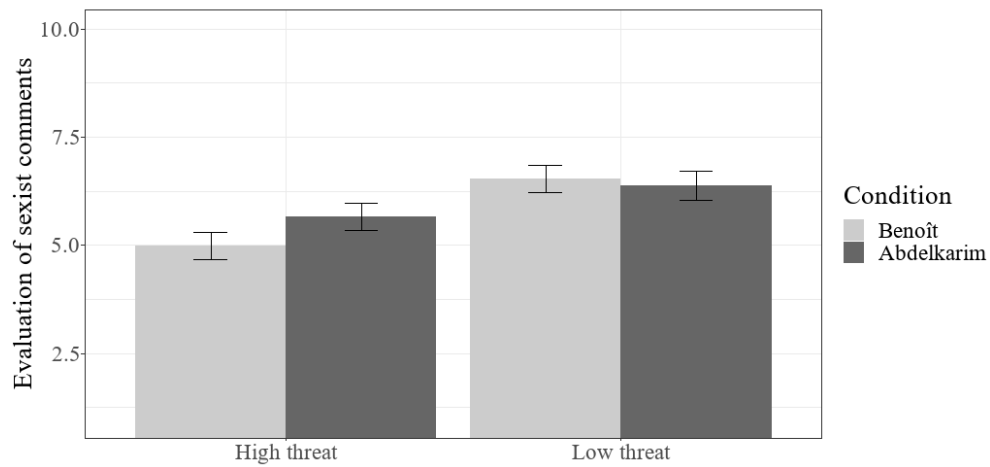


Figure 7. Evaluation of sexist comments depending on threat and condition levels.

Then, we entered the model using intergroup threat, condition, gender, and the first and second-order interactions as fixed effects (model 3b). We found a negative effect of intergroup threat on condemnation of sexist comments ($b = -.34$, $t(576.87) = -6.93$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .04$), an effect of gender with women condemning more the sexist comments ($b = .76$, $t(577.02) = 4.72$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .019$), and the interaction effect of condition and threat ($b = .24$, $t(577.25) = 2.40$, $p = .02$, $Rsq = .005$), with the same pattern as above. Thus, the expected condition $\times$ threat interaction reached significance with and without including gender as a control variable.

Overall, results on evaluation scores were encouraging. Although we did not find the expected SDO $\times$ condition interaction, the interaction emerged when using political orientation and intergroup threat. The pattern suggested that, as hypothesized, antiegalitarian participants condemned sexist comments more harshly when they came from Abdel Karim than from Benoît.

Gender equality attitudes

After examining potential shifts in evaluation, we proceeded to examine shifts in gender equality attitudes. The regression model was the same, although no random intercepts were introduced, as all participants saw the same items of gender equality attitudes.

First, we entered a model with social dominance, condition and their interaction as predictors, and gender equality attitudes as criterion (model 1a). As we hypothesized with H2, social dominance orientation negatively predicted gender equality attitudes ($b = -0.28$, $t(577) = -6.06$, $p < .001$, $Rs^2 = .06$). The condition had no significant effect on gender equality attitudes ($p = .17$), and, contrary to our hypothesis, neither did the interaction ($p = .24$). We could not confirm H5.

Second, we entered the same model with right wing authoritarianism as the moderator replacing SDO. Here, we found a negative effect of RWA on gender attitudes ($b = -0.19$, $t(577) = -3.99$, $p < .001$, $Rs^2 = .027$). We did not find a significant effect of condition ($p = .09$) and did not find the expected interaction effect either ($p = .16$).

Using political orientation, we found a negative effect of political orientation, such that right-wing participants reported less gender-equality attitudes ($b = -0.14$, $t(577) = -4.12$, $p < .001$, $Rs^2 = .029$). There was no effect of condition ($p = .14$) and again, no interaction effect ($p = .27$).

Finally, using intergroup threat as a moderator in the same regression model, we found a negative effect of intergroup threat ($b = -.10$, $t(577) = -3.34$, $p < .001$, $Rs^2 = .019$), but no effect of condition ($p = .09$), and once again, no interaction effect.

In sum, results on gender equality attitudes were not conclusive. Although we found the expected main effects of egalitarianism, the interaction effect capturing malleability did not emerge.

Acceptance of rape myths

Next, in a new series of regressions, we proceeded to evaluate whether participants would endorse rape myths depending on their level of antiegalitarianism and on their exposure to sexist comments made by Abdel Karim (experimental condition) or Benoit (control condition). The 'rape myths' construct measures the belief that women victims tend to be responsible for their rape, and that perpetrators should be blamed to lesser extents (Courtois et al., 2021; Helmke et al., 2014).

Starting again with SDO as a moderator (model 1a), we found a positive effect of SDO on acceptance of rape myths ($b = .41$, $t(577) = 8.36$, $p < .001$, $Rs^2 = .108$), in line with H3. However, we did not find an effect of condition ($p = .30$) or an interaction between SDO and condition ($p = .94$), contrary to what we expected for H6.

A similar pattern emerged when using right-wing authoritarianism as moderator (model 2a), with the emergence of a positive effect of right-wing authoritarianism ($b = .37$, $t(577) = 7.25$, $p < .001$, $Rs^2 = .083$), such that right wing participants believed to a greater extent that

women rape victims should be more held responsible. Here too, no effect of condition ($p=.64$) and no interaction effect ($p=.58$) emerged.

Relying on political orientation in the same model, we found a positive effect of political orientation ($b = .24$, $t(577)= 6.57$, $p<.001$, $Rs^2 = .07$) such that right-wing orientation predicted greater acceptance of rape myths. We found no effect of condition ($p=.39$), and no interaction effect ($p=.08$).

4.6 Discussion

In this study, we showed participants a series of (fake) sexist comments and examined their evaluation of these comments depending on the source: an outgroup member (Abdel Karim) or Benoît. This manipulation, which mirrors numerous studies on double standards (e.g., West et al., 2022), also aimed to capture the weaponization of gender equality by antiegalitarian participants. Thus, we examined participants' evaluation of comments as well as their views with regard to gender equality, after they had been exposed to comments by a man named Abdel Karim or Benoît. We hypothesized that antiegalitarian participants would condemn comments from Abdel Karim more, and that they would adopt more gender-friendly views in the Abdel Karim condition, compared to the Benoît condition. In contrast, we hypothesized that egalitarian participants would not mark differences across conditions.

Results partially supported our hypotheses. With regard to the evaluation of comments, findings showed that right-wing and threatened participants indeed condemned more the comments made by Abdel Karim than the comments made by Benoît. This suggests the presence of an ingroup bias, in which the man called Benoît is privileged in comparison to the man named Abdel Karim with regard to individuals' judgments.

While the mere presence of this bias is concerning, the presence of a malleability of ideology requires also a shift in the adherence, or the attachment to a proclaimed egalitarian ideology, that is, gender equality. Yet, we did not observe the expected shift. Specifically, the interaction between SDO (or others antiegalitarian variables used here) and condition, to predict gender equality (measured via gender equality attitudes and rape myths acceptance) failed to reach significance. Thus, the fact that this bias in the evaluation of comments did not translate into higher gender equality attitudes prevents us from concluding to a form of malleability of ideology here. A possible explanation would be that antiegalitarian participants' more favorable attitudes regarding gender equality did not persist until the gender equality scales, in spite of the task of open reaction that precisely aimed at consolidating participants attitudes.

In conclusion, the present study provided us with the first encouraging results, showing a form of intergroup bias in the evaluation of targets' sexist comments. While this was progress, these results did provide sufficient evidence for us to draw conclusions about the presence of malleability of ideology.

5. Attachment to gender equality to justify biased evaluations of an immigrant in a US sample (Study 5)

The objective of this study was to replicate the previous study, this time among US respondents. Admittedly, a significant portion of the literature on gender equality and immigration has concentrated on France (notably, addressing bans on religious signs). Yet, the United States has also been called out for stereotypical representations of immigrants in terms of sexism (Bader, 2023). In addition, recruiting participants from Prolific enabled us to secure a more reliable sample (Peer et al., 2022). Moreover, we relied on alternative measurements of gender equality (i.e., gender attachment scale). This aimed to capture participants' performative attachment to gender equality.

5.1 Participants

To conduct our power analysis, we relied on results from a previous study, and found a $d=0.19$ for the interaction of interest. Using PANGEA (Westfall, 2015), we found that 219 participants were needed in each cell, for a $d=0.19$ and a statistical power of 80% to detect our moderation effect. We thus aimed at collecting 900 participants on Prolific, with the aim to obtain 876 reliable participations.

We recruited 904 US participants from Prolific. Among these participants, we excluded 12 participants who missed the attention checks and 5 participants who were Muslim. Of these 887 participants, 49% were men, 50% were women, and 0.01% (13) identified as another gender. Sixty percent of these participants had higher education degrees, the rest had no schooling, lower or high school degrees.

This study was preregistered on osf.io: <https://osf.io/cf8ve/>

5.2 Procedure

After providing consent, participants provided demographic information (gender, age, education level, nationality, language spoken at home, religion and political orientation). Then, they responded to SDO, RWA and Identification to the US scales. As before, identification levels were only measured to enhance intergroup-based processes, following Sindic et al.'s procedure (2018). The experimental manipulation consisted of exposing participants to a series of sexist statements. The materials in this study were identical to those used in the previous study, albeit with adaptations to ensure they were suitable for a US context in terms of language and names, with the two sources being called Abdelkader and John. As in the previous study, each participant viewed four statements from a pool of seven statements written by either Abdelkader (experimental condition) or John (control condition). Upon completion of the manipulation, participants provided an open reaction to the statements and indicated their level of attachment to gender equality. Lastly, participants completed the intergroup threat scale and were debriefed.

5.3 Hypotheses

Overall, our hypotheses closely resemble those posited in the previous study. We expected higher levels of social dominance (SDO) to go hand in hand with more positive evaluation of sexist comments (H1) and lower attachment to gender equality (H2). We expected that the interaction between SDO and condition would significantly predict evaluation of sexist comments (H3). Specifically, we hypothesized that high-SDO participants would condemn sexist comments more when they were exposed to sexist comments made by a person with an Arabic name (i.e., experimental condition) compared to a condition where comments were made by a person with an American name (i.e., control condition). We hypothesized that low-SDO participants would condemn the comments equally regardless of the condition.

Similarly, we expected that the interaction between SDO and condition would significantly predict gender attachment (H4). Specifically, we expected that high-SDO participants would express more attachment to gender-equality when they were exposed to sexist comments made by a person with an Arabic name (i.e., experimental condition) compared to a condition where sexist comments were made by a person with an American name (i.e., control condition). Low-SDO participants would express equal attachment to gender-equality, regardless of the condition.

Here too, we planned to also look at moderation by RWA, intergroup threat and right-wing political orientation for exploratory purposes, making the same prediction as for SDO.

5.4 Measures

Political orientation. To measure political orientation, we relied on the political orientation scale from Koch et al. (Koch et al., 2016), using a 7-point Likert scale. For each of the four items, participants were asked to situate themselves on the scale, according to how ‘Traditional or Modern’, ‘Religious or Science-oriented’, ‘Conventional or Alternative’ and ‘Conservative or Liberal’ they are ($\alpha=.81$).

Social dominance orientation. To measure SDO, we asked participants to fill the 16 items SDO scale by Pratto et al. (1994). A sample item is ‘We would have fewer problems if we treated different groups more equally’. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.95$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 13).

Right-wing authoritarianism. To measure RWA, we relied on the very-short version of the RWA scale by Bizumic and Duckitt (2018). Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree). A sample item was: ‘God’s laws about abortion, pornography, and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late’ ($\alpha=.83$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 14).

Identification to the United States. Participants responded to the identification scale used in the previous study, comprising five items by Klein et al. (2011) and two created items. A

sample item was ‘There are many things the United States can be proud of’ ($\alpha=.92$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 15).

Evaluation of the comments. For each sentence shown to participants, they indicated how they ‘feel about this statement using a scale from 1 (completely harmless, normal, inoffensive) to 10 (completely problematic, shocking, condemnable)’.

Open reaction to comments. We asked participants to ‘write what they think about the comments and what they think about the type of person that would write such comments’. This aimed to encourage participants to reflect and create an impression of the situation.

Attachment to gender equality. To measure attachment to gender equality, we relied on three items ‘Women’s rights are extremely important to defend’, ‘I am concerned about women’s rights’, ‘Defending women’s rights is absolutely central’ ($\alpha=.92$).

Intergroup threat. To measure intergroup threat, we relied on six items from Stephan et al. (1999), with three items tapping into symbolic threats and three tapping into realistic threats. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.93$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 16).

5.5 Results

5.5.1 Correlations

Attachment to Gender equality was negatively related to SDO ($r=-.55$, 95% CI $[-.60, -.51]$, $p<.001$), RWA ($r=-.39$, 95% CI $[-.45, -.33]$, $p<.001$), intergroup threat ($r=-.45$, 95% CI $[-.50, -.40]$, $p<.001$) and right-wing political orientation ($r=-.48$, 95% CI $[-.53, -.42]$, $p<.001$). Correlations are displayed below in Table 16.

Table 16. Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Right-wing pol.	3.31	1.29				
2. SDO	2.21	1.23	.42** [.37, .47]			
3. RWA	3.18	1.43	.71** [.68, .74]	.46** [.41, .51]		
4. Attach. gender equ.	5.81	1.47	-.48** [-.53, -.42]	-.55** [-.60, -.51]	-.39** [-.45, -.33]	
5. Threat	2.65	1.54	.46** [.41, .51]	.62** [.58, .66]	.51** [.46, .56]	-.45** [-.50, -.40]

Note. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. * indicates $p<.05$. ** indicates $p<.01$.

5.5.2 Regressions

We conducted analyses using R (R Core Team, 2013) and the `lm` and `lme4` packages (Bates et al., 2015).

We centered SDO, RWA, political orientation and intergroup threat around the mean. Condition was coded -0.5 (Abdelkader condition) and 0.5 (John condition).

As was the case for the previous study, we did not register for any effect of gender in our hypotheses. We thus examined the role of gender in the tested models in an exploratory way. Once again, for the sake of brevity, we report results when interaction effect of condition $\times$ SDO (or RWA, political orientation, threat) is significant or when the interaction of condition $\times$ SDO $\times$ gender is significant. Again, having an overwhelming majority of participants identifying as man or woman, and very few participants choosing ‘other’, we only coded two categories (men = -0.5; women = 0.5)

Table 17 includes a summary of all regressions.

Table 17. *Summary of regressions on evaluation of comments and gender equality attachment.*

<i>Variables used as Criterion</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Model Predictors</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Evaluation of sexist comments</i>	1a	SDO Cond	*
	2a	SDO × cond RWA Cond	*
	3a	RWA × cond Political orientation Cond	*
	4a	Political ori. × cond Threat Cond	✓ *
	3b	Threat × cond Political orientation Cond	*
		Gender	*
		Political ori. × cond Political ori. × Gender Gender × cond	
		Political ori. × Gender × cond	✓
<i>Gender equality attachment</i>	1a	SDO Cond	*
	2a	SDO × cond RWA Cond	✓ *
	3a	RWA × cond Political orientation Cond	*
	4a	Political ori. × cond Threat Cond	*
		Threat × cond	

Note. * indicates significance. Random effects of mixed models are not reported here. For interaction effects, x indicates unexpected interaction patterns, and ✓ indicates expected interaction patterns (among antiegalitarian participants, in the Abdelkader vs. John condition: more condemnation of sexist comments, higher gender equality attachment).

Evaluation of sexist comments

First, in a model including condition and social dominance orientation and their interaction as predictors, along with random intercepts for participants and comments, and evaluation as the criterion (model 1a), we found a negative effect of SDO ($b = -.61$, $t(882.90) = -10.71$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .07$) showing that high-SDO participants tended to condemn sexist comments less than low-SDO participants, and confirming H1. We found no effect of condition ($p = .75$), and, conversely to H3, no interaction effect either ($p = .10$).

Second, in the same model, this time using RWA instead of SDO (model 2a), we found a negative effect of RWA ($b = -.61$, $t(882.90) = -12.80$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .096$), such that high-RWA participants condemned sexist comments less, in general. However, no effect of condition ($p = .71$) and no interaction effect emerged ($p = .13$).

The same pattern emerged when using political orientation (model 3a). Right-wing political orientation was associated with lower condemnation ($b = -.77$, $t(882.93) = -15.03$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .125$), but again, no effect of condition ($p = .97$) and no interaction effect ($p = .91$) emerged.

Yet, when controlling for gender (thus in a model using political orientation, condition, gender, and the associated first and second-order interactions; model 3b), we found interesting effects. First, an effect of gender, with women condemning more sexist comments than men ($b = 1.12$, $t(866.26) = 8.70$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .045$). Second, we found again that right-wing participants condemned less than left-wing participants ($b = -.78$, $t(865.75) = -15.42$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .128$). Third, we found a second-order interaction effect of condition $\times$ political orientation $\times$ gender ($b = -.45$, $t(866.43) = -2.23$, $p = .03$, $Rsq = .003$). Decomposing the interaction shows that among men, the interaction of condition $\times$ political was close to reaching significance ($b = .30$, $t(865.77) = 1.93$, $p = .05$, $Rsq = .002$). Among women, the interaction between condition and political orientation had the opposite direction, but was far from significant ($b = -.15$, $t(866.73) = -1.18$, $p = .24$). Further simple slopes analyses revealed that right-wing men participants descriptively condemned Abdelkader more than John ($b = .46$, $t(865.93) = 1.66$, $p = .097$) whereas the condition slope was negative among left-wing men participants, and far from significant ($b = -.32$, $t(865.93) = -1.18$, $p = .24$). This was in line with our malleability hypothesis, although this interaction pattern was qualified by gender.

Then, because threat was measured at the end of the questionnaire, we proceeded to check that threat levels did not vary across conditions in order to rely on this measure as a moderator. Threat levels did not differ between conditions ($p = .28$). In the regression model using threat as a moderator, we found a negative effect of intergroup threat ($b = -.48$, $t(882.93) = -10.53$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .068$), but no effect of condition ($p = .96$) and no interaction between condition and intergroup threat ($p = .92$).

Gender equality attachment

We entered a model with condition, SDO and their interaction (model 1a). Social dominance negatively predicted gender equality attachment ($b = -.62$, $t(839) = -18.95$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .30$), as predicted by H2. Condition had no significant effect ($p = .73$). The interaction

between condition and SDO was significant ($b = -.13$, $t(839) = 2.00$, $p = .0455$, $Rsq = .005$). Among high-SDO participants, the slope of condition was descriptively positively associated with gender equality attachment ($b = .18$, $t(839) = 1.65$, $p = 0.10$), whereas among low-SDO participants, the slope was negative ($b = -.13$, $t(839) = -1.21$, $p = .23$). The presence of an interaction suggested that high-SDO increased their attachment to gender equality when facing outgroup sexist comments, compared to ingroup comments. This interaction pattern was in line with H4. It is reported in Table 18 and in Figure 8.

Table 18. *Multiple regression coefficients of predictors of Gender equality attachment.*

<i>Fixed effects</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	5.88	0.04	149.08	<0.001***
Condition	0.03	0.08	0.35	.73
SDO	-0.62	0.03	-18.95	<0.001***
SDO $\times$ condition	0.13	0.07	2.00	.0455 *

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$. ‘.’ Indicates $p < .10$.

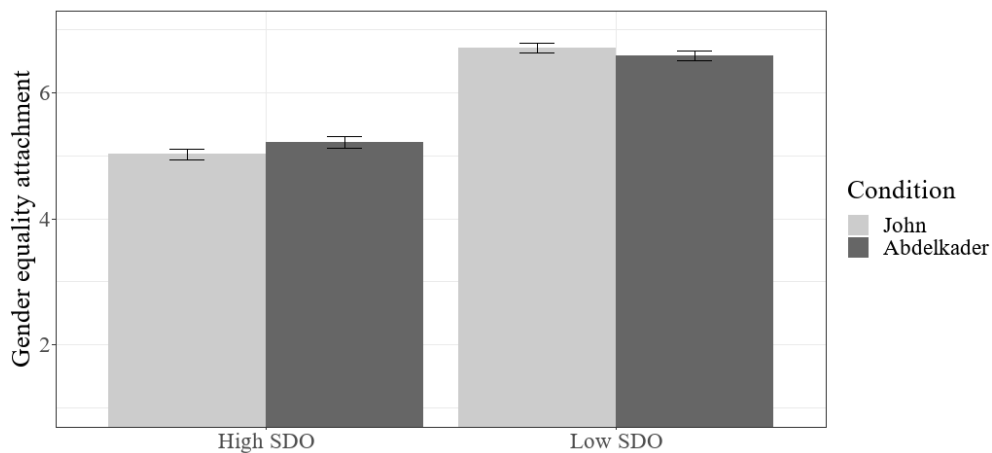


Figure 8. *Gender equality attachment depending on SDO and condition levels.*

Using RWA as the moderator, we found a negative effect of RWA on gender equality attachment ($b = -.41$, $t(836) = -13.49$, $p < .001$). We did not find an effect of condition ($p = .10$). More importantly, contrary to what was expected, we did not find the expected interaction effect ($p = .84$).

Using political orientation, we found that right-wing political orientation negatively predicted gender equality attachment ($b = -.53$, $t(839) = -16.20$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .238$). However, we found no effect of condition ($p = .23$) and no interaction effect ($p = .92$).

Finally, to examine a model relying on intergroup threat, we first verified that intergroup threat levels were not different across conditions, we found indeed that condition did not predict participants' intergroup threat ($p=.28$). Then, entering a model with threat, condition and their interaction, we found a negative effect of intergroup threat on gender equality attachment ($b = -.42$, $t(839)=-14.81$, $p<.001$, $Rsq = .207$), no effect of condition ($p=.31$) and no interaction effect ($b = .09$, $t(839)= 1.75$, $p=.08$).

5.6 Discussion

Following encouraging results in the previous study, we decided to launch a similar study using a US sample. Surprisingly, while antiegalitarian French participants from Study 4 had condemned more harshly sexist comments from the outgroup source, here, we did not find such an effect. As was the case for the previous study, we argue that a bias in the evaluation of comments denotes an ingroup bias and that a shift in the ideology is necessary to capture malleability. Here, instead of relying on gender equality attitudes, we relied on a measure of attachment, aiming to capture perhaps a more performative commitment to the ideology. Overall, results confirmed our hypotheses: we found the expected interaction effect on attachment to gender equality. Indeed, high-SDO reported higher attachment to gender equality when they had been exposed to comments by Abdelkader, compared to comments by John.

In conclusion, the results of the present study were encouraging. Specifically, our hypotheses on the bias in the evaluation were not confirmed. However, looking at attachment to gender equality, we found the expected interaction pattern between SDO and condition, but no simple slope effects emerged. Furthermore, the interaction was found using SDO, but not the other ideologically close, moderators (right-wing authoritarianism, political orientation, intergroup threat).

6. Attachment to gender equality after taking the outgroup perspective (Study 6)

This research, as did the previous two, aimed to more directly elicit an association between Islam and sexism in the minds of the participants. The study incorporated a task, requiring participants to reflect on Muslims' levels of sexism. Furthermore, whereas the two prior studies depended on a sole target (Abdelkarim or Abdelkader vs. Benoît or John), this study focused on highlighting stereotypes pertaining to entire groups (i.e. Muslim immigrants in France). The manipulation of the study consisted of the administration of a sexism scale in which the participants placed themselves in different scenarios: Muslim immigrants (Muslim condition), French people (French condition) or no manipulation task (control condition).

6.1 Participants

Because we again relied on a paradigm and design that were not used before, we decided to rely on an effect size that was small to moderate ($d=0.3$). PANGEA (Westfall, 2015) indicated 88 participants were needed in each cell in order to detect an effect of $d=0.3$ and reach a statistical power of 80% for our moderation effect. Thus, we intended to collect 528 French participants from the Prolific platform.

We managed to recruit only 518 French participants from Prolific. Among these participants, we removed 15 participants who had failed attention checks, 35 participants who were Muslim and/or spoke Arabic at home, reaching a sample size of 468 participants. Among this sample, 48% were women, 50% were men and 2% identified to another gender. Participants' mean age was 30.7 years old ($SD_{age} = 9.74$). Among these participants, 88% had a higher education degree, the rest had no schooling, lower or high school degrees.

The study is preregistered and can be found on osf: <https://osf.io/4uv3b/>

6.2 Procedure

After providing consent, participants responded to the demographic questions (including political orientation) and to a SDO scale. Then, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In the 'Muslim' condition, participants completed the Attitudes Towards Women scale while taking the perspective of Muslim immigrants in France. In the 'French' condition, they completed the same scale taking the perspective of 'French people in general'. In the control condition, participants did not complete this scale and moved on to the next question. After the manipulation, participants reported their level of Attachment to gender equality, filled out the intergroup threat scale, were thanked and debriefed.

6.3 Hypotheses

This study followed a Perspective target (Muslim vs. French vs. control) $\times$ SDO (continuously measured, from low to high) between-subjects design.

We expected that SDO would negatively predict attachment to women's rights (H1), and that SDO and condition would significantly interact to predict attachment to women's rights (H2). Specifically, low-SDO participants would not express different levels of attachment to women's rights as a function of condition. High-SDO participants would be more attached to women's rights in the Muslim condition, compared to the French or control condition.

As was the case for the previous study, we also looked at moderation by right-wing political orientation and by intergroup threat, making the same predictions for this variable as for SDO.

6.4 Measures

Political orientation. Political orientation was measured using a single item: 'In terms of political orientation, would you say that you are rather on the left or on the right? To answer, please move the slider at the spot where you would situate yourself'. Participants used a slider ranging from 1 ('completely left') to 7 ('completely right').

Social dominance orientation. To measure social dominance orientation, we relied once again on the 10-item French version of the SDO scale from Duarte et al. (2004), originally developed by Pratto (1999). Participants answered on a scale ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). This scale showed excellent reliability ($\alpha=.31$).

Attitudes towards Women. Participants responded to the 15-item version of the Attitudes towards Women scale developed by Spence and Hahn (Spence & Hahn, 1997). Depending on the random condition assignment, participants were asked to respond to the scale 'while putting themselves in the shoes of French people in general' or 'while putting themselves in the shoes of Muslim immigrants living in France'. A sample item was 'A woman should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man'.

Attachment to gender equality. To measure attachment to gender equality, we relied on the same three items as in the previous study. ($\alpha=.86$)

Intergroup threat. To measure intergroup threat, we relied on the same six items from Stephan et al. (1999), as was done in the previous study. Participants indicated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert type scale (1= totally disagree, 7= totally agree) ($\alpha=.92$).

6.5 Results

6.5.1 Correlations

As can be seen in Table 19 underneath, participants' attachment to gender equality was negatively related to SDO levels ($r=-.57$, 95% CI $[-.63, -.50]$, $p<.001$), to intergroup threat

perception ($r = -.50$, 95% CI $[-.57, -.43]$, $p < .001$), and to right-wing political orientation ($r = -.53$, 95% CI $[-.59, -.46]$, $p < .001$).

Higher levels of social dominance orientation were related to more right-wing political orientation ($r = .61$, 95% CI $[.55, .66]$, $p < .001$), and to more feelings of intergroup threat ($r = .59$, 95% CI $[.53, .65]$, $p < .001$).

Table 19. Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Attachment gender equality	6.01	1.21			
2. SDO	2.22	1.06	-.57** [-.63, -.50]		
3. Intergroup threat	2.84	1.56	-.50** [-.57, -.43]	.59** [.53, .65]	
4. Right-wing pol.	3.02	1.48	-.53** [-.59, -.46]	.61** [.55, .66]	.66** [.60, .71]

Note. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

6.5.2 Regressions

We conducted analyses using R (R Core Team, 2013) and the *lm* and *lme4* packages (Bates et al., 2015).

In order to test our hypotheses, we conducted regression contrasts analyses. Indeed, we regressed participants' level of attachment to gender equality on their SDO score (centered), their experimental condition using orthogonal contrasts, with C1 (+2/3 for Islam condition; -1/3 for French condition and -1/3 for control condition) and C2 (0 for Islam; +1/2 for French and -1/2 for control) and the interaction between these variables. We expected that SDO and the interaction between SDO and C1 predict significantly participants' attachment to women's rights. Contrasts codings are reported in Table 20 below.

Table 20. *Regression contrasts as predictors of Attachment to Gender Equality.*

Contrast predictors	Islam condition	French condition	Control condition
C1	2/3	-1/3	-1/3
C2	0	1/2	-1/2

We also ran models including gender to see whether the relevant $SDO \times C1$ interaction, or a $SDO \times C1 \times \text{gender}$ interaction would reach significance. This was not the case, so, no models including gender are reported here.

A summary of the regressions can be found in Table 21.

Table 21. Summary of regressions on Attachment to gender equality.

<i>Variables used as Criterion</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Model Predictors</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Attachment to gender equality</i>	Model 1a	SDO	*
		C1	
		C2	
		SDO $\times$ C1	
		SDO $\times$ C2	
	Model 2a	Political orientation	*
		C1	
		C2	*
		Political orientation $\times$ C1	
		Political orientation $\times$ C2	
	Model 3a	Threat	*
		C1	
		C2	
		Threat $\times$ C1	
		Threat $\times$ C2	*

Note. * indicates significance. For hypothesized interaction effects, x indicates unexpected interaction patterns, and $\checkmark$ indicates expected interaction patterns (among antiegalitarian participants, in the Islam vs. French and control conditions: higher attachment to gender equality).

Before looking at the dependent variable of attachment to gender equality, we proceeded to examine whether participants in the Muslim condition reported higher levels of sexism in comparison to participants in the French condition. Thus, this analysis aimed to compare scores of positive attitudes towards women between the Muslim condition (in which participants responded from French Muslims' perspective) and the French condition (in which participants responded from French people's perspective). In order to do so, we conducted a multilevel regression, with the score as the criterion, and the condition (coded -0.5 for French condition, 0.5 for Muslim condition) and SDO as fixed factors, also including participants and items as random intercepts. This regression revealed a significant effect of condition ($b = -.88$, $t(305) = -4.86$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .023$), such that scores of positive attitudes towards women were significantly lower when participants had to respond from the point of view of Muslims compared to French. Moreover, we found an interaction between condition and SDO ($b = -.77$, $t(305) = -4.40$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .019$). Simple slopes analyses showed that high-SDO participants attributed lower scores of positive attitudes toward women when they took the perspective of Muslim compared to French people ($b = -1.70$, $t(305) = -6.44$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .04$). Low-SDO participants did not attribute any difference in attitudes towards women to Muslim and French people ($p = .80$). This was a promising finding, especially given that this was a between-subjects design where participants were asked to express their opinions from either one or the other perspective.

Then, as preregistered and as shown in Table 22, we entered a model comprising SDO, C1, C2 and the two interactions of SDO $\times$ C1 and SDO $\times$ C2 as predictors (Model 1a). We found an effect of SDO, with high-SDO participants reporting less attachment to gender equality ($b = -.65$, $t(461) = -15.09$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .331$), confirming H1. Unfortunately, we did not find the expected SDO $\times$ C1 interaction ($p = .17$), thus, could not confirm H2. All other effects were not significant either ($p > .07$).

Table 22. *Multiple regression coefficients of predictors of Attachment to Gender Equality.*

Predictor	<i>b</i>	Standard error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	6.01	0.05	131.07	<.001***
SDO	-0.65	0.04	-15.09	<.001***
C1	-0.17	0.10	-1.81	.07
C2	-0.19	0.11	-1.66	.10
SDO $\times$ C1	-0.12	0.09	-1.38	.17
SDO $\times$ C2	-0.20	0.11	-1.85	.07

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$.

Then, we entered a model using political orientation, along with C1, C2 and the two interactions. Right-wing political orientation negatively predicted attachment to gender equality ($b = -0.44$, $t(461) = -13.54$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .285$). We also found an unexpected effect of C2 ($b = -0.25$, $t(461) = -2.10$, $p = .04$, $Rsq = .009$) showing that participants reported less attachment to gender equality in the French condition compared to the control condition. Again, we did not find the expected interaction between political orientation and C1 ($p = .76$).

Finally, after confirming that intergroup threat did not differ as a function of the condition ($p=.39$), we entered the same model using intergroup threat as the moderator, thus having intergroup threat, C1, C2, intergroup threat $\times$ C1, and intergroup threat $\times$ C2 as predictors, and gender attachment as criterion. In this model, we found a negative effect of threat on gender attachment ($b = -0.40$, $t(461) = -12.77$, $p < .001$, $Rsq = .261$). The expected interaction effect of threat $\times$ C1 was not significant ($p=.08$). However, we found an unexpected threat $\times$ C2 interaction ($b = -0.21$, $t(461) = -2.84$, $p < .01$, $Rsq = .017$) showing that high-SDO participants reported less attachment to gender equality in the French condition, in comparison to the control condition.

6.6 Discussion

This study relied on a manipulation aiming at making salient participants' stereotypes about Muslim immigrants about sexism. To do that, we randomly assigned participants to three conditions. In the Muslim condition, we asked participants to evaluate how Muslim immigrants would respond to the 'Attitudes towards Women' scale. In the French condition, participants were asked to complete the scale as well, this time taking the perspective of French people in general. In the third, control, condition, we did not present participants with this task.

Ratings on the Attitudes towards Women scale provided encouraging results, as participants evaluated the sexism of Muslim as higher (i.e., more negative attitudes towards women) compared to the sexism of French people. Notably, this condition effect was moderated by participants' SDO, such that high-SDO participants evaluated both groups differently, while low-SDO participants did not.

In spite of these encouraging differences, results on gender attachment were not satisfactory. We found the expected effect of antiegalitarian variables on gender attachment. However, we found surprising differences between the conditions. We found that participants expressed less attachment in the French condition, compared to the control condition. However, this unexpected contrast effect, opposing the French and the control condition, emerged in the model including political orientation, but did not reach significance in the models using SDO or threat. Once again, this inconsistency prompts vigilance.

At least two reasons might explain this lower attachment to gender equality in the French (vs. control) condition. First, participants' exposure to the ATWS (in the French condition), might have elicited a perception that gender equality is no longer a priority, and subsequently, lowered attachment to it. Indeed, the ATWS mentions issues and rights that can be perceived as acquired (e.g., having access to education, not being more sanctioned for swearing insults, not obeying one's husband). Second, exposure and completion of the ATWS scale might also have elicited feelings of intergroup threat, or reactance (Brehm, 1966), might have enhanced categorization as antiegalitarian and activated associated beliefs, or might have encouraged group-identity affirmation processes (Badea, 2022).

Importantly, although we found main effects of contrasts comparing conditions, we also found interactions with SDO suggesting that these contrasts between conditions were driven,

to a certain extent at least, by high-SDO participants. Indeed, the SDO*C2 contrast revealed that only high-SDO participants reported different gender equality attachment levels between control and French conditions. The aforementioned explanations are especially relevant for individuals with high Social Dominance Orientation, as they are more inclined to perceive women's rights as already achieved or to experience reactance when confronted with gender equality matters.

In conclusion, while the manipulation succeeded in making the perception of Muslims' sexism salient, it did not produce the expected effects. Antiegalitarian participants did not embrace gender equality more after they had thought about Muslims' attitudes towards women. Instead, we found differences between participants in the French and control condition, but inconsistency across tested models encourages vigilance.

Chapter 7.

Belgian *Laïcité*: Associations with racism, sexism, and strategic endorsement in the face of Islam

Laïcité is frequently invoked as a reason for public measures against the headscarf and is the subject of heated debate. Research has suggested that, in France, two conceptions of *laïcité* coexist, a historical version and a more recent one limiting the expression of religious signs in the public space. In Belgium, such debates about Islam and *laïcité* also came to the fore in recent years. However, to our knowledge, no empirical work has examined the different conceptions of *laïcité* in Belgium, nor their link with attitudes towards Islam, racism, and sexism. In Study 1 (N=321), we relied on Confirmatory Factor Analysis and found that *laïcité* comprises three separate dimensions (historic, anti-funding and anti-public expressions of religious signs *laïcités*), each having distinct links with intergroup attitudes of racism, sexism, and anti-Islam attitudes. In Study 2 (N=191), we used an experimental design and exposed participants to items related either to Islam or to Catholicism. As expected, anti-egalitarian participants increased their levels of endorsement of ‘anti-public expression of religious signs’ in the Islam condition, compared to the Catholic one. In line with Study 1, this interaction was not present when looking at anti-funding *laïcité*. These results suggest distinct forms of *laïcité* in Belgium while showing the existence of strategic malleability of *laïcité* in Belgium. Findings such as these allow improving our understanding of the dynamics at work in the debates around the headscarf, the financing of cults, *laïcité* in Belgium, and their implications for societal cohesion.

Reference

Van Oost, P., Baccus, J., Klein, O. & Yzerbyt, V. (in preparation). Belgian *Laïcité*: Associations with Racism, Sexism, and Strategic Endorsement in the Face of Islam.

Chapter 7. Belgian *laïcité*: Associations with racism, sexism, and strategic endorsement in the face of Islam

In France as well as in several other Western European countries, the headscarf has become a symbol of how people envision the place of Islam in society. In this context, the status of secularism, or its French version known as *laïcité*, has been the focus of heated debates. According to many social scientists, right-wing politicians endorse the principle of *laïcité* as a means to hide their racist agenda (Al-Saji, 2018; Benelli et al., 2006; Delphy, 2006; Krivenko, 2012). Interestingly, recent social psychological research suggests that the notion of *laïcité* actually comprises two distinct meanings, one dating back to the initial law instituting secularism in the country and a more recent and indeed restrictive view (Roebroeck & Guimond, 2017). This conclusion is all the more significant that these two meanings appear to have different links with prejudice towards immigrants. Although Belgium is often compared to France, the Belgian version of secularism takes on a different form known as neutrality. A first goal of the present work was to examine the way this form of *laïcité* is understood in Belgium and whether the same distinction would emerge as in France. A second goal was to investigate the relations between these dimensions of *laïcité* and three sets of attitudes, namely, attitudes towards the headscarf, racism, and sexism. A third important goal was to establish whether participants' attitudes towards *laïcité* can be seen as a strategic posture by checking the impact of exposure to a specific religion (i.e., Catholicism vs. Islam).

1. *Laïcité* in France

Most Western European countries rest on the well-established principle that there ought to be a strict separation between the State and the Church. At the same time, the question of what *laïcité* exactly entails remains vivid. In France, several issues are raised in the public debate in the name of *laïcité*, arousing a huge amount of passion and controversy. In spite of its repeated use, the exact application of *laïcité* does not seem to be agreed upon (Hennette-Vauchez, 2016; Martin, 2015; Roy, 2015). Somehow, 'the concept of *laïcité* tends to be hollowed out to become a strange discursive object, at the same time a loose meaning and a rigid designator' (Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015, p.105, our translation).

In France, *laïcité* has been explicitly articulated in a law issued in 1905, even though its history is more ancient (Barthélemy & Michelat, 2007; Lindner, 2019; Selby, 2011). The law asserts freedom of thought, equality among all citizens regardless of their religion, and separation of civil society and religion. The primary intention underlying the law was to weaken the influence of the Catholic Church (Barthélemy & Michelat, 2007; Cesari, 2002;

Selby, 2011). However, in the last decades, another, more restrictive understanding of *laïcité* has gained popularity. This new conception emerged in the late 1980s, at a time when many immigrants who had initially come to Europe as a temporary workforce, opted to stay in France on a permanent basis. This encouraged the construction of mosques, halal shops, etc. (Phalet et al., 2015). The growing presence of Islam in a country where it used to be almost nonexistent such as France spurred fear among the population and a resurgence of governments' scrutiny of the presence of Muslims in society (Barthélemy & Michelat, 2007; Bentouhami, 2018; Lindner, 2019; Selby, 2011). Since the 1980s, the question of the headscarf and its relation to French *laïcité* has become a growing source of contention. The headscarf soon became conceptualized as the main challenge for French *laïcité*. Rising concerns and disagreements led to the setup of a commission by the French president to address the matter. The report subsequently inspired the ban on religious symbols in schools with the law of 15 March 2004. As would be expected, the 9/11 attacks further entrenched the idea that Muslims are driven, or even blinded, by their religious affiliation (Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015). The fear of Islamism promoted the idea that *laïcité* is intrinsically at odds with Islam (Benelli et al., 2006; Bentouhami, 2018; Lindner, 2019). Following the 2004 law, the headscarf was restricted in an increasing number of places in the name of *laïcité*. This newer conception of *laïcité* proposes a version of secularism that dictates neutrality not only to the State and to public officials (teachers, hospital agents, State agents, etc.) but also to citizens themselves as users of public institutions (Barthélemy & Michelat, 2007; Hennette-Vauche, 2016; Policar, 2017; Roebroek & Guimond, 2016). This change in the use of *laïcité* has been abundantly criticized by several scholars who denounced a 'falsified' *laïcité*. In their view, the concept is being deprived of its core meaning as it brings neutrality to the foreground while relegating religious freedom and non-discrimination goals to the background (Baubérot, 2008; Jacquemain, 2014).

Work in social psychology conducted over the last decade has confirmed the existence of distinct conceptions of *laïcité* within the French population (Kamiejski et al., 2012; Roebroek & Guimond, 2017). Whereas some authors find two dimensions, namely of historic and new *laïcités* (Roebroek & Guimond, 2017; Roebroek & Guimond, 2018), others identify as many as four dimensions (Cohu et al., 2018). In various French samples, Roebroek and Guimond (2017) found two conceptions of *laïcité*. Specifically, whereas a first dimension enshrines equality of all citizens regardless of their religion and freedom of conscience and separation of civil society and religion (referred to as 'historic *laïcité*'), a second dimension demands neutrality from individual citizens, bans religious signs in public spaces and administrations, and opposes the public funding of religions (referred to as 'new *laïcité*'). Most Western European countries rest on the well-established principle that there ought to be a strict separation between the State and the Church. At the same time, the question of what *laïcité* exactly entails remains vivid. In France, several issues are raised in the public debate in the name of *laïcité*, arousing a huge amount of passion and controversy. In spite of its repeated use, the exact application of *laïcité* does not seem to be agreed upon (Hennette-Vauche, 2016; Martin, 2015; Roy, 2015). Somehow, 'the concept of *laïcité* tends to be hollowed out to become a strange discursive object, at the same time a loose meaning and a rigid designator' (Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015, p.105, our translation).

2. *Laïcité* in Belgium

Although, like France, Belgium has no official religion, *laïcité* takes a different shape (Dobbelaere, 2010; Jacquemain, 2014; Martin, 2015). Historically, the country evolved on the basis of a delicate balance between opposing forces called ‘pillars’: the catholic, socialist, and liberal pillars. Each pillar provides a range of services to the population with its own schools, medical insurance, trade unions and middle-field organizations and, not the least, political parties. In this context, the Belgian state has had no official religion but has evolved into an idea of pluralism where various beliefs (and attached services) are officially funded. Today, Belgium acknowledges seven ‘beliefs’ (Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, Protestant-Evangelicalism, and organized *laïcité*). Thus, the ‘*laïc*’ belief is recognized as a proper belief, with its own representatives and funding (Dobbelaere, 2010; Jacquemain, 2014; Martin, 2015). The practice of Catholicism is on the decline, but a substantial portion of Belgians still identifies with Catholicism, and the Catholic Church maintains a robust presence in civil society.

Having said this, the funding of beliefs is the focus of some debate. Indeed, the Catholic belief is said to receive an excessive portion of governmental funds (RTBF, 2019; Schreiber, 2014). Moreover, opponents argue that in virtue of the separation of religion and State, religions should simply not be funded, or at least to a much lesser extent (Schreiber, 2014). Finally, other critics argue that Islam should receive more funding so as to protect it against foreign, Islamist influences (Le Vif, 2017). Clearly, the debate surrounding public funding reveals a variety of motivations, i.e., a will to grant less space for religions in general, a will to grant less space for Catholics or, to grant less space for Islam, among others. As Schreiber (2014, p. 140, our translation) summarizes it: ‘Thus, the assumption in Belgium is that Islam – supposedly the prime symbol of discrimination against people of foreign origin – is minorized or even excluded from the European scene, that this exclusion is an unacceptable violence against Muslims, and that the balance must be redressed. That is, to grant Muslims and Islam rights comparable to those of previously recognized religions. This rebalancing would therefore lead to an increase in religion in the public sphere – a public sphere already overloaded with symbols and symbolism’.

Interestingly enough, next to being an acknowledged ‘belief’ among the seven beliefs officially funded, *laïcité* also refers to the principle itself, that is, the idea of separation of religion and State in the effort of dealing with diversity of beliefs. In Belgium, the concept of *laïcité* serves as a guarantor of freedom of conscience, equality among citizens as well as State’s neutrality concerning religious beliefs. However, the practical application of the principle of State neutrality sparks intense debates. Much like in France, second- and third-generation Muslims, rightfully acknowledged as citizens, have been striving to connect with their Islamic heritage. Whether they should have the freedom to manifest their religious beliefs in specific settings, such as higher education institutions and the parliament, is a matter of contention.

Clearly, Belgium encounters certain analogous challenges to France, such as the question of the ban on religious signs. However, the unique heritage of pluralism and the financial

support provided to religious institutions in Belgium, set Belgian *laïcité* apart. In spite of the uniqueness of the Belgian version of *laïcité*, no research has investigated the conceptualization of *laïcité* among Belgians. This is the first goal of the present research.

3. *Laïcité* and prejudice

For many, *laïcité* supports gender equality (Charte de la *laïcité* dans les services publics, 2021). In France, the legal ban on religious symbols was justified by stating the need to promote gender equality and help vulnerable women (Bentouhami, 2018; Delphy, 2006; Howard, 2012; Selby, 2011). In this view, *laïcité* would go hand in hand with an anti-sexist agenda. In contrast, many authors claim that the use of an antisexist rhetoric to ban the headscarf is hypocritical (Bentouhami, 2018; Delphy, 2006; Howard, 2012; Selby, 2011). Indeed, testimonies reveal that the motives behind the wearing of the headscarf are manifold. These range from an identification with the Islamic cultural minority to a form of resistance, or even a reaction to rejection, a proof of religiosity and humility before God, a radical interpretation of the faith, a pressure from relatives, etc. (Djelloul, 2013; Fernandez, 2009; Howard, 2012; Krivenko, 2012; Mullaly, 2011). According to some, only a small minority of *hijabis* would experience pressure, for whom a ban would limit their educational and professional opportunities, thereby constituting an obstacle to their emancipation (Howard, 2012). In this view, *laïcité* (more specifically, the ban on religious symbols) would be a case of benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Thus, although numerous scholars warn that a ban is counterproductive for gender equality (Freedman, 2007; Howard, 2012; Krivenko, 2012), one might wonder how adherence to *laïcité* relates to sexism.

In addition to condemning adverse outcomes for gender equality, numerous authors have highlighted the racial bias inherent in contemporary interpretations of *laïcité*. Notably in the field of sociology, scholars have suggested that actions taken in the name of *laïcité* such as the ban on the headscarf in schools, hospitals, administrations, sports competitions, etc. are signs of Islamophobia, both in France and Belgium (Delphy, 2006; Koussens, 2010; Mullaly, 2011). Such measures are deemed discriminatory. Indeed, rather than serving increased equality in settings where the headscarf is banned, they would marginalize the minorities affected by such bans (Delphy, 2006; Howard, 2012; Krivenko, 2012; Roux et al., 2006; Selby, 2011). The rejection of headscarves or of the expression of religious symbols would be linked to a negative perception of Islam, and to a perception of Islam as being a distinct religion for which one needs to take specific actions and measures (Allievi, 2005; Schreiber, 2014).

In a large representative survey of the French population conducted in 2007, Barthélémy and Michelat (2007) found that among participants voting on the left, attachment to *laïcité* goes hand in hand with acceptance of immigrants, while the reverse is true for the right-wing participants. In the same vein, on the right, people attached to *laïcité* perceive Islam as a threat to *laïcité*, while on the left, Islam and Catholicism are both blamed. In social psychology, the link between prejudice and *laïcité* has recently gained attention. Kamiejski et al. (2012) showed that the dimension of *laïcité* related to the desire to restrict religious

symbols in the public sphere is associated with anti-Maghrebi prejudice. The so-called new *laïcité* is shown to be related to social dominance orientation (albeit weakly), prejudice towards immigrants, as well as discriminatory behavior (Anier et al., 2016; Cohu et al., 2018; Roebroek & Guimond, 2018; Sablonnière et al., 2020; Troian et al., 2018). Historic *laïcité* reveals the opposite pattern and is associated with less prejudice, less social dominance orientation, and greater well-being among majority group members (Roebroek & Guimond, 2017; Sablonnière et al., 2020).

On top of that, Roebroek and Guimond (2018) have examined whether *laïcité* could be an example of *malleable ideology*. This concept outlines how individuals with a strong Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) can shape and advocate for egalitarian ideologies in pursuit of their social goals. In their research, Knowles et al (2009) concentrated on the ideology of color-blindness. They showed that high-SDO participants facing intergroup threat strategically shaped color-blindness as a procedural principle (i.e., equal treatment between individuals, regardless of their race) rather than a distributive principle (i.e., equal outcomes between individuals, even if it means using unequal treatment such as affirmative policies). In other words, they showed that participants endorse this egalitarian principle, construing it differently, depending on their exposure to an intergroup threat.

In line with this concept, Roebroek & Guimond (2018) conjectured that antiegalitarian individuals feeling threatened by the outgroup may strategically adhere to *laïcité*. In several studies, they tested whether intergroup threat (e.g., by exposing participants to Turkey's values clashing with that of European Union) could lead participants with higher levels of social dominance to support the *laïcité* principle more readily. Their results support this hypothesis, suggesting that, much like White antiegalitarian in the United States endorse color-blindness to maintain racial status quo (Knowles et al., 2009), antiegalitarian individuals under intergroup threat promote *laïcité*. This study suggests that *laïcité* may work as a malleable ideology, i.e., a sociopolitical ideology that individuals can rely upon to promote their intergroup goals (Knowles et al., 2009). In a similar vein, Lankaster & Alexopoulos (2021) argue that new *laïcité* may be serving as a justification to express prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003).

Accordingly, the second goal of this paper is to investigate the relations of *laïcité* dimensions with a set of prejudiced attitudes, comprising sexism, racism, and anti-Islam attitudes.

Furthermore, in line with the concept of malleable ideologies, our third goal will be to investigate whether antiegalitarian Belgians show higher support for dimensions of *laïcité* when confronted with Islam.

4. Overview of the present research

The aim of this research is threefold. The first is to understand how *laïcité* is conceptualized by Belgians, a country close to France but with a very distinct history with regard to *laïcité* and the separation of Church and State (Dobbelaere, 2010; Schreiber, 2014). The second is to examine the relationship that *laïcité*, in its various dimensions, may hold

with sexism, racism, and attitudes towards the headscarf, among Belgian citizens. The third goal is to understand how the different dimensions of *laïcité* relate to attitudes towards Islam and Catholicism, two religions present in Belgium, with Islam being often described as the newer target of *laïcité* and Catholicism being the most prominent religion in Belgium (and its historical antagonist).

As a whole, this project was approved by the Ethics Committee from the (blinded), reference 2019-10.

5. Study 1

Study 1 aimed to identify several dimensions of *laïcité* in the Belgian context and to examine relation between emerging dimensions and various intergroup issues (racism, anti-Islam and sexism). To do so, we relied on correlational data and conduct confirmatory factor analyses. We hypothesized that participants distinguish between at least two dimensions of *laïcité*, and that these dimensions show opposite relations with regard to sexism, racism, and anti-Islam attitudes.

5.1 Method

5.1.1 Participants

Participants were 694 Belgian French-speaking adults reached via Facebook ads. Of these, 321 filled out the questionnaire and responded correctly to the attention check. The present study included these 321 individuals ($M_{\text{age}}=45.12$, $SD=7.43$), 265 women, 52 men, and 4 people who did not indicate their gender or identified to another gender. Of the sample, 12% had no degree higher than secondary school education while 83% had a higher education.

5.1.2 Measures

After providing consent, participants responded to a number of scales, namely anti-headscarf attitudes scale, anti-Islam conspiracy, beliefs about the headscarf, modern sexism, ambivalent sexism inventory, *laïcité*, prejudice, acculturation preferences, intergroup threat. The survey ended with demographical data. All materials were in French. Participants indicated their response using a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), unless otherwise noted.

Anti-headscarf attitudes. We measured anti-headscarf attitudes with nine items adapted from Saroglou et al. (2009). The items tap the feeling of disturbance regarding the wearing of the headscarf in a number of places (e.g., ‘it bothers me that staff members of public services (administrations, hospitals, etc.) wear the headscarf’ (reversed). Higher scores denote more positive attitudes. The reliability proved satisfactory ($\alpha=.95$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 18).

Conspiracy Islam. We measured beliefs in conspiracy regarding Islam using eight items adapted from Uenal (2016). The items evoke perceptions of conspiracy from Muslims to Islamize Belgium (e.g., ‘Most Muslims in Belgium are in cahoots with racial groups who strive for an Islamization of the society’). The reliability proved satisfactory ($\alpha=.94$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 19).

Beliefs about the headscarf. We created an eight-item scale to measure beliefs about the headscarf tapping into the perception that the headscarf is a sign of oppression, a will to Islamize society, or a simple expression of one’s faith (e.g., ‘the headscarf is a sign of oppression towards women’) ($\alpha=.90$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 20).

Modern Sexism. We measured modern sexism using items from Swim et al. (1995). An illustrative item is ‘discrimination towards women is no longer an issue today in Belgium’ ($\alpha=.87$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 21).

Ambivalent Sexism. We measured the two dimensions of ambivalent sexism (benevolent and hostile sexism) using the French version of the 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory adapted by Dardenne et al. (2006). We conducted principal component analyses and created two separate factors, namely hostile and benevolent sexism, with respectively $\alpha=.92$ and $\alpha=.084$. The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 22).

Prejudice. We measured prejudice using the scale of prejudice towards immigrants in France designed by Dambrun & Guimond (2001) and we adapted the scale to the Belgian context. A sample item was ‘Belgian society is unfair towards immigrants.’ ($\alpha=.89$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 3).

Acculturation preferences. We measured acculturation preferences with Berry and Kalin’s (1995) scale, adapted to the Belgian context. An illustrative item was ‘The people who come to live in Belgium should adapt their behavior so that it matches that of Belgians’. Higher scores express higher desire for assimilation and lower desire for multiculturalism ($\alpha=.86$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 23).

Intergroup threat. We measured intergroup threat with six items taken from Stephan et al. (1999), three items tapping into symbolic threats (e.g., ‘The immigration of persons of Muslim faith is undermining Belgian culture’) and three tapping into realistic threats (e.g., ‘Immigrants of Muslim faith get more from this country than they contribute’) ($\alpha=.90$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 7).

Laïcité. To measure participants’ conceptions and attachment to *laïcité*, we used the scale proposed by Roebroek and Guimond (2017). This 15-item scale is meant to cover several conceptions of *laïcité*, including a more tolerant and egalitarian historic *laïcité* (e.g., ‘each citizen should be free to practice the religion of their choice’) and a more restrictive so-called new *laïcité* (e.g., ‘As much as possible, religious practices should be private and not public’) ($\alpha=.86$). The scale can be found in the Appendices (see Table 6).

5.2 Results

In order to analyze the data, we turned to confirmatory factor analysis using the *lavaan* package in R in version 1.4.1717 (Rosseel, 2012) and relied on the MLR (robust maximum likelihood) estimator. We relied on Hu and Bentler's (1999) cut-off criteria for goodness of fit, that is, next to the chi-square value and its associated p-value (often criticized for their sensitivity to sample size), we expected a CFI and TLI equal or superior to .95, a RMSEA equal or inferior to .06 and a SRMR equal or inferior to .08. However, based on the considerations of Chen et al. (2008) that fit indices penalize good models tested on smaller samples, we applied a comprehensive approach, i.e., we combined these statistical measures to make a decision on model fit. Because our model comprises both second order and first order factors, we started with conducting confirmatory factor analyses on the first-order latent factors (e.g., anti-headscarf attitudes), ensuring construct validation, and then examined the CFA for the corresponding second-order factor (e.g., second order factor, Islam, comprising first order factors of anti-headscarf attitudes, anti-Islam, and beliefs about the headscarf). After that, we examined the CFA for dimensions of *laïcité*. In the final step, we conducted a structural equation analysis on our global model, including dimensions of *laïcité*, second order factors (racism, sexism, anti-Islam) and corresponding first-order factors.

Because an excessive number of indicators for one latent factor may cause problems of identification and poor fit, especially if the sample size is rather small (Little et al., 2002), we created parcels for scales with eight or more items. Parceling is a measurement technique which consists in the creation of indicators formed by aggregating (sum or average) two or more items (Little et al., 2002). We relied on a parceling technique proposed by Little et al. (2002). We created four parcels for constructs comprising at least 8 indicators, and five parcels for constructs comprising at least 10 indicators. We created parcels using the best four (or five) loading items as anchors for our parcels. In order to balance the relation between each parcel and the construct, the next four (or five) items with the higher loadings were then added to the anchors in the reverse order. The remaining items were placed following the same procedure (Little et al., 2002). Table 1 contains correlations and descriptive statistics of the variables of interest.

5.2.1 Measurement models of Islam

First, we examined the fit of the measurement models of the anti-headscarf attitudes, conspiracy about Islam, and beliefs about the headscarf separately. Table 2 shows, the loadings and fit indices for the scales. We then computed a model including the three first-order factors as well as a second-order factor, Islam. The model fitted the data well ($\chi^2[51] = 138.50, p < .001$, CFI = .98, TLI = .97, RMSEA = .08; 90% CI [.063, .0945], SRMR = .032). All parcel loadings were satisfactory ($>.80$) and all three first-order latent factors loaded strongly on the second order factor ($>.78$). Note that, the variance estimate associated with beliefs about the headscarf was negative (i.e., a 'Heywood case'). Numerous reasons might explain the emergence of a Heywood case, and they are difficult to identify. Thus, because of the robustness of the analyses and the good overall fit, we proceeded to keep the implied model.

Table 1. *Correlation matrix and descriptive statistics of the variable of interest*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Historic <i>laï</i> .	5.44	0.72											
2. Anti-expres. <i>laï</i> .	4.82	1.88	-0.02										
3. Anti-funding <i>laï</i>	5.25	1.64	0.01	0.37***									
4. Anti-headscarf	3.71	2.01	-0.25***	0.79***	0.29***								
5. Islam conspir.	3.06	1.22	-0.39***	0.45***	0.12*	0.66***							
6. Neg. bel. heads.	3.79	1.50	-0.23***	0.72***	0.30***	0.89***	0.68***						
7. Modern sexism	2.41	1.01	-0.10	0.18**	-0.06	0.26***	0.15**	0.23***					
8. Benevolent sex.	2.27	0.97	-0.16**	0.09	-0.13*	0.20***	0.40***	0.22***	0.09				
9. Hostile sex.	2.37	1.20	-0.17**	0.25***	-0.02	0.37***	0.41***	0.36***	0.60***	0.39***			
10. Prejudice	3.24	1.51	-0.45***	0.43***	0.14*	0.64***	0.73***	0.63***	0.36***	0.38***	0.49***		
11. Assimilation	3.95	1.38	-0.35***	0.53***	0.19***	0.70***	0.71***	0.71***	0.36***	0.33***	0.47***	0.80***	
12. Intergroup threat	3.06	1.53	-0.41***	0.50***	0.16**	0.68***	0.81***	0.69***	0.24***	0.41***	0.46***	0.83***	0.78***

Note. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$ *** indicates $p < .001$

Table 2. *Fit and loading measurements of the Islam second-order factor and included first-order factors*

Dimension	Parcel	Items	Loading	χ^2	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Anti-headscarf att. (AH)				(2)11.45	0.99	0.97	14.9	0.01
Anti-headscarf attitudes	Parcel 1	1,2,7	.89					
Anti-headscarf attitudes	Parcel 2	9,4	.93					
Anti-headscarf attitudes	Parcel 3	3,5	.93					
Anti-headscarf attitudes	Parcel 4	8,6	.97					
Conspiracy Islam (CON)				(2)2.46	0.999	0.998	0.026	0.006
Conspiracy Islam	Parcel 1	7,3	.90					
Conspiracy Islam	Parcel 2	4,1	.86					
Conspiracy Islam	Parcel 3	2,6	.90					
Conspiracy Islam	Parcel 4	5,8	.90					
Beliefs headscarf (BH)				(2) 6.92	0.99	0.98	0.09	0.02
Beliefs headscarf	Parcel 1	4,2	.84					
Beliefs headscarf	Parcel 2	7,3	.85					
Beliefs headscarf	Parcel 3	8,1	.82					
Beliefs headscarf	Parcel 4	5,6	.79					
Islam = AH+CON + BH				(51)138.5	.98	.97	.08	.03

Note. All loadings are standardized. Models of 'AH', 'CON' and 'BH' are one-latent factor models. Model of 'Islam' is a hierarchical model with a second order factor (Islam) and three first-order factors (AH, CON, BAH).

5.2.2 Measurement models of Sexism

Here too, we first examined the fit of the various sexism factors separately. Table 3 shows the loadings and fit indices for these models. We then computed a model including first order factors of modern sexism, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism as well as a second-order factor of sexism. The model showed good fit ($\chi^2[74] = 193.94$, $p < .001$, CFI = .95, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .08; 90% CI [.064, .09], SRMR = .059. Parcel loadings were satisfactory (>.66). Note that, the variance estimate of hostile sexism was negative.

5.2.3 Measurement model of racism

We examined measurement models of prejudice, acculturation preferences and intergroup threat. Following modification indices, we allowed covariances between indicators in order to achieve a good fit, for acculturation preferences (Accultu_1 and Accultu_5, Accultu_2 and Accultu_6). Table 4 shows the loadings and model fits. We then computed the model including the first-order factors of prejudice, acculturation preferences, and intergroup threat, with a second-order factor of racism, allowing the same two covariances for acculturation. The model showed good fit ($\chi^2[99] = 368.51$, $p < .001$, CFI = .92, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .10; 90% CI [.09, .11], SRMR = .056). Loadings were satisfactory (>.59), with the first-order latent factors loading strongly on the second order factor (>.93).

5.2.4 Measurement model of *laïcité*

Turning to the measurement of *laïcité*, we first computed a model relying on Roebroeck & Guimond' (2017) dimensions, that is, a measurement model including three dimensions, historic *laïcité*, new *laïcité*, and attachment to *laïcité*. The model had poor fit indices ($\chi^2[87] = 547.17$, CFI = .69, TLI = .62, RMSEA = .14; 90% CI [.13, .15], SRMR = .115). We compared this model with alternative models, in which we split new *laïcité* into two dimensions: a dimension about the public expression of religious signs, and another dimension about the public funding of religious practices. We did not include the two items about the attachment to *laïcité*, as these do not measure a specific conception of *laïcité* but rather a mere attachment to the principle, empty of meaning. This 3-dimension solution ('historic *laïcité*', '*laïcité* expression', '*laïcité* funding'), in which we allowed a covariance between two items of historic *laïcité*, Laicité_14 and Laicité_15 yielded a better fit in comparison with the previous solution ($\chi^2[50] = 133.78$, CFI = .92, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .079; 90% CI [.063, .095], SRMR = .085). Table 5 shows the three dimensions and corresponding indicators loadings.

5.2.5 Global model

After confirming the factorial structure of the attitudinal factors and *laïcité* dimensions comprising the model, we tested a global model encapsulating the three dimensions of *laïcité*, as well as Anti-Islam, Racism, Sexism second-order factors and associated first-order factors. This global model brings together the models listed above. We set the covariances between

first-order factors (e.g., hostile sexism, conspiracy Islam, intergroup threat) and dimensions of *laïcité* (historic *laïcité*, anti-funding *laïcité*, anti-expression *laïcité*) to zero. Doing so allowed us to ensure that covariances between *laïcité* dimensions and second order factors (racism, sexism and anti-Islam) were not affected by the covariances between *laïcité* dimensions and first-order factors. (The model showed a good fit ($\chi^2[1350] = 2649.85$, $p < .001$, CFI = .90, TLI = .89, RMSEA = .060; 90% CI [.053, .060], SRMR = .085) and is represented in Figure 1.

Table 3. *Fit and loading measurements of the sexism second-order factor and included first-order factors*

Dimension	Parcel	Items	Loading	χ^2	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Modern sexism (MS)				(2)33.06	0.95	0.85	0.22	0.04
Modern sexism	Parcel 1	7,3	.78					
Modern sexism	Parcel 2	6,2	.75					
Modern sexism	Parcel 3	1,8	.84					
Modern sexism	Parcel 4	5,4	.73					
Hostile sexism (HS)				(5)11.76	0.99	0.98	0.08	0.02
Hostile sexism	Parcel 1	2,10,15	.85					
Hostile sexism	Parcel 2	5,18	.85					
Hostile sexism	Parcel 3	4,11	.97					
Hostile sexism	Parcel 4	7,16	.84					
Hostile sexism	Parcel 5	21,14	.79					
Benevolent sexism (BS)				(5)25.24	0.96	0.91	0.12	0.04
Benevolent sexism	Parcel 1	1,19,3	.83					
Benevolent sexism	Parcel 2	8,12	.86					
Benevolent sexism	Parcel 3	13,17	.71					
Benevolent sexism	Parcel 4	9,20						
Benevolent sexism	Parcel 5	6,22						
Sexism = MS+HS+BS				(74)193.94	.95	.93	.08	.06

Note. All loadings are standardized. Models of ‘MS’, ‘HS’ and ‘BS’ are one-latent factor models. Model of ‘Sexism’ is a hierarchical model with a second order factor (Sexism) and three first-order factors (MS, HS, BS).

Table 4. *Fit and loading measurements of the racism second-order factor and included first-order factors*

Dimension	Parcel	Items	Loading	χ^2	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Prejudice (PREJ)				(2)1.13	0.92	0.75	0.33	0.05
Prejudice	Parcel 1	8,3	.84					
Prejudice	Parcel 2	4,6	.88					
Prejudice	Parcel 3	2,7	.81					
Prejudice	Parcel 4	5,1	.80					
Acculturation pref. (AC)				(7) 16.13	.99	.97	.07	.03
Acculturation pref.		1	.63					
Acculturation pref.		2	.60					
Acculturation pref.		3	.75					
Acculturation pref.		4	.82					
Acculturation pref.		5	.72					
Acculturation pref.		6	.65					
Intergroup threat (TH)				(9)38.05	.97	.95	.11	.03
Intergroup threat		1	.59					
Intergroup threat		2	.84					
Intergroup threat		3	.77					
Intergroup threat		4	.89					
Intergroup threat		5	.67					
Intergroup threat		6	.89					
Racism=PREJ+AC+TH				(99)368.51	.92	.90	.10	.06

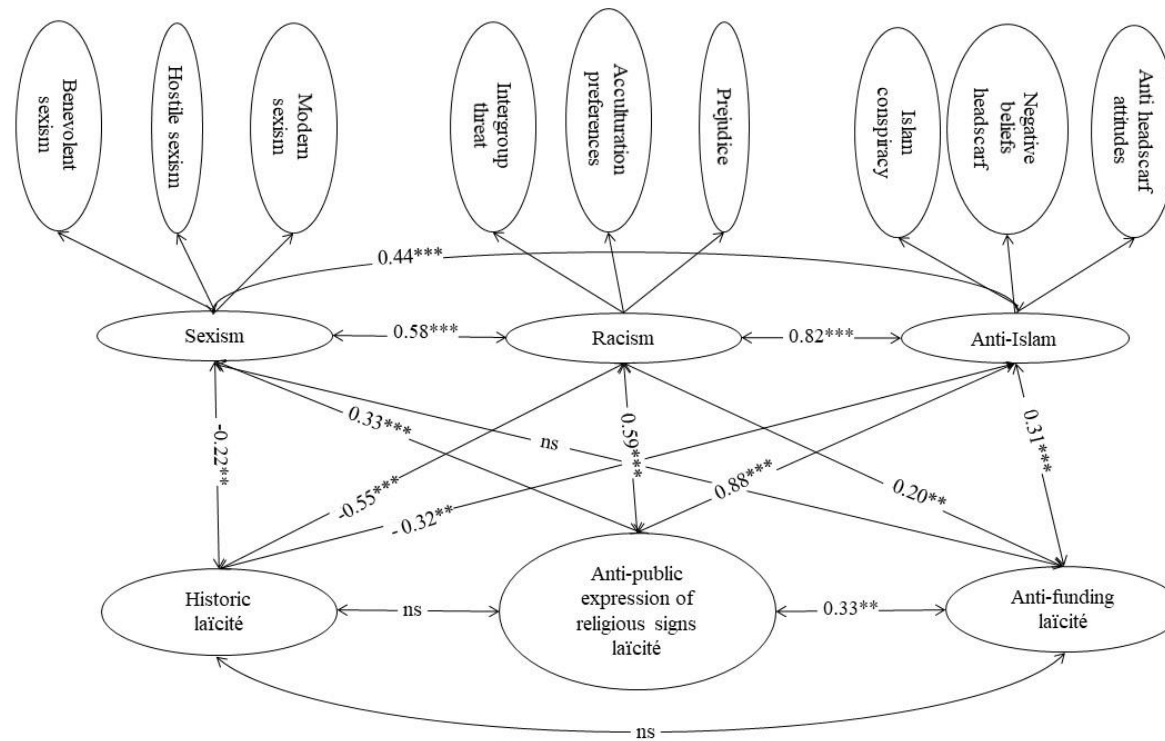
Note. All loadings are standardized. Models of 'Prej', 'AC' and 'TH' are one-latent factor models. Model of 'Racism' is a hierarchical model with a second order factor (Racism) and three first-order factors (Prej, AC, TH). In the acculturation preferences model, two pairs of indicators were allowed to covariate, Accultu_1 and Accultu_5, Accultu_2 and Accultu_6.

Table 5. *Fit and loading measurements of the laïcité dimensions*

Dimension	Items	Loading	χ^2	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Historic <i>laïcité</i> (HL)	3	.54					
Historic <i>laïcité</i>	4	.50					
Historic <i>laïcité</i>	9	.71					
Historic <i>laïcité</i>	13	.64					
Historic <i>laïcité</i>	14	.55					
Historic <i>laïcité</i>	15	.59					
<i>Laïcité</i> public expression	1	.50					
<i>Laïcité</i> public expression	7	.87					
<i>Laïcité</i> public expression	8	.91					
<i>Laïcité</i> funding	5	.94					
<i>Laïcité</i> funding	10	.42					
<i>Laïcité</i> funding	11	.86					
<i>Laïcité</i> = HL + LE+LF			(50)133.18	.92	0	.08	.085

Note. All loadings are standardized. Model of ‘*Laïcité*’ is a model with three latent factors (HL, LE, LF).

Figure 1. Global model of the covariances between dimensions of *laïcité* and Sexism, Racism, and Anti-Islam second-order factors and their corresponding first-order factors.



Model fit: $\chi^2[1350] = 2649.85$, $p < .001$, CFI = .90, TLI = .89, RMSEA = .06; 90% CI[.053, .060], SRMR = .085. Covariances coefficients are standardized. *** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.

In line with hypotheses, our data showed that, in Belgium, the dimensions underlying *laïcité* have distinct associations with attitudes regarding sexism, racism or Islam. Specifically, historic *laïcité* was negatively associated with sexism ($-.22, p = .01$), racism ($-.55, p < .001$) and the anti-Islamic second-order factors ($-.32, p < .001$). Strikingly, the *laïcité* dimension of ‘anti-expression of religious symbols’ showed an opposite pattern as it was positively associated with sexism ($.33, p < .001$), racism ($.59, p < .001$), and anti-Islamic attitudes ($.88, p < .001$). As for the ‘anti-funding’ *laïcité*, the picture was more complex and once again marks the specific character of the Belgian context compared to the French *laïcité* (Roebroeck & Guimond, 2017). While in the French context, the rejection of public funding and of the expression of religious signs coexist as one dimension, our data showed only a moderate link between these two dimensions of *laïcité* ($.33, p < .01$). Furthermore, opposition to the funding of religions was less associated with racism ($.20, p = .002$) and anti-Islamic attitudes ($.31, p < .001$). These lower associations might be explained by the fact that opposition to public funding of religious beliefs stems from various motivations (arguing for lower funding of Catholicism, or no funding regardless of the targeted belief), beyond an anti-Islam sentiment. Interestingly, however, no links emerged between opposition to the funding of religions and sexism ($p = .96$), nor with adherence to historic *laïcité* ($p = .62$).

5.3 Discussion

Based on the literature on *laïcité* in social psychology and sociology, we questioned the presence of differing conceptions of *laïcité* within Belgium. With this study, we aimed to uncover how French-speaking Belgians interpret the concept of *laïcité*; and how this (these) representation(s) articulate(s) with different intergroup attitudes, such as sexism, racism, and different beliefs and attitudes regarding Islam.

We relied on a Belgian sample and analyzed our data by means of confirmatory factor analysis. Our results confirm the existence of very different understandings of *laïcité*. First, as is the case in France, our data confirmed the presence of historic *laïcité*, which enshrines the right to worship and the non-discrimination based on an individual's religious or philosophical beliefs. This stance was associated with more tolerance in the form of less sexism, less racism, and less negative attitudes and beliefs towards Islam. Next to this tolerant conception of *laïcité*, a second dimension emerged, encompassing the desire to restrict the public expression of religious symbols. Finally, a third dimension concerned the desire to limit the funding of religious beliefs. Remarkably, while in France these last two dimensions combine under the dimension of new *laïcité*, our data suggest that in Belgium, the attitude towards the funding of religious beliefs is distinct from the one that concerns the expression of religious symbols in public. As it turns out, our data revealed that these two conceptions of ‘anti public expression of religious signs’ and ‘anti-funding’ show close but distinct patterns with our measures of intergroup attitudes.

On the one hand, ‘anti-funding’ *laïcité* was positively associated with racism and negative attitudes and beliefs of Islam, albeit moderately. It was not linked to sexist attitudes. These moderate associations surely reflect the multi-faceted debate at play when it comes to funding

religions in Belgium. Indeed, while the desire to limit funding of religions may go hand in hand with a desire to limit the space taken by Islam, it may also emerge among egalitarian participants wishing to question the funding share received by the Catholic Church, or feeling reluctant to fund religions in general. On the other, the *laïcité* dimension capturing refusal of public expression of religious signs was strongly associated with racism, very strongly associated with negative beliefs and attitudes towards Islam, and positively associated with sexist attitudes (encompassing modern, hostile and benevolent sexism). These findings suggest that we may question the motivations underlying the laws restricting the expression of religious symbols.

Although we used measures that captured a broad spectrum of sexist attitudes, a limitation of Study 1 is that our questionnaire did not measure all aspects of sexism that Muslim women face. Specifically, scholars describe that women wearing the headscarf are seen both as victims and accomplices of their domination by Muslim men (Bentouhami, 2018). Their headscarves would be understood as a desire to proselytize and Islamize, or as an assertion that a moral woman must be covered so as not to attract male attention. There is a prevalent perception that women wearing the headscarf tend to consider uncovered women as morally questionable, associating them with prostitution and unfaithfulness (Bowen, 2008; Howard, 2012; Krivenko, 2012). This more ‘aggressive’ and ‘hostile’ view of women wearing a headscarf is not captured by the ambivalent sexism measure. In fact, although hostile sexism denotes a form of perceived aggressiveness in women, hostile sexism represents above all a perception of willingness among women to seize power and to dominate men, which is not the case here. Future studies should investigate this question.

In conclusion, the present findings confirm the existence of various conceptualizations in Belgium, conceptualizations that show some similarities but also differences with those that are prevalent in France. The data also emphasizes the importance of understanding these differences. Indeed, each type of *laïcité* shows a different pattern of relations with important issues in the area of intergroup relations and, in this way, different consequences for society cohesion. Building on these observations, it is worth examining how the individuals may alter their interpretations of the *laïcité* beliefs when facing changing contexts. Echoing the recent work on malleable ideologies, we aimed to investigate whether antiegalitarian individuals (i.e., high-SDO participants) will shape *laïcité* in more exclusive forms, and will express higher attachment to *laïcité*, when reminded of a minority eliciting threat, Muslims.

6. Study 2

In Study 2, we aimed at digging into the relation between *laïcité* and possible weaponization of this set of attitudes against the Muslim minority. Following malleable ideology research of Knowles et al. (2009), this study investigated whether antiegalitarian individuals change their views about the principle of *laïcité* as a function of the intergroup context. Because *laïcité* is often said to be strategically claimed in the face of Islam, we wanted to examine how people feel attached to the *laïcité* principle and endorse the two dimensions of *laïcité* identified in Study 1 depending on whether they have been exposed to

items pertaining to Catholicism (Catholicism condition) or Islam (Islam condition). Specifically, we looked at participants' levels of attachment to *laïcité* and adherence to the subdimensions of *new laïcité* as identified in Study 1, namely expression of religious symbols and funding of religious practices. Doing this should provide support to the results obtained in Study 1 and further establish the relevance of a distinction between these two factors in the Belgian context. Such a pattern would contrast Roebroeck and Guimond's (2017) findings in which the two factors combined under a single *new laïcité* factor.

We preregistered the study on the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/d3zjb/>. Following the literature on ideological malleability, we used SDO as our main moderator, but tested moderation by RWA, due to the relevance of ideological deviance from perceived norms in the present context. We also looked at the possible role of political orientation.

In line with the ideological malleability hypothesis and building upon the results that emerged in Study 1, we hypothesized a three-way interaction between SDO, condition and *new laïcité* dimension. Specifically, we expected that high-SDO, but not low-SDO, participants would adhere more to the 'anti-public expression of religious signs' dimension, as opposed to the 'anti-funding' dimension, when they had exposed to Islam rather than to the Catholic religion. Said otherwise, we predicted a significant two-way interaction between SDO and condition for the subdimension of 'anti-public expression of religious signs', but not for the subdimension of 'anti-funding'. We thus expected high-SDO, but not low-SDO, participants would adhere more to the 'anti-public expression of religious signs' when they had been exposed to Islam religion, compared to they had been exposed to the Catholic religion. We predicted the emergence of a similar pattern using RWA and political orientation as moderators.

Next, in line with findings from Roebrock & Guimond (2018), we predicted that SDO and condition would significantly interact to predict attachment to *laïcité*. Specifically, we expected that high-SDO participants would be more attached to *laïcité* in the Islam condition compared to the Catholicism condition. As to low-SDO participants, we predicted that they would not express different levels attachment to *laïcité*, as a function of condition. We expected the emergence of a similar pattern using RWA and political orientation as moderators.

6.1 Method

6.1.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 191 French-speaking individuals recruited in the streets of (blinded) during March and April 2023. We had initially planned to collect 280 participants but we stopped data collection after two months due to lack of resources. Participants had to be at least 18 years old and to be a native French-speaker. Participants who failed attention checks, who were interrupted during completion, who spoke Arabic at home or who were Muslim were excluded from the analyses. The final sample comprised 160 individuals ($M_{age}=47.49$, $SD=16.14$), 90 women and 69 men and 1 person who did not wish to indicate their gender or identified to another gender.

6.1.2 Procedure

We recruited participants in the street and invited them to fill the questionnaire on an electronic tablet. The research was introduced to them as ‘a survey looking at the position of individuals toward certain societal issues in Belgium’. In addition, they learned that the data collection was anonymous and confidential and that there were no right or wrong answers. After providing their consent, respondents provided some demographic data (gender, age, city of birth, education level, nationality, language spoken at home and religion). Then, the questionnaire started with political orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, and social dominance scales. Next, we randomly assigned participants to one of the two conditions. In both conditions, participants completed two scales, namely the Bogardus Social Distance Scale consisting of 7 items by Mather et al. (2017) with items on practicing Muslims (Islam condition) or practicing Catholics (Catholicism condition) and an Anti-Islam sentiment scale consisting of 4 items by Uenal (2016; Islam condition) or the same scale adapted to Catholicism (Catholicism condition). Then, participants filled out items on *laïcité*.

6.1.3 Measures

All materials were in French. Using 7-point Likert scales, respondents had to indicate the extent to which they agreed (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*) with a list of statements originating from the following scales.

Political orientation. We measured participants’ political orientation using the following item: ‘In terms of political orientation, would you say that you are more left or right-wing? The number 1 corresponds to a political orientation completely to the left, the number 7 corresponds to a political orientation completely to the right’.

Right wing authoritarianism. We measured participants’ right wing authoritarianism using a 6-items version of the Right Wing Orientation Scale by Bizumic and Duckitt (2018). A sample item was ‘There is nothing wrong with premarital sex’. Three items were reverse coded ($\alpha=.64$).

Social dominance orientation. We measured participants’ social dominance orientation using the French form of the Social Dominance Orientation scale validated by Duarte et al. (2004). A sample item was ‘Some groups of people are simply inferior compared to other groups’. Out of the 10 items, five were reverse coded ($\alpha=.77$).

Laïcité. We measured participants’ endorsement and attachment to *laïcité* with the 15-items scale proposed by Roebroek & Guimond (2017) that was used in Study 1 ($\alpha=.75$). The original scale, based on the French context, comprises two conceptual dimensions of *laïcité*: historic *laïcité* and new *laïcité*. Yet, based on the model that emerged in Study 1 in a Belgian context, we split the new *laïcité* dimension into two dimensions, one dealing with the expression of religious symbols in public spaces (e.g., ‘I think it’s only right that visible religious symbols should be banned from schools in the official network.’) ($\alpha=.80$) and the other dimension pertaining to the funding of religious practices (e.g., ‘I’m opposed to state funding of religious buildings’) ($\alpha=.61$).

6.2 Results

6.2.1 Anti-expression and anti-funding dimensions

We conducted our analyses using R (R Core Team, 2013) and the lme4 package (Bates et al., 2014). To test our hypothesis, we relied on a mixed model analysis. We treated condition (coded -.5 for the Catholic condition, .5 for the Islam condition), SDO (centered), type of *laïcité* (coded -.5 for anti-funding dimension, .5 for the anti-expression dimension) and all interactions involving these variables as fixed effects. We included both items and participants as random intercepts.

The predicted condition by SDO by type of *laïcité* three-way interaction effect was significant ($b = .78$, $SE = .26$, 95% CI [0.27; 1.28], $t(794) = 2.98$, $p = .003$, $Rs^2 = .006$). As can be seen in Figure 2, there was no significant condition by SDO interaction on the anti-funding dimension ($b = -.14$, $SE = .29$, 95% CI [-0.70; 0.41], $t(244) = -0.51$, $p = .61$) but a significant interaction between condition and SDO on the anti-expression dimension of *laïcité* ($b = .63$, $SE = .29$, 95% CI [0.07; 1.19], $t(244) = 2.21$, $p = .028$, $Rs^2 = .008$). Further breaking down the latter interaction as a function of SDO revealed the predicted condition effect among high-SDO participants ($b = .86$, $SE = .36$, 95% CI [0.16; 1.56], $t(244) = 2.39$, $p = .017$, $Rs^2 = .010$) and no condition effect among low-SDO participants ($b = -.26$, $SE = .36$, 95% CI [-0.96; 0.44], $t(244) = -0.73$, $p = .46$). These results confirmed that high-SDO participants showed higher support for anti-expression *laïcité* when confronted to Islam compared to Catholicism. Conversely, low-SDO participants did not change their level of support depending on condition.

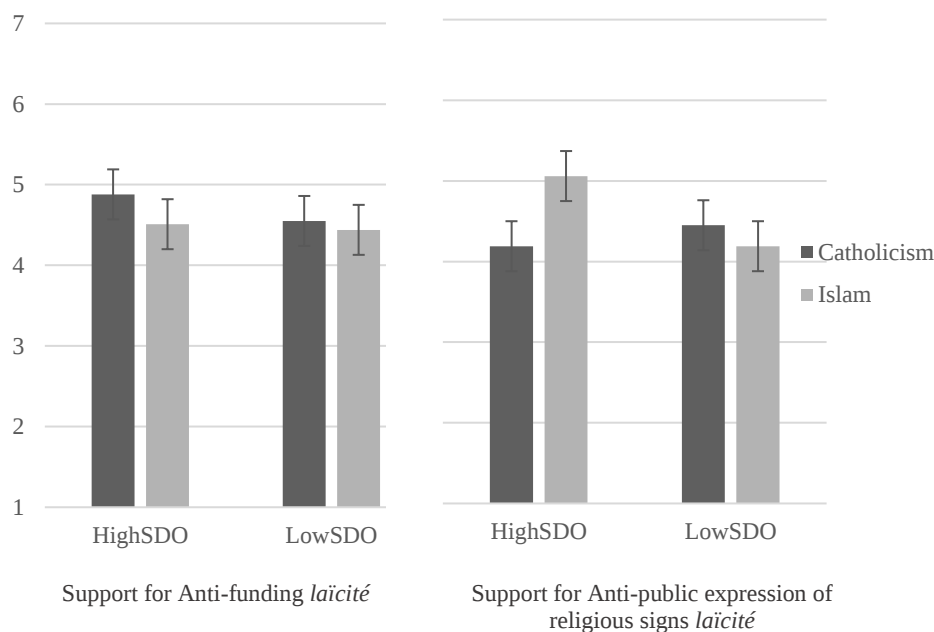


Figure 2. Support for *laïcité* depending on *laïcité* type, SDO and condition levels

We also relied on a model relying on RWA instead of SDO. This model included condition (coded -.5 for the Catholic condition, .5 for the Islam condition), RWA (centered), type of *laïcité* (coded -.5 for anti-funding dimension, .5 for the anti-expression dimension) and all interactions between these variables as fixed effects. Again, we included both items and participants as random intercepts.

We again found the predicted condition by RWA by type of *laïcité* three-way interaction effect ($b = .46$, $SE = .23$, 95% CI [0.003; 0.91], $t(794) = 1.97$, $p = .003$, $Rs^2 = .003$). There was no significant condition by RWA interaction on the anti-funding dimension ($b = .14$, $SE = .26$, 95% CI [-0.36; 0.64], $t(243) = 0.31$, $p = .59$), but a significant interaction effect between condition and RWA on the anti-expression dimension of *laïcité* ($b = .59$, $SE = .23$, 95% CI [0.09; 1.09], $t(243) = 2.31$, $p = .02$, $Rs^2 = .009$).

Further breaking down the latter interaction as a function of RWA revealed the predicted condition effect among high-RWA participants ($b = .84$, $SE = .36$, 95% CI [0.14; 1.54], $t(244) = 2.34$, $p = .019$, $Rs^2 = .009$) and no effect of condition among low-RWA participants ($b = -.35$, $SE = .36$, 95% CI [-1.05; 0.36], $t(243) = -0.95$, $p = .34$). Again, results confirmed that high-RWA participants showed higher support for anti-expression *laïcité* when confronted with Islam compared to Catholicism, but low-RWA participants did not change their level of support depending on condition.

Finally, we entered a model including condition, political orientation (centered), type of *laïcité* and all interactions between these variables as fixed effects, as well as items and participants as random intercepts.

Here, the second-order interaction between political orientation, type of *laïcité* and condition was not significant ($b = .19$, $SE = .20$, 95% CI [-0.20; 0.58], $t(794) = 0.96$, $p = .34$). However, as expected, there was no significant interaction between political orientation and condition when looking at the anti-funding dimension ($b = .24$, $SE = .22$, 95% CI [-0.18; 0.67], $t(244) = 1.98$, $p = .27$), but there was a significant interaction between political orientation and condition on the anti-expression dimension of *laïcité* ($b = .43$, $SE = .22$, 95% CI [0.06; 0.86], $t(244) = 1.98$, $p = .049$, $Rs^2 = .007$).

Here too, breaking down the latter interaction as a function of political orientation revealed the predicted effect of condition among right-wing participants ($b = .75$, $SE = .36$, 95% CI [0.05; 1.46], $t(244) = 2.09$, $p = .037$, $Rs^2 = .007$), and no effect of condition among left-wing participants ($b = -.28$, $SE = .37$, 95% CI [-1.00; 0.44], $t(244) = -0.76$, $p = .45$). Results suggested that right-wing participants were more opposed to the expression of religious signs when they were primed with Islam compared to Catholicism.

6.2.2 Attachment to *laïcité*

To look at attachment to *laïcité*, we conducted a multiple regression model including SDO, the condition and their interaction as predictors. As expected, the regression analysis showed no SDO effect ($b = -.12$, $SE = .14$, 95% CI [-0.40; 0.16], $t(156) = -0.86$, $p = .39$), and no condition effect ($b = -.17$, $SE = .25$, 95% CI [-0.66; 0.33], $t(156) = -0.67$, $p = .50$). Also, we

did not find the predicted interaction between the condition and SDO ($b = -.07$, $SE = .28$, 95% CI $[-0.62; 0.49]$, $t(156) = -0.23$, $p = .82$).

We then entered a multiple regression model including the effect of RWA, of the experimental manipulation of and their interaction as predictors. RWA negatively predicted the attachment to *laïcité* ($b = -.28$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI $[-0.52; -0.03]$, $t(156) = -2.20$, $p = .03$, $Rsq = .03$), but contrary to what was expected, RWA did not interact with condition to predict attachment to *laïcité* ($p = .66$).

Using political orientation in the same model, we found an effect of political orientation, such that right-wing participants were less attached to *laïcité* ($b = -0.24$, $SE = .11$, 95% CI $[-0.45; -0.03]$, $t(156) = -2.27$, $p = .03$, $Rsq = .032$), but condition was not significant ($p = .69$) and the interaction was not either ($p = .33$).

These results showed that participants' attachment to *laïcité* did not vary across conditions.

6.3 Discussion

Following malleable ideology research by Knowles et al., (2009) this study aimed to investigate whether individuals change their attitudes towards *laïcité* when Islam is salient, in comparison to Catholicism. In line with the concept of malleable ideologies coined by Knowles et al. (2009) and building on the results from Study 1, we hypothesized that high-SDO individuals would show higher support for the 'anti-public expression of religious signs' when Islam, rather than Catholicism, had been made salient. Importantly, we hypothesized that this interaction would not emerge with the dimension opposing the funding of beliefs. Our results provided strong support to our hypothesis in that we found a clear shift in the adherence to the dimension pertaining to the opposition to the wearing of religious symbols in public spaces as a function of condition. Indeed, anti-egalitarian individuals showed higher opposition to the wearing of religious symbols in public spaces in the Islam condition compared to the Catholic condition. Those who scored low on Social Dominance Orientation remained unaffected by the exposure to Islam and showed constant support across conditions. These results nicely extend what has been conceptualized in Study 1, and confirm the presence of distinct sub-dimensions of *laïcité* in Belgium, with distinct use by antiegalitarian participants. Furthermore, in line with the results obtained by Roebroek & Guimond (2018) in France, our results show a weaponization of *laïcité* in Belgium. Importantly, they demonstrate that a more restrictive form of *laïcité* which emerged in recent years, can serve as a disguised form of anti-Islam attitudes.

Interestingly, whereas Roebroek and Guimond (2018) found a shift in the attachment to the principle, we did not find such a pattern. In all likelihood, this absence of shift in the attachment to the *laïcité* principle can be attributed to the Belgian context, where the concept of *laïcité* is much fuzzier. In other words, *laïcité* is not a significant part of the Belgian identity, contrary to the French context (Anier et al., 2018; Barthélemy & Michelat, 2007).

7. General discussion

The principle of *laïcité* is used extensively to support the regulation or ban on religious symbols in various environments, such as schools, administration, universities, sports, etc. Despite there being no apparent consensus on the precise meaning of the term, it is claimed by individuals with conflicting motivations and potentially different representations. To our knowledge, no paper had documented the articulation of *laïcité* in relation to sexism, racism, and attitudes towards Islam, particularly in Belgium. Study 1 allowed uncovering the broad conceptualization of *laïcité*, a concept that takes very specific meanings in the Belgian context. Indeed, while Belgian *laïcité* was first construed in an attempt to balance the strong powers of the Catholic Church (Dobbelaere, 2010), *laïcité* has repeatedly been associated with Islam in more recent debates.

Our results confirmed that Belgians have distinct understandings of what *laïcité* precisely entails. Confirmatory analyses revealed three dimensions. First, historic *laïcité* was a more tolerant conception, showing negative associations with sexism, anti-Islam sentiment and racism. The second dimension concerned the opposition to the public expression of religious symbols. This dimension showed positive association with sexism, racism, and anti-Islam sentiments. It is striking that the effort to restrict the expression of religious symbols is most often portrayed as a means of achieving *laïcité* and supporting women's empowerment, devoid of any discriminatory motivation. Beyond the case that banning religious symbols is said to be counterproductive for women's empowerment (Howard, 2012), our results suggest that the newer conception of *laïcité* opposing the headscarf (and other religious symbols) would possibly be detrimental for women and motivated by an antiegalitarian agenda.

A third dimension emerged and tapped opposition to the public funding of religious beliefs. Interestingly, this dimension was only weakly associated with intergroup relations constructs. This state of affairs may reflect the intricate debate surrounding the funding of religions, with advocates of funding potentially having opposing motivations, that is, the goal to recognize the different beliefs versus the goal to control them more. Clearly, the factorial structure obtained in Study 1 suggests that, contrary to what Roebroek and Guimond (2018) found, the anti-funding and anti-public expression dimensions do not form one factor of new *laïcité* in Belgium.

Building on these findings, Study 2 aimed at examining how these two dimensions, along with an attachment to *laïcité*, may be endorsed in contexts where Islam versus Catholicism are salient. Our data point to the fact that, in line with the research on malleable ideology, the Belgian context is not exempt of the exploitation of *laïcité* to justify anti-Islam stances. Indeed, antiegalitarian participants showed higher endorsement for the opposition to the public expression of religious signs, in a situation where they met with Islam-related content as opposed to Catholicism-related content. Thus, they modified their position with regard to the right of people to wear religious signs, depending on the religion they were envisioning. Importantly, this interaction pattern did not emerge on the anti-funding dimension. These results highlight the extent to which antiegalitarian participants can turn to the normative value of *laïcité* as a tool against Islam. Such a strategic use of *laïcité* goes hand in hand with

the strategic use of gender equality against Islam (see ‘femonationalism’, Farris, 2017; Benelli et al., 2006; Delphy, 2006; Lankester & Alexopoulos, 2021), as found on Belgian participants (blinded, submitted).

The present research is not without its limitations. Firstly, in both studies, although the data was collected in the street (thus avoiding the common pitfalls associated with the reliance on psychology students), the samples were not representative. One must therefore be wary with respect to external validity. Notably, Study 2 sample took place in (blinded), a city home to a Catholic University, and part of the French-speaking region. Future studies should rely on a more diverse sample or explore the attitudes towards forms of *laïcité* in Flanders, a region that has historically adopted different approaches to diversity (Adam et al., 2018). Another drawback is the fact that a lack of resources prevented reaching the planned number of respondents planned for Study 2. Future work should ensure that a larger sample be included in the data collection.

To conclude, the present data allowed for the identification of Belgians’ representations with regard to *laïcité*. We also examined how these conceptions relate to sexism, racism, and anti-Islam attitudes. We managed to identify similarities and differences between the French and Belgian appraisal of this important ideology. In particular, when French data point to a single new *laïcité* dimension that is related to prejudice, our data point to the presence of two subdimensions, one related to the expression of beliefs and the other to the funding of the different faiths. Last but not least, we also tested whether *laïcité* was strategically used by antiegalitarian individuals and found that these expressed a renewed adherence to some dimensions of the principle in the presence of Islam. These are the first data to investigate these issues in Belgium and, as such, they send a worthwhile message, at both practical and political levels.

Chapter 8.

Gender inequality discourse as a tool to express attitudes towards Islam

In order to promote their anti-immigration agenda, many politicians resort to gender-equality discourse, often suggesting that national or European values should be protected against Islam that subordinates women. This co-occurrence of racist and anti-sexist arguments is striking because research generally shows that people with racist views and lower levels of egalitarianism tend to have attitudes that are more sexist. In this study, we use textual data to examine whether this co-occurrence emerges in lay people's discourses and how it relates to their ideological positions. Specifically, drawing on data collected via an online questionnaire with French-speaking Belgians ($N=500$) and using statistical text analyses, we investigate the participants' responses to open-ended questions pertaining to their conception of European lifestyle, the relation between Islam and Christian religions, and Islam and feminism. We find that participants with right-wing political orientation and higher levels of system justification associate women's rights to European way of life more than other participants, perceive Islam and Christianity as more different, and perceive Islam as incompatible with feminism. They justify their views using gender-equality arguments. In contrast, left-wing participants do not see feminism and Islam as incompatible and blame both religions for being an obstacle on the road to gender equality. As a set, our findings confirm that people with right-wing political orientation and higher levels of system justification tend to exploit the issue of gender equality to promote their anti-egalitarian views towards Islam. In view of the widespread and normative support for gender equality in many Western countries, this phenomenon is particularly treacherous.

Reference

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Chapter 8.

Gender inequality discourse as a tool to express attitudes towards Islam

Today's Europe is the home of refugees and descendants of first, second generation immigrants. In Belgium, and in other parts of north-western Europe, guest workers, many of whom came from Muslim countries (Voas & Fleischmann, 2012), have been recruited since the 1960s to boost local economies (Strabac & Listhaug, 2008; Phalet et al., 2015; Zick et al., 2008). As a result, Muslims are emerging as the largest religious minority in Europe and Islam as the second most popular religion within the Belgian population (Sealy & Modood, 2020). Despite their long-standing presence, Muslim immigrants encounter considerable levels of discrimination¹ (e.g., Bayraklı & Hafez, 2018). In 2019 Belgium, 88.1% of the complaints filed for religious or philosophical discrimination referred to Islam, with mostly Muslim women as the victim (Unia, 2019). At the same time, the presence of Islam and immigration has been the focus of attention of many European political parties. In this context, examples abound of politicians invoking gender equality arguments to advocate their anti-immigration policies. That is, associating Islam with the oppression of women, they imply that women's rights are a core value of the ingroup that deserves protection (Akkerman, 2015; Farris, 2017). Interestingly, such rhetoric has been predominantly held by right-wing politicians, the same who often failed to support progressive policies including women's rights. As Akkerman (2015, p. 56) writes: 'This defense of liberal principles seems to sit rather uneasily with the conservatism that these parties tend to display when formulating their policy agendas in the domain of family relations (...)'. Notably, right and far-right figure such as Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders or Matteo Salvini claimed to seek to protect their country from Islam in order to defend women (Akkerman, 2015; Farris, 2017). This collusion between racist views with gender equality ideas was recently coined 'femonationalism' by Farris (2017), singling out political actors. However, one question of high interest is whether such rhetoric also prevails within a general European population. In other words, do right-wing anti-egalitarian individuals invoke gender equality when facing the question of Islam?

From a psychological point of view, this co-occurrence of anti-immigration and pro-gender equality discourses may come as a surprise. Indeed, historically, the two types of rhetoric have long tended to be associated with opposing poles of the political spectrum as anti-egalitarian views regarding immigration usually go hand in hand with antiegalitarian views on gender. However, the weaponization of egalitarian ideologies for antiegalitarian purposes echoes the concept of 'malleable ideology' (Knowles et al., 2009), which allows one to reconcile this apparent incompatibility. Egalitarian ideologies would be exploited by people who wish to maintain the status quo to assert inequalities claims, such as legitimizing an insensitivity to racial inequalities on the grounds of color-blindness (Knowles, 2009).

¹ Discrimination is conceptualized as the differential treatment of people on account of their group membership (Kite & Whitley, 2016)

Building on the concept of malleable ideologies, the present work examines whether individuals rely on gender-equality to differentiate from and express negative views towards Islam. Indeed, while the weaponization of gender equality by politicians has received some attention (Akkerman, 2015; Farris, 2017; Norocel & Pettersson, 2022), to our knowledge, no study has yet looked at the existence of this phenomenon among lay people and even less so by relying on a quantitative approach. Using textual data analysis, we examine whether and how this weaponization of women's rights emerges among lay people and how it relates to their ideological positions. In view of the normativity of gender equality and the mobilizing potential of this ideology, it is crucial to uncover such a treacherous phenomenon.

1. Malleable ideologies

Although the diversity climate in today's Europe may be less welcoming than one would hope (e.g., differential treatment given to Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, see De Coninck, 2023); egalitarian traditions and non-discrimination standards often prevail in Europe and the notion of race superiority remains inadmissible for a majority of people (Bamberg & Verkuyten, 2022; Bratt, 2022; Monteith et al., 2010). In our post-holocaust world where the pressure to appear egalitarian is widespread (Bamberg & Verkuyten, 2022; Plant & Devine, 2009), people will tend to express their racist attitudes only if there is an acceptable reason for doing so, i.e., a reason that can be seen as unrelated to prevailing negative stereotypes and prejudice² (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Monin & Miller, 2001; Snyder, 1979). In this context, weaponizing egalitarian ideologies, such as gender equality, allows individuals to express negative attitudes towards minorities in a socially acceptable way. Indeed, in 2009, Knowles and collaborators proposed that ideologies, widely held to be clear and non-negotiable, would in fact be exploited and interpreted according to one's personal and social motivations. Knowles and collaborators coined the concept of 'malleable ideology'. These authors argued that the color-blind ideology, historically promoted as egalitarian (Wolsko et al., 2000) and aimed at reducing racial discrimination, is in fact frequently endorsed by anti-egalitarian white people who feel threatened by diversity. By appraising this ideology as resting on procedural rather than distributive principles (i.e., as aiming at equality of process rather than equality of outcomes), anti-egalitarian white people find a socially acceptable way to deal with the threat of diversity and the possible demands from minorities (Knowles et al., 2009).

This malleability framework sheds light on a number of other principles mentioned in the literature and that seem to be exploited in similar ways. As a case in point, freedom of speech can be used to justify hateful speech, both by citizens and politicians (Pettersson, 2019; White & Crandall, 2017). Along similar lines, liberalism and freedom may come across as Western or domestic values that one needs to defend against illiberal Islam, thereby serving as exclusory principles (Gustavsson et al., 2016; Verkuyten, 2013). Finally, diversity has sometimes been construed in broader terms so as to include other types of heterogeneity and,

² Prejudice is here conceptualized as a negative attitude held towards people based on their membership of a social group (Brewer & Brown, 1998)

as a result, overlook the issue of racial homogeneity and white dominance (Petts, 2020; Unzueta et al., 2012).

In this general context, the notion of '*laïcité*' (a rough equivalent of secularism) as it is known in France would seem to be particularly relevant. *Laïcité* traditionally combines freedom of worship, equality of all citizens before the State – irrespectively of one's belief – and the absence of State and Church interference in each other's affairs. Interestingly enough, this definition evolved in recent decades to give way to a so-called 'excluding' *laïcité*, which strongly limits religious expression in the public space, most notably for Muslims (Allievi, 2005; Barthélemy & Michelat, 2007; Baubérot, 2012; Flood, 2012; Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015). Some scholars even noted some form of 'exceptionalism' towards Islam (Allievi, 2012; Jacquemain, 2014; Schreiber, 2014) driven by a perception of violent, primitive, and fanatical character (Lyons, 2014; Said, 1978). Empirical research by Roebroek and Guimond (2016) showed that people with a higher level of egalitarianism supported the *laïcité* principle more than individuals with low levels of egalitarianism. However, when exposed to intergroup threat, low egalitarian participants endorsed *laïcité* more strongly, suggesting that secularism can be promoted by people with opposing motivations and attitudes (Roebroek & Guimond, 2018). Building on the work of Knowles et al. (2009), the present study aims at looking specifically at the strategic use of gender equality as a malleable ideology.

2. Anti-sexism to Justify Anti-Islam Stances

The strategic use of gender equality against Islam rests on two assumptions. First, there is the construction of the East and Islam as particularly patriarchal, with sexism being an illustration 'of the backwardness of non-western cultures' (Akkerman, 2015, p. 40; Said, 1978). Second, one finds the construction of Europe and Christianity as exempt of sexism. Although gender-equality is indeed a declared priority of European instances (European Union Commission, s. d.), the phenomenon at hand can be characterized by the construction of gender equality as solely or primarily European and Western, and of Europe as comparatively virtuous on this front (Akkerman, 2015; Benelli et al., 2006). In this context, sexual violence in racialized communities is depicted as a reflection of immigrants' culture, whilst overlooking the cultural aspects of sexual violence when perpetrated by Western men (Volpp, 2001). Gender issues become salient only in the context of immigration, with the condemnation of violence against women in Islamic countries or by immigrant groups (Akkerman, 2015). Presumably, the integration trainings designed to instil the values of gender equality supposedly lacking among immigrants who come from an 'uncivilized' East are a clear illustration of this state of affairs (Afshar, 2008; Delphy, 2006; Duits & Van Zoonen, 2006; Farris, 2017; Gianettoni & Roux, 2010). To be sure, individuals (and political actors) may well differ in their conception of gender rights or even have only a vague idea of what gender equality or even gender should mean (i.e., conceptualize gender as binary or not). However, they also share the view that gender issues are more advanced in the West and that the West should be the single model for women's emancipation (Benelli et al., 2006;

Delphy, 2006; Duits & van Zoonen, 2006; Farris, 2017; Fernandez, 2009; Gianettoni & Roux, 2010; Howard, 2012).

In contrast to this posture, a number of scholars point out that this construction of Islam as patriarchal and of the West as exempt from sexism (Benelli et al., 2006), is at best false and at worst hypocritical. Lyons (2014) explains that, as early as the time of colonialism, Eastern Christian countries have held an anti-veil discourse by framing it as a form of subjugation of women and used it as a justification for colonialism (Flood, 2012; Said, 1995; Volpp, 2001) while explicitly opposing advances for women's rights in their own nations. In the same vein, many scholars have argued for a critical and decolonial consideration of Islam (Al-Saji, 2008; Delphy, 2006; Joosub & Ebrahim, 2020).

Nevertheless, studies have shown that Europeans view Muslim immigrants less favorably than they see other immigrants (Heath & Richards, 2019). A study conducted in Germany showed that Muslims come across as a particularly problematic immigrant group, a stance that is associated with a desire to restrict their freedom (Van der Noll, 2014). In Belgium, about one in two citizens would like a more restrictive immigration policy for Muslims (Lafleur & Marfouk, 2017). Among Belgian women, Muslim men trigger feelings of disgust, fear, and anger, and are mentally associated with harassment and sexual violence (Kuppens & Yzerbyt, 2012). This attitude towards Muslims in Europe is also reinforced by a process of racialization (i.e., the process by which a person, group or social practice is assimilated to a specific racial identity) of certain religious identities, particularly among Muslims in white-majority countries (Amer, 2020; Dawes, 2021; Garner & Selod, 2015; Meer, 2013).

This racialization of Islam is fuelled by the media under the banner of the 'Muslim problem' in some European countries. Through this process, Islam is perceived as being made for and associated with 'brown bodies', 'foreigners' or 'other' non-white citizens (Amer, 2020; Dawes, 2021; Meer, 2013). In sum, studies across social psychology and sociology show that many Westerners construe Islam as an illiberal, patriarchal religion that is difficult to reconcile with traditional European values, sometimes called the 'Inassimilable Other', while other religions are not perceived as such (Ali & Sonn, 2017; Chrysoschoou & Lyons, 2010; Moss et al., 2019; Van Acker & Vanbeselaere, 2012; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). This can be traced back to colonial view of Muslim communities (Ali-Faisal, 2020; Al-Saji, 2018; Cesari, 2002; Lyons, 2014).

Europeans also perceive Muslim women in essentialist ways and construe them as a homogenous, monolithic group (Ali & Sonn, 2017). Often, Muslim women wearing the headscarf come across as passive victims of submission who act under the influence of their husbands or family and need rescuing (Haritaworn, 2012). Yet, although a large number of scholars have reported that the motives behind the wearing of the headscarf in Europe are manifold (religiosity, humility before God, sense of belonging the Islamic minority, resistance against rejection of Islam; Djelloul, 2013; Fernandez, 2009; Howard, 2012; Krivenko, 2012; Mullaly, 2011), and various Muslim feminist groups are gaining visibility, many Europeans still appraise Islam as being intrinsically at odds with feminism and women's emancipation.

In Belgian and French politics, the convergence of gender equality and Islam came under the spotlight during debates on the headscarf ban. In France, this ban in public places has been justified by the depiction of this garment as an enemy of *laïcité* and by it violating the principles of gender equality, of which the French Republic claims to be the guardian. By seeking to protect and liberate young girls from radical Islamism, the law allegedly intends to establish the republican principles of freedom, while overlooking the principles of equality and freedom of worship (Baubérot, 2012). In Belgium, the use of gender arguments to justify the discrimination against Muslim women is also recurrent. In 2020 and 2021, the banning of headscarves in some portions of Belgian higher education was the focus of a heated debate and legal proceedings, with Muslim feminists calling for demonstrations and emphasizing that banning the headscarf was incompatible with women's emancipation (Howard, 2012; Vice Media, 2020).

In this context, one may wonder whether people, just like political leaders, mobilize gender equality to justify their negative attitudes towards Islam. To investigate this hypothesis, we surveyed respondents about their perception of the values of the European way of life, the distinction between Islam and Christianity on this matter, and the compatibility between Islam and feminism.

3. The present research

In light of the above considerations, the question of the link between prejudice and a specific use of gender equality comes as an urgent and important issue. Scholars have previously alerted on the strategic use of feminism among politicians using qualitative data. However, to our knowledge, no published research has yet investigated and documented this phenomenon in a lay population. Moreover, using quantitative methods allows us to tackle larger samples and achieve a greater degree of generality. In the present study, we investigate whether participants conceive gender equality as specific to their ingroup and as incompatible with Islam. We also examine whether these views depend on individuals' ideological position.

To encourage participants to provide us with as much written material as possible, we relied on several strategies. First, we approached participants' views via three different open-ended questions, each addressing the issue of malleability from a different perspective. We started with broad questions on the values associated with individuals' culture (What are the values representing European way of life? Are Christianity and Islam different?), before moving to a more precise question pertaining to the articulation of gender equality and Islam. In addition, we relied on news events to make respondents feel more concerned. For example, we introduced the third question with the notion of 'Muslim Feminism' because this notion, particularly relevant for our question on Islam and gender-equality, appeared repeatedly in the media (e.g., Ali, 2012; La Croix, 2020) and could thus be thought-provoking. We analyzed their answers with the assistance of a text analysis software, enabling us to draw conclusions about the associations existing between certain discourses (words, classes of words) and individual variables (political orientation and justification of the economic

system). It should be noted that it is difficult to study rhetorical strategies using rating scales because they constrain participants' freedom in the articulation of their arguments. As for purely qualitative strategies, they are extremely rich but run the risk of subjectivity and impose strong limits in terms of sample size. The present approach lets participants express their views freely while offering a robust quantitative basis for the analysis of their responses.

We formulated several hypotheses. First, when asked about the values representing the European way of life, participants who are less egalitarian, as evidenced by their political orientation and their justification of the economic system, should refer to women's rights more than other participants should. Second, regarding the difference between Christianity and Islam, participants with a higher level of economic system justification, and participants with right-wing political orientation should perceive these religions as more different and should refer to gender related concepts to justify this perceived difference. Finally, participants with a higher level of economic system justification, and participants with right-wing political orientation will perceive them as more incompatible, explaining this by the fact that Islam is too illiberal, both on issues of treatment of women (notably the headscarf) and on issues of freedom of thought and belief.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

We recruited 504 Belgians (316 women, 182 men and 6 'other', $M_{age}= 45.08$, $SD_{age}=15.61$) by means of a Facebook ad for a study about 'social issues'. Regarding educational status, 64.8% attended higher education, 32.2% attended secondary school and 2.9% attended primary school, or another type of education. The average political orientation was 3.06 (standard deviation = 1.46) on a scale from 1 (far left) to 7 (far right). All participants were living in Belgium, with 92.26% of the participants of Belgian nationality, 3.96% of French nationality, 1.79% of Italian nationality and the remaining 1.99% had other nationalities (e.g., Bhutanese, Bulgarian, Chinese, Spanish, Greek, Uruguayan). Among the participants, 56.15% declared themselves agnostic or atheist, 29.96% reported being Catholic and 13.89% selected the 'other' option (the details ranged from paganism, to spiritualism, to ecumenism, etc.). Participants who indicated that they were Muslim or held a nationality of a country with a majority Muslim population were removed from the dataset.

4.2 Procedure

Participants had to complete an online questionnaire lasting about twenty minutes. Upon giving consent, participants answered a number of demographic questions including political orientation and an economic system justification scale. They were then presented with the core of the questionnaire, consisting in three parts: the European lifestyle, the (dis)similarity between Islam and Christian religions, and the (in)compatibility between Islam and feminism. There was also a fourth question related to secularism that we do not examine in this paper. We collected and analyzed the data in French and translated the results in English

(e.g., the lexicon highlighted by the results of the analyses). This project has received the approval of the Ethics Committee from the Psychological Sciences Research Institute of UCLouvain, reference 2019-10.

We are aware that as part of the white and non-Muslim scientific community, we, as authors, run the risk of continuing to use ‘concepts, methods, and beliefs about normality that are rooted in the WEIRD realities that inform scientific and epistemic imagination’ (Adams et al., 2015, p. 214) and to reproduce hegemonic forms of research (Decolonial Psychology Editorial Collective, 2021; Lazard & McAvoy, 2020).

4.3 Materials

Political orientation. We measured participants’ political orientation with a scale ranging from 1 (totally left) to 7 (totally right). For textual analyses, we grouped the very few participants ($N=29$) with scores 6 ($N=18$) and 7 ($N=11$) in a single category, resulting in a total of 6 levels of political orientation. For correlation analyses, we relied on the original 7 levels.

Economic system justification scale. We measure participants’ level of egalitarianism with the economic system justification (ESJ; Jost & Thompson, 2000). Although previous research on malleability of ideology typically relied on Social Dominance Orientation to examine how anti-egalitarian people mobilize egalitarian ideologies to serve their political goals (see Knowles et al., 2009; Unzueta et al., 2012), we opted for ESJ to avoid floor effects and non-normal distributions often encountered with the SDO scale in French-speaking samples. The ESJ scale comprises 17 items, examples of which are ‘most people who don’t get ahead in our society should not blame the system; they have only themselves to blame’ and ‘Economic positions are legitimate reflections of people’s achievements’. We divided participants into decile groups, with the lowest decile referring to the lowest economic system justification scores. Together with political orientation, the measure of economic system justification thus serves as proxies for ideology (Jost et al., 2009), with political orientation covering a more deliberate and explicit aspect of ideological views in comparison to ESJ.

European lifestyle. Next, participants read ‘Six months ago, the European Commission created a new commissioner position with the main task of ‘Protecting the European way of life. Not everyone agrees on the meaning of the European way of life’. Participant then read ‘In your opinion, what would be the values attached to the European way of life? (Specify why)’ and were to answer by means of a textbox with no word count limit.

(Dis)similarity between Islam and Christian religions. Participants then had to assess the (dis)similarity between Islam and Christian religions with the question ‘In your opinion, are the Muslim and Christian religions rather similar or rather different?’. Responses options ranged from 1 (similar) to 4 (different). Then, they had to explain their answer using a textbox.

(In)compatibility between Islam and feminism. Finally, participants read ‘In the newspapers, some articles mention women claiming to be Muslim feminists. In reaction,

some people point out that these are two contradictory terms, that feminism and Islam are totally opposed'. They were then asked to indicate to what extent they thought that Islam and feminism are (in)compatible on a scale ranging from 1 (compatible) to 4 (incompatible). Again, they were asked to explain why with another textbox.

5. Analysis

We analyzed participants' answers to the open-ended questions with the Iramuteq software (Loubère & Ratinaud, 2014; Ratinaud, 2009). This statistical tool allows studying textual data by performing lexicometric analyses (Leblanc, 2016). For the present study, we relied on four types of analysis: descriptive analyses, analyses by descending hierarchical classes (DHC), similarity analyses, and specificity analyses. To perform its various analyses, Iramuteq relies on different dictionaries, identifying 'full words' (i.e., nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs) and 'tool words' (i.e., pronouns, articles and conjunctions). Main analyses performed by the software focus exclusively on 'full words'.

First, the software lemmatizes the 'full words', such that each form of the corpus corresponds to the root of the word and independently of its syntactic category (e.g., the form 'rac+' will group together the nouns 'racism' and 'race', as well as the adjectives 'racist' and 'racists', Heine et al., 2008). Then, the program proceeds to divide the corpus into 'elementary context units' (ECU), based on the number of words analyzed and the punctuation of the text. This provides an analysis of the frequency of words to highlight the words used most frequently by participants when answering the questions.

Secondly, the similarity analysis proposes a graphical representation of the textual corpus (Degenne et al., 1973). By selecting the most significant links between different lexical forms, this method provides an overview of the thematic structure of the textual corpus (Marchand & Ratinaud, 2012). To reveal the distribution and the association of terms within the text, the software computes the connections as well as distances between the most salient terms of the corpus and produces a graphical representation. Therefore, the more frequently a word appears in the individuals' speeches, the more prominent it is in the graph. Also, the shorter and thicker the line between two words, the closer they are associated in participants' answers.

Thirdly, the DHC consists in a successive fractioning of the text to constitute classes of ECUs based on their lexical content. This descending hierarchical classification allows the identification of the main lexical fields or themes within a textual corpus (Ratinaud & Marchand, 2015). The associated chi-square determines the degree of association between the various words and the classes defined by the software to highlight the most representative forms for a given class. It is then possible to consider these classes in relation to additional variables previously defined by the analyst (i.e., which in the present case comprise gender, age, political orientation, ESJ scores, etc.). This method allows processing large text corpora in a statistical and mostly hypothetical-deductive way. Indeed, it is only when the software has created the classes that the researcher is expected to provide an interpretation. In other

words, the software performs the initial analyses, thereby reducing the interpretive bias on the part of the researcher and increasing the objectivity of the analyses.

Finally, the specificity analysis provides insights into the distribution of terms in different parts of a text corpus and checks if words are used more frequently (i.e., score above 0) or less frequently (i.e., score below 0) within parts of the corpus (Leblanc, 2016). The positive or negative score created for each term is based on a threshold relative to the expected frequency of occurrence of each form in the corpus, by comparison with the other forms or variables. Practically, we considered here that an association significant when the value was equal or superior to 3, with a score of 3 corresponding to p-values between 0.001 and 0.009 (a score of 4 corresponding to p-values between 0.0001 and 0.0009, etc).

6. Results

In this section, we report the results for each of the three questions addressed to the participants. For the sake of brevity, we only report the results of the analyses pertaining to our hypotheses. Therefore, for each of the questions investigated, the four types of analysis provided by the software will not be systematically presented. The corpuses and a dictionary of the coded variables used for the analysis are available on OSF at the following link: <https://osf.io/3dy5c/>

6.1 European lifestyle values

For the open question about the values associated with the European way of life, the most frequently and consensually cited values are: freedom ($N=147$), rights ($N=109$), respect ($N=89$), equality ($N=88$), social ($N=71$), democracy ($N=65$) and solidarity ($N=60$).

In addition, the specificity analysis shows that the word ‘woman’ is more associated with decile 10 of the ESJ scale ($p<.001$), as well as with political orientation scores 6 and 7 ($p<.001$). Looking at the ‘characteristic text segments’ (i.e., participants’ answers considered the most representative of the class by the software), we understand that the participants belonging to these ideological categories refer to the word ‘woman’ to refer to women’s rights or gender equality. Among the most representative answers, examples are: *‘A Christian religion, respect for work and traditions, respect for laws and private property, respect for women, freedom of speech, freedom, democracy, national identity’* (participant 453); *‘Human rights, equality of men and women, democracy, laïcité’* (participant 336).

In other words, and in line with our hypothesis, participants showing a higher level of ESJ and a marked right-wing political orientation perceived women’s rights and women’s issues as more integral to the European way of life.

6.2 Perceived similarity between Muslim and Christian religions

Participants’ ratings of the (dis)similarity between Islam and Christianity showed that greater perceived dissimilarity between Islam and Christian religions was associated with a

more right-wing political orientation ($r = .283, p < .0001$) and a higher level of ESJ ($r = .095, p < .05$).

Regarding the text data, the similarity analysis (see Figure 1) shows how participants structured their answers for this question and we can see that the arguments are numerous. Of special interests to us is the position of gender and women. Interestingly, the word ‘woman’ ($N=39$)³ falls in a cluster of arguments associated with the notion of ‘Muslim’ ($N=80$). In this cluster (top left of the graph), we also find the notions of ‘place’ and ‘status’, but also ‘submission’ and ‘inequality’.

³ Occurrence of the word in participants' answers to this question

as their associated forms), their importance in relation to the corpus of responses (in percentage), and the variables associated with each class. Here, we explore more specifically class 1 and 2 because these seem to fall more readily within the scope of our hypotheses.

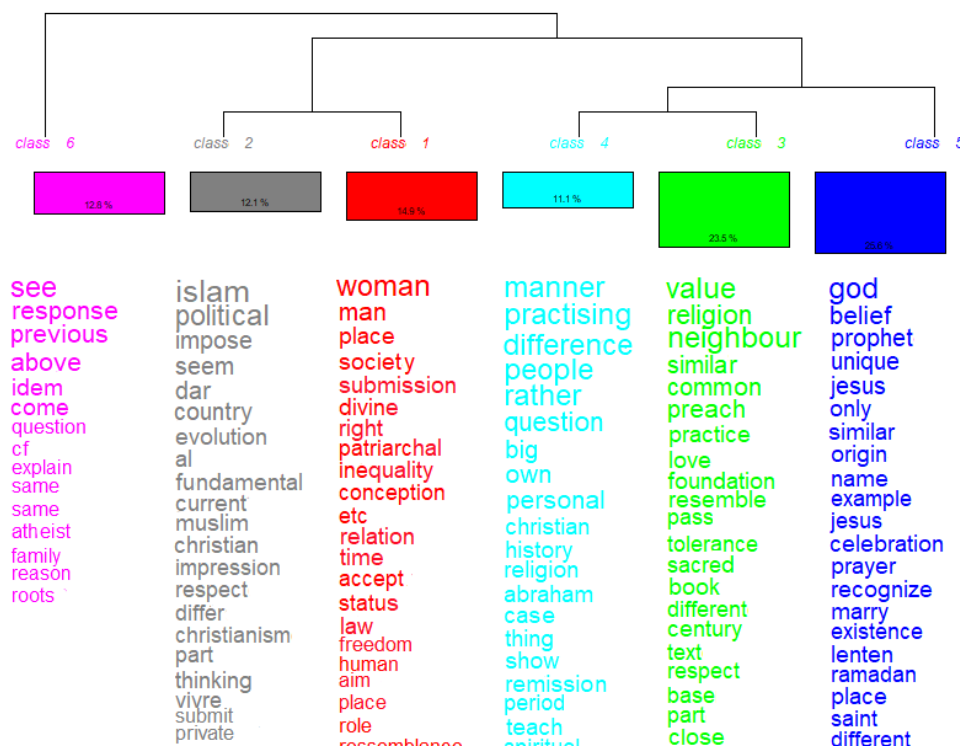


Figure 2. Descendant Hierarchical Classification (DHS) analysis performed on the question ‘In your opinion, are the Muslim and Christian religions rather similar or rather different? Why’ (English translation)

Class 1 (14.93% of the analyzed corpus) refers to the place of the woman in the Muslim and Christian religions. The term ‘woman’ ($\chi^2 = 139$, $p < .0001$) is the most representative form, along with the notions of ‘position’ ($\chi^2 = 40$, $p < .0001$), ‘society’ ($\chi^2 = 33$, $p < .0001$), etc. The term ‘man’ (e.g., $\chi^2 = 59$, $p < .0001$) also stands among the most popular forms, with respondents resorting to the comparison between man and woman. In this class, we also find the terms ‘submission’ ($\chi^2 = 29$, $p < .0001$), ‘right’ ($\chi^2 = 23$, $p < .0001$), ‘patriarchal’ ($\chi^2 = 29$, $p < .0001$), ‘inequality’ ($\chi^2 = 23$, $p < .0001$), ‘status’ ($\chi^2 = 17$, $p < .0001$), etc. Looking at participants’ most representative answers, we understand that the respondents discuss the issue of women’s status in each of the two religions. Among the most representative answers, we observe for example: ‘Islam invitation to jihad submission of the woman to the man Koranic text considered as divine therefore to be interpreted literally authorization of the slavery of non-Muslims Koranic penal code barbarian prophet conqueror cruel pedophile polygamist and conqueror Christianity’ (participant 288); ‘The roles the place of the woman

etc. are strongly different I have the impression that nowadays the Christian religion has evolved more and accepts that we live it in a way that it does not go against the modern way of life' (participant 60).

Of note, this class is associated with the most right-wing levels of political orientation (i.e., 6 and 7 on the 7-point scale', $\chi^2 = 14, p < .0001$). For this question, individuals with the most right-wing scores are the most likely to stress this topic. Interestingly, the specificity analysis reveals that the form 'submission' is significantly associated with a right-wing political orientation (again, with the rightmost political orientation: 6 and 7 on the 7-point scale), $p < .001$. Conversely, the term 'patriarchal' is particularly associated with the third decile of the ESJ ($p < .001$), but also with a far-left political orientation (1 on a scale of 1 to 7, $p < .001$). The excerpts using this term show that respondents mobilize the term patriarchal to emphasize the fact that both religions are patriarchal, which contrasts with the use of the term 'women' used to criticize Islam.

In class 2 (12.09% of the analyzed corpus), one finds differences between Muslim and Christian religions in terms of rules and politics: 'Islam' ($\chi^2 = 86, p < .0001$), 'politics' ($\chi^2 = 59, p < .0001$), 'impose' ($\chi^2 = 37, p < .0001$), etc. The typical answers illustrate this point: *'Islam is a law that regulates private social and political life in Muslim countries. In de-Christianised Western countries the state is not religious nor is private or social life'* (participant 136).

The representative variables for this class correspond to decile 10 of the ESJ (i.e., the highest decile on the economic system justification scale), as well as right-wing political orientations (pol5, $\chi^2 = 19, p < .0001$; pol6.7, $\chi^2 = 11, p < .0001$) and the male gender ($\chi^2 = 5, p < .05$). Once again, those participants who raise the idea of Islam being a more politicized religion or having a normative system that needs to be distinguished from that of Christian religions are the ones who are furthest to the right on the political scale and who show the highest levels of system justification.

6.3 Perceived (in)compatibility of Islam and feminism

First, looking at participants' quantitative evaluation of (in)compatibility between Islam and feminism, results show a positive correlation between the perception that Islam and feminism are incompatible and the score of justification of the economic system ($r = .11, p = .024$), and a correlation between the perception that Islam and feminism are incompatible, and right-wing political orientation ($r = .282, p < .0001$).

Second, the DHC resulted in the analysis of 87.33% of the textual data collected for this question and produced three different thematic classes (see Figure 3). Class 2 gathers most of the content of participants' answers (with 38.68% of the corpus) and concerns (in)compatibility, containing arguments about the 'values' ($\chi^2 = 18, p < .0001$) present in each of the concepts and about the 'interpretation' ($\chi^2 = 18, p < .0001$) that one makes of Islam and feminism and of their principles. Responses range from arguing for the compatibility of feminism and Islam (e.g., *'the values of the Muslim religion are for tolerance, therefore feminism is compatible'* (participant 293), *'considering that Islam is a religion and that any*

religion is first and foremost an ideology carrying values of tolerance, respect, love, etc. feminism aiming at equality', (participant 24) to their incompatibility (e.g., 'all major religions are based on archaic principles alien to the notion of feminism and are dominated by conservative currents incapable of reforming in this regard', (participant 408); 'One can be a feminist and practice a certain form of Islam, in that sense it can give them a feminist and Muslim identity but the texts of the Koran are quite explicit about the status of women and are incompatible with feminist values', (participant 52). This class is associated with a centre-left political orientation (pol3 on a scale of 1 to 7; $\chi^2 = 6$, $p < .0001$). Class 1 (33.85% of the analyzed corpus) points to the place of the Islamic veil ('port du voile' in French; 'veil', $\chi^2 = 62$, $p < .0001$; 'wear', $\chi^2 = 39$, $p < .0001$). Responses raise the possibility that the veil can be worn by choice, and is therefore a reflection of their wearers' freedom, in line with the values of feminism (e.g., 'Feminism is also about being free of one's body and choices, if Muslim women want to wear the veil, what's wrong with that', (participant 270), 'I think that if the woman does not experience her religion as a constraint and she is not obliged to do anything, that it comes from her own choice, there is nothing incompatible. The incompatibility comes from the fact that there is a family obligation to modify her behaviour, like wearing the veil', participant 291). Associated with this class is the female gender ($\chi^2 = 5$, $p < .0001$) (thus compared to participants who identified as female or other), as well as a left-wing political orientation (pol2, $\chi^2 = 6$, $p < .0001$).

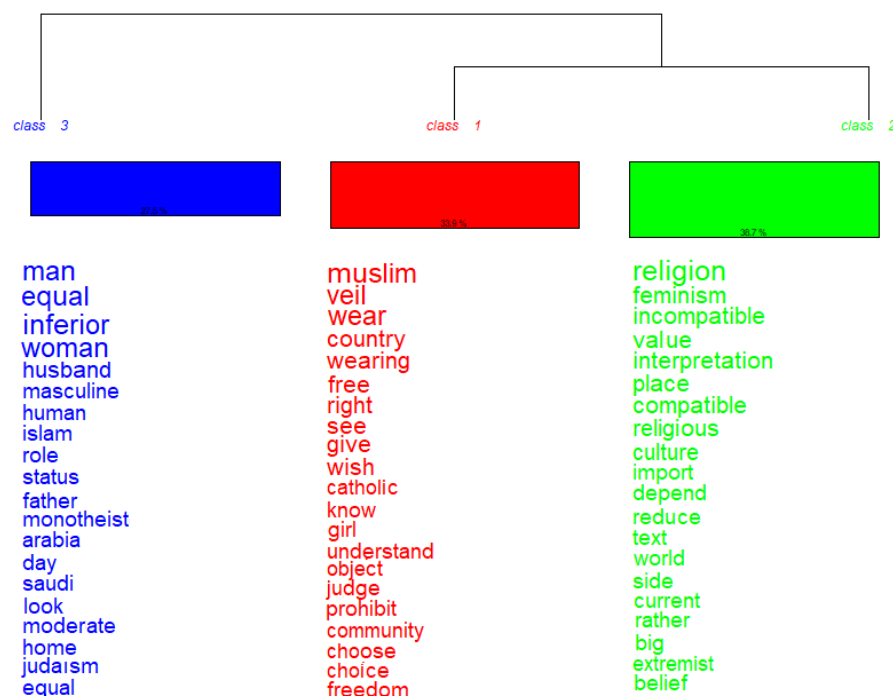


Figure 3. Analysis by Descending Hierarchical Classification of Question 3: 'To what extent you believe that Islam and feminism are (in)compatible? Why' (English translation)

Finally, class 3 (27.47% of the analyzed corpus) features comments around the comparison of the place of women with that of men in Islam. Individuals thus refer to notions of equality ('equal', $\chi^2 = 44$, $p < .0001$), 'inferiority' ('inferiority', $\chi^2 = 44$, $p < .0001$) of women, in relation to men ('man', 'husband', 'male', 'father', etc.). Most of the responses support the idea that women are placed as inferior or not equal to men within Islam: *'the traditional status of women in the various interpretations of Islam, is not equal to that of men'* (participant 455); *'Islam advocates the superiority of men over women, how can one be a feminist (woman as superior) and a Muslim (woman as inferior)'* (participant 289). This type of argument is strongly associated with right-wing respondent profiles ($\chi^2 = 19$, $p < .0001$), but also with the male gender ($\chi^2 = 8$, $p < .0001$) and with the highest ESJ scores (decile 10, $\chi^2 = 4$, $p < .0001$).

Finally, the specificity analysis once again reveals that certain gender-related terms are associated with specific political positions. Indeed, the terms 'submission' ($p < .001$) and 'wife' ($p < .0001$) are more used by individuals reporting a political orientation of 6 or 7 (i.e., the most right-wing political orientations on the proposed scale). Conversely, the word 'patriarchal' is mentioned more often by respondents placing themselves on the leftmost orientation proposed by the scale (pol1; $p < .001$).

7. Discussion

Building on the concept of malleable ideologies (Knowles et al., 2009), we examined how individuals rely on discourses pertaining to gender equality to articulate and justify their point of views on the compatibility between Islam and Europe. We hypothesized that less egalitarian participants seeking to elaborate and rationalize their negative messages about Islam would turn to the ideology of gender equality. They do so in light of the sexist nature that they attach to Islam and the normative nature of gender equality ideology. The data confirm our hypotheses. Across several questions, we found consistent and robust associations between the frequency of gender-related forms and word classes on the one hand and political orientation and system justification ideology on the other.

First, when asked to elaborate on the European way of life, right-wing participants and participants with a high level of ESJ referred to 'woman' more than other participants did, even though this question did not focus on women's rights. Second, when participants assessed the similarity between Muslim and Christian religions, the data show, as expected, that right-wing participants and participants with a high level of ESJ report more dissimilarity. As these respondents elaborated on this issue, the analysis confirmed that these participants were associated with a word class about the status of woman (with words as 'submission', 'inequality', etc.). As for the third question, when we questioned participants about the (in)compatibility between Islam and feminism, those with a more right-wing political orientation and higher levels of ESJ not only perceived more incompatibility, but also used word classes related to woman status in Islam (with words as 'inferiority', 'equal', etc.) as well as more words related to this issue ('submission', 'wife').

Interestingly, for the two latter questions, the male level of the gender variable also tended to be associated with comments or arguments related to women's status. It is worth noting, however, that the word 'patriarchal,' also clearly related to gender equality, was used by a segment of participants, namely by left-wing participants. In all likelihood, these respondents wanted to highlight the patriarchal nature of religions in general.

The present results are the first to demonstrate, in the general population, that feminism can be a malleable ideology serving a right-wing, possibly Islamophobic, political agenda. They confirm that the ideology of gender equality is not only being used by politicians, in line with the concept of 'femonationalism' (Farris, 2017), but also encountered among lay individuals. Following Knowles et al.'s (2009) work on malleable ideologies, the present evidence stresses the fact that gender equality, an ideology rooted in equality and inclusion, may be mobilized to promote exclusionary stances.

Our findings also highlight the critical role of the normative context. Specifically, less egalitarian individuals seize ambiguity in the principles held dear by the population to advance their agenda. Thus, the fact that gender equality is not only cherished by a large portion of the population in various European countries (Akkerman, 2015; Lyons, 2014), but has almost become part of the *Zeitgeist*, makes this malleable discourse particularly deceptive. It is worth noting that Muslim women and antiracist feminists actively dispute this association between Islam and sexism (Ali & Sonn, 2017; Sager & Mulinari, 2018).

Further, as much as we conducted an analysis at the individual level, one should note that this weaponization of gender equality (and with it, islamophobia) has implications beyond the individual level. Intergroup domination unfolds not only via individual bias and interpersonal relations but also at institutional levels by altering access to opportunities, goods, and services. In this respect, the perception that a culture is a serious threat to our ingroup values can lead us to favoring stricter integration policies (i.e., assimilation) that are deleterious for minority populations (Downie et al., 2006; Verkuyten, 2010), or to tolerate or even commit immoral actions (Reicher et al., 2008). In other words, the present research is part of a wider effort to study the expression of negative views towards minority groups, both in its individual functioning (i.e., impression management) and in its socio-cultural dimension (normative context, legitimizing ideologies, dynamics of power).

In parallel to the appropriation of gender equality themes described here, several scholars have denounced the emergence of a weaponization of LGBTQIA+ issues (termed 'homonationalism') in the UK, Ireland, the USA, and Israel (Ammaturo, 2015; Luibhéid, 2018; Puar, 2013). This opportunistic advocacy of gay rights and of progressive views of gender identity (i.e., supporting gays as victims of Islamic bigotry) stands in contrast with the exploitation of women's rights described here. While a small number of far-right parties in Europe seem to emphasize gay rights for their anti-Islam agendas, this strategy is much less common (Akkerman, 2015). Yet, in light of the fact that the issue of LGBTQIA+ inclusion gains attention, this is an important question to consider for future research.

Of course, the present research does not come without limitations. One may argue that the findings lack generalizability given the sampling method. Although this is a fair concern,

one should stress that the ambition of the present endeavour is to identify a phenomenon that operates in a given context with a given population, i.e., one should thus see the present research as a ‘proof of concept’. To be sure, one interesting avenue for future research may indeed be to examine whether other respondents, in particular French, show similar patterns of response. Overall, it is important to keep in mind that statistical analyses of verbal material using software such as Iramuteq are limited in terms of understanding and consideration of speech content (e.g., being able to fully grasp nuances in the subjects’ narratives, such as negations, irony, figures of speech, etc.). They are very useful tools for highlighting trends, but other, more comprehensive, approaches allow complementing the approach. Perhaps the most obvious limitation however is that the analyses building on DHC are subject to potential interpretation biases inherent to the researchers. This is because it is necessary to connect the different words included in the word class in order to assign meaning. Similarly, the words considered by researchers for specificity analyses can suffer from the same bias. Having said this, the complementarity of the analyses, thanks to the specificity analyses, the similarity analyses, but also to the examination of the closed questions, certainly contribute to minimizing this problem. As a set, these various tools offer the possibility to interpret the corpus in a more comprehensive and indeed less subjective way.

Second, we built on existing social categories that are generic (i.e., Muslims) in light of their widespread use and understanding and in order to encourage participants to generate responses with a large number of words. For example, we referred to the two major religions of Islam and Christianity without accounting for their respective heterogeneity. It is of course possible that a number of participants would distinguish between more moderate and more radical fringes within these groups. Future work may want to examine this possibility. Moreover, such reliance on generic social categories could induce a reified vision of the concerned groups (i.e., Muslims), that is, lead participants to believe that the latter are a homogeneous category, while the ways in which Islam is experienced are diverse (e.g., (e.g., Joosub & Ebrahim, 2020)).

8. Conclusion

The present study addresses the important question of how lay respondents may rely on viewpoints that would seem alien to their ‘expected’ position in an attempt to justify exclusionary position with respect to minorities. We focused specifically on stances that are associated with cultural values seen as threatening in the eyes of portions of the majority group. Our study is but a first attempt at approaching this important phenomenon insofar as it concerns lay respondents and not the usual suspects such as politicians and opinion leaders. Despite their limitations, the use of more qualitative tools such as the ones mobilized in the present effort opens fascinating avenues for research. Intriguing as they are, our findings call for additional work that rests on such complementary methods as the reliance of archival data or even the use of experimental approaches. This is a clear agenda for our future research on these aspects.

Chapter 9.

Discussion

Chapter 9. Discussion

In this doctoral dissertation, we presented a series of theoretical and empirical chapters. This general discussion aims to provide an integrated view of the various lines of research, highlight a series of strengths as well as limitations, and suggest future avenues of research.

1. Objectives of the thesis

The debates on the Burkini, the headscarf in schools, the authorization of halal meat, etc., that surround the inclusion of Muslim communities, particularly in Belgium and France, are recurrent. Time and again, these debates have centered around two principles: *laïcité*, and gender equality. Although these two principles may initially appear to champion equality, numerous experts in the fields of sociology and law have cautioned against their exploitation for repressive policies, such as the prohibition of religious symbols in French schools (e.g., Benelli et al., 2006; Delphy, 2006; Howard, 2012). As a case in point, Farris (2017) introduced the term ‘femonationalism’ to qualify a ‘peculiar encounter between anti-Islam agendas and the emancipatory rhetoric of women’s rights’ (p. 2).

In social psychology, this weaponization of egalitarian ideologies seems to resonate with a long tradition of research on prejudice determinants. Notably, in societies where unabashed racism is largely condemned (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Swim et al., 1995), people will be less reluctant to discriminate against minority group members when they can rationalize their actions in what appears a socially acceptable manner. This can take the form of introducing ambiguity into the list of hiring criteria, as exemplified by the work of Uhlmann and Cohen (2005) but there are many forms of justification that possibly serve prejudice in concrete situations (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Going a step further, Knowles et al. (2009) showed that individuals willing to justify their prejudice not only leverage ambiguity in situations, but also ambiguity in the interpretation of egalitarian *ideologies*. Egalitarian ideologies can be shaped and endorsed by individuals with antiegalitarian inclinations to align with their social motives. A relevant illustration of this phenomenon is provided by Chow and Knowles (2016), who showed that individuals holding anti-egalitarian views endorsed the concept of color-blindness as a means to avoid discussions about racial inequalities.

Over the last decade, the French ideology of *laïcité* has garnered significant attention from researchers. Indeed, scholars have delved into the multifaceted nature of *laïcité* within the minds of French citizens. Some studies identified two underlying factors (Roebroeck & Guimond, 2017), while others suggested the existence of four distinct factors (Cohu et al., 2018) associated with this ideology. Whereas the older form of *laïcité*, referred to as ‘historic *laïcité*’, upholds principles such as freedom of religion, equal treatment by the State, and mutual non-interference between religions and the State, the more contemporary meaning of *laïcité* that emerged in the 1980s promotes a clear demarcation between the private and public

spheres in relation to religious expressions. Research also revealed that the newer form of *laïcité* correlates with assimilationist preferences and prejudice. In contrast, historic *laïcité* aligns with a preference for multiculturalism and shows a negative association with prejudice (Nugier et al., 2016; Roebroek & Guimond, 2017). Building upon these findings, Roebroek and Guimond (2018) conducted a series of initial, but arguably limited, attempts to investigate whether French *laïcité* was a ‘malleable ideology’, akin to the concept of color-blindness in the United States. Interestingly enough, the exploitative use of gender equality is inextricably tied to that of French or Belgian *laïcité*. Indeed, many scholars have contended that ‘*laïcité* laws’ banning public expressions of religious signs in France were primarily discussed and defended in terms of gender equality. Advocates of a strict version of *laïcité* argued that it would symbolize a form of empowerment for women who wear the hijab (Al-Saji, 2018; Benelli et al., 2006; Delphy, 2006). Likewise, the assertion that Islam is inherently degrading for women has provided ample ammunition for (far) right-wing politicians to advocate for anti-immigration policies, relying on ongoing stereotypes that associate Islam and Muslims with primitive beliefs, radicalism and male domination (Akkerman, 2015; Pettersson, 2019; Verkuyten, 2013). Although sociologists have whistle blown on this pervasive trend among some politicians, to our knowledge, no psychology study had examined the weaponization of gender equality among lay individuals. The present thesis drew on work on the justification of racist attitudes and on the concept of the malleability of ideologies coined by Knowles (2009) to investigate how *laïcité* and gender equality can be tailored to address perceived threats posed by immigration.

Clearly, the significance of understanding the weaponization of normative principles is of great importance, not only for research, but also for society in general. Indeed, as Reicher et al. (2008) argued, virtue – or ideologies – can be recruited to serve hate and produce evil. In their ‘Five-Step Social Identity Model of the Development of Collective Hate’, Reicher et al. (2008) offer valuable insights into the strong power of ingroup values, and more generally, social identities, to foster good, but also terrible consequences. Drawing from historical evidence, these authors challenge the notions of ‘banality of evil’ and ‘agentic state’ frequently used to explain historical acts of cruelty (Arendt, 1963; Milgram, 1974). Instead, they contend that social identities, rather than an excessive focus on procedures, gradually led individuals to commit crimes or even genocides.

Reicher and colleagues delineate five distinct steps in the development of collective hate: (1) ‘the creation of a cohesive ingroup through shared social identification’ (2) ‘the exclusion of specific populations from the ingroup’, (3) ‘the constituting of the outgroup as a danger to the existence of the ingroup’, (4) ‘the representation of the ingroup as uniquely virtuous’ and (5) ‘the celebration of outgroup annihilation as the defense of (ingroup) virtue’. It is worth noting that several of these steps, particularly steps 1, 3, and 4, strongly resonate with the portrayal of Muslims as a sexist, proselytizing, and politically incompatible group with European values and societies, as described by various social scientists (Allievi, 2005; Bentouhami, 2018; Delphy, 2006, etc.). The third step, which involves framing the outgroup as a threat to the existence of the ingroup, emerges in the discourse of political figures who argue against ‘Islamization,’ such as Geert Wilders (Verkuyten, 2013). As a case in point, the

short movie ‘Fitna’ produced by Geer Wilders in 2008, carries the message that Islam wants to dominate the Netherlands and more generally the world and features frightening projections of stoning and terrorism. Interestingly, Edwin Bakker, expert in terrorism and radicalization, regretted that the film, while pretending to fight radical Islam, may precisely provide opportunities for it to thrive (RTL Nederland, 2018). The ‘Five-Step Social Identity Model of the Development of Collective Hate’ warns against the potential danger lying in the weaponization of ingroup values such as gender equality and *laïcité*. Their prescriptive potential can appeal to many and potentially lead one to caution or engage in harmful behavior, all while convinced of the reasonableness and moral righteousness of their actions.

The hijacking of feminist and *laïc* agendas is also dangerous because the subsequent legitimized discrimination has significant repercussions. Indeed, research has shown that negative stereotyping and discrimination affect outgroup members in several ways. Beyond direct disparities in areas such as housing, education and employment opportunities, perceived discrimination has been linked to poorer mental health, including conditions such as depression, anxiety, life satisfaction (Schmitt et al., 2014). It can also hinder individuals’ sense of identification with the host society (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007).

Furthermore, several studies found a positive association between social rejection and the legitimization or engagement in radicalization (Pauwels & De Waele, 2014; Rousseau et al., 2018, but see Bhui et al., 2014). The 3N model of radicalization places the network as a key determinant of radicalization (Webber & Kruglanski, 2016). Along these lines, Da Silva et al. (2021) found that Maghrebi-French and Muslim French who did not feel recognized as French citizens displayed higher hostility towards the French mainstream society. Kamans et al. (2009) found that Moroccan teenagers who experienced prejudice against the Dutch and who felt stereotyped by the Dutch, assimilated with this negative stereotype by legitimizing aggressive behavior, loitering, and terrorism. More recently, a study involving over 2,000 young adults in Belgium revealed that perceived discrimination was associated with radical intentions (Frounfelker et al., 2019).

To be clear, we do not mean to say that any ban from the authorities on the headscarf or other practices stems from negative emotions towards concerned minorities. Indeed, van der Noll (2014) found that the willingness to restrict Muslims’ religious civil liberties was also present among a substantial part of participants reporting explicitly positive attitudes towards Muslims. We also do not consider that bans should necessarily be rejected. We think however that, as argued by various social scientists, a better balance between equality and neutrality must be restored (Baubérot, 2012; Jacquemain, 2014). Finally, we do not mean to say that relying on ingroup values to appeal to an audience is wrong. Rather, we propose that social identities are powerful tools to mobilize an audience to engage in the best and the worst that humans can do. For all the reasons above, we think that the work conducted in this dissertation – and other work on the malleability of ideologies – is of scientific and societal interest.

As such, our doctoral work pursued four primary objectives:

The first objective involved investigating the potential malleability of ideology concerning *laïcité* and gender equality. To achieve this, we relied on language analyses and experimental analyses, working with various paradigms for the latter aspect. We hypothesized that antiegalitarian individuals would increase their adherence to an egalitarian principle, whereas egalitarian participants would remain constant in their adherence. We tested this hypothesis by examining moderation effects. Overall, our experimental efforts were unable to provide evidence of malleability of ideology, particularly concerning gender equality. However, language analyses provided clear evidence of the use of gender-friendly language by anti-egalitarians to justify negative attitudes towards Islam.

Given the distinct historical and cultural background characterizing France and Belgium, we suspected the presence of a series of differences between Belgium's concept of *laïcité* and that prevalent in France. In light of the absence of empirical work on these issues in the Belgian population, the second goal of the present work aimed to uncover Belgians' perceptions of *laïcité* and how these perceptions related to intergroup outcomes, particularly in terms of sexism and racism. In two studies, we have discerned distinct interpretations of *laïcité* in Belgium, which notably diverge from the ones prevalent in France. Furthermore, as anticipated, these three perceptions yielded contrasting outcomes for intergroup harmony.

The third goal of our work was to outline the criteria for the emergence of a malleability of ideology. Drawing from the existing literature on impression management and social identity, we examined whether factors such as making comparisons with an outgroup, the desire to project a positive self-image, or the intention to mobilize others would serve as triggers for this malleability. In our experimental studies, we relied on various paradigms to examine these factors.

A fourth goal we pursued in the present dissertation was to assess the genuineness of antiegalitarians' adherence to ideologies. Indeed, a sudden adherence to gender equality stances may not reflect a genuine enhanced belief in gender equality. Given the potential for social desirability concerns to blur the message on this front, we decided to turn to indirect measures of ideological beliefs to investigate this aspect. Unfortunately, due to the difficulty of observing robust malleability effects in an experimental setting, we did not manage to shed light on this question.

In the next section, we look more closely at the research findings.

2. Discussion of the findings

2.1 Summary of the findings

We presented three empirical chapters in this dissertation (Chapters 6, 7, and 8). In Chapter 6, we proposed a repository of experimental efforts made along this PhD work. Specifically, we included a selection of six studies that tested the weaponization of *laïcité* and/or gender equality in a context where immigration was made salient, mainly among French participants. Following the distinction that we proposed in the general introduction, the studies relied on three approaches:

- The social categorization approach, where individuals' social identity is made salient by means of a comparison context, leading to an increase in the attachment to ingroup values
- The motivational approach, where individuals seek to justify antiegalitarian stances (their own, or others') to maintain a positive image of the self to themselves and/or to others by relying on normative values.
- The mobilization approach, where antiegalitarians endorse, or distance themselves from values to appeal to an audience.

Based on the social categorization approach, Study 6 aimed at fostering intergroup comparison with regard to sexism. Participants completed a sexism scale from the point of view of French, of Muslim immigrants in France, or did not complete the scale. They then indicated their level of attachment to gender equality. We predicted that high-SDO participants in the Islam condition would perceive differences in gender equality between Muslim immigrants and their ingroup, and would thus subsequently report higher gender equality attachment. Our manipulation yielded the expected results in terms of comparison, as we found that participants attributed more positive attitudes towards women to French people compared to Muslims, and that this difference was present among high-SDO only. Yet, we did not find the expected results in terms of the hypothesized subsequent attachment to the ingroup values. That is, antiegalitarian participants did not feel more attached to gender equality when they had thought about the outgroup's attitudes towards gender equality. These results were somewhat surprising, because various authors have argued that categorizing the ingroup as virtuous, in comparison to the outgroup (e.g., on gender equality) is a key step in the weaponization of egalitarian principles (Al-Saji, 2018; Delphy, 2006; Fernandez, 2009; Volpp, 2001). Thus, although we were able to make salient a more positive perception of the ingroup (French, vs. Islam) in terms of gender equality, this did not trigger a weaponization of gender equality. To be sure, the absence of an effect of the present 'categorization' manipulation to produce gender equality malleability does not exclude the role of categorization processes in the malleability of ideology. In fact, we concur with the above-cited authors that categorizing the ingroup as more virtuous than the outgroup is a step towards malleability.

Based on the motivational approach, four studies examined whether individuals, particularly antiegalitarians, will commit to an ideology to justify antiegalitarian stances taken by others (Study 1) or by themselves (Studies 3, 4, and 5).

In Study 1, we presented participants with a vignette scenario depicting an argument between a female journalist and an interviewee (Imam vs. Bishop). The journalist claimed that she was not treated fairly by the interviewee due to her gender. We were interested in seeing whether participants, particularly antiegalitarian ones, would side with the journalist and her gender equality claims more in the Imam condition, thus again hypothesizing an interaction between condition and antiegalitarianism. In fact, we found that *all* participants expressed *less* concern for the journalist in the Imam condition and perceived that the Imam was not being treated well enough. Other results were non-significant or incohesive. Thus,

in spite of building upon materials and measurements used in a previous study (White & Crandall, 2017), our results were largely non-satisfactory. Such a pattern is somewhat surprising because numerous studies have pointed out the double standards and discrimination weighing on immigrants and Muslims (Di Stasio et al., 2021; West et al., 2022).

In Study 3, we examined whether participants would shift their stances on gender equality and *laïcité* when facing an immigration threat. Thus, like Roebroek & Guimond (2018), or Knowles et al. (2009), we opted for a manipulation consisting in an induction of threat. Still, we aimed to induce feelings of threat posed not only by immigrants but by the progressive members of the majority population in Belgium. The manipulation yielded hardly any difference in the variables of interest. That is, for most measures, we found no effect of condition and no interaction effect. As an exception, we found shifts in acceptance of rape myths, and shifts in prioritization of gender equality, but the interaction pattern did not show the expected shape. Among antiegalitarians, the threat manipulation fostered even stronger antiegalitarian views (i.e., stronger acceptance of rape myths, lower prioritization of gender equality). Although we cannot be certain what caused this shift, it might have stemmed from comparison processes (self-categorization as antiegalitarian, self-affirmation) with high-SDO participants' sense of ingroup values being exacerbated in the 'progressivism threat' condition. It might also stem from reactance processes (Brehm, 1966). Nonetheless, the induction of threat did not produce the expected rush to gender equality and *laïcité*.

In Studies 4 and 5, we investigated how participants evaluated sexist comments made by an ingroup member (Benoît, Study 4; John, Study 5) or an outgroup member (Abdel Karim, Study 4; Abdelkader, Study 5) and how they subsequently endorsed gender equality. Both studies showed mixed results. In terms of condemnation, Study 4 revealed that (French) right-wing participants and highly-threatened participants condemned sexist comments more when they came from Abdel Karim than Benoît. Study 5 showed that US right-wing participants (and right-wing men, particularly) condemned Abdelkader more than John, but none of the other ideological moderators yielded significant results. Thus, we observed the expected pattern on condemnation of sexist comments in Study 4, whereas results were less cohesive in Study 5. Regarding a shift in the gender equality ideology itself, we did not find the expected interaction pattern in Study 4, where we relied on measurement of gender equality attitudes and rape myths acceptance. In Study 5, where we relied on measurement of attachment to gender equality, we found the expected pattern, but only with SDO. High-SDO participants reported higher attachment to gender equality in the Abdelkader condition than in the John condition.

Thus, overall, Study 4 yielded results on condemnation but not on gender equality stances, whereas Study 5 yielded inconsistent results on condemnation and on gender equality attachment. These results were probably the most encouraging results we obtained in our attempts to evidence the malleability of *laïcité* and gender equality in an experimental setting.

Based on the mobilization approach, Study 2 aimed at placing participants in an argumentative setting. We reasoned that justification and mobilization processes may be

more strongly at play if participants are confronted with a (psychologically present) audience. This paradigm was thus grounded in the concept of social identity performance (Klein et al., 2007), whereby individuals see themselves as group members and act as such in front of a (psychologically present) audience. Here, after making Belgian identity salient, we asked participants to provide a list of arguments to elaborate their view on the immigration of Muslims in Belgium for an uncertain audience (immigration condition) or on the climate and ecological crises (control condition). Then participants filled out a number of scales pertaining to gender equality (differentiating various forms of feminism), *laïcité*, and ideological variables. We hypothesized that threatened participants would endorse more gender-friendly stances, would show more attachment to *laïcité*, and a more restrictive view of *laïcité* in the immigration condition than in the control condition. In contrast, we hypothesized that less threatened participants would not shift their endorsement to these principles. We also wanted to show that more inclusive principles like ‘inclusive feminism’ and ‘historic *laïcité*’ would not be the subject of strategic endorsement from antiegalitarians. Results failed to confirm our hypotheses. With regard to gender equality, we found no shift in the attachment to feminism, and weak or incoherent results on gender equality attitudes. With regard to *laïcité*, results were mixed. As expected, we found that participants reporting higher social distance with Muslim immigrants adhered more to new *laïcité* in the immigration condition. However, we found interesting results on attachment to *laïcité* and historic *laïcité*. Specifically, participants reporting more intergroup threat adhered *less* to the more *egalitarian* form of historic *laïcité* in the immigration condition, compared to the control condition. Furthermore, participants with low social distance towards Muslims felt *less* attached to *laïcité* in the immigration condition, perhaps because the immigration salience made them aware of the dangerous exploitation of *laïcité* against immigrants. Thus, although the study yielded disappointing results with regard to malleability, it revealed interesting, albeit somewhat unexpected, patterns among both egalitarian and antiegalitarian participants.

In Chapter 7, we included two studies conducted in Belgium, aiming at understanding French-speaking Belgians’ conceptions of *laïcité* and their relation with racism, sexism, and Islam. Indeed, in spite of the important debates surrounding the implementation of *laïcité* (or ‘neutralité’) in Belgium, to our knowledge, no study examined representations of *laïcité* in Belgium. The first study aimed at filling this gap. Using confirmatory factorial analyses, we were able to distinguish three distinct aspects of *laïcité*, as well as their relations with a factor of sexism (comprising modern, hostile, and benevolent forms of sexism), racism (comprising threat, acculturation preferences, and prejudice) and anti-Islam (comprising attitudes and beliefs about the headscarf, as well as anti-Islam conspiracy). Our CFA showed that the model including not two, but three forms of *laïcité* best fitted the data. The first, historic *laïcité*, acknowledges freedom of conscience, equality of beliefs. Second, the ‘anti-expression of religious signs’ *laïcité* concerns conceptions of *laïcité* restricting the public wearing of religious signs. Third, the ‘anti-funding’ component captures a resistance to government funding of acknowledged beliefs. Interestingly, whereas the two latter dimensions form one factor of *laïcité* in France, our results showed that these two dimensions have distinct relations with other variables in Belgium. In particular, the ‘anti-expression’

component of *laïcité* was associated with sexism, racism, and anti-Islam factors. The anti-funding factor was also positively related to racism and anti-Islam factors, albeit much less strongly, and was not related to sexism. These two more restrictive forms of *laïcité* were not related, neither positively nor negatively, to the adherence to the more egalitarian form of historic *laïcité*.

After exploring Belgians' understanding of *laïcité*, our second study relied on an experimental design to examine whether individuals would strategically endorse forms of *laïcité* depending on which religion (Islam vs Catholic) was primed. We found that high-SDO participants showed higher resistance to the expression of religious signs in the Islam condition, compared to the Catholic condition. Interestingly, we found no shift in the anti-funding form of *laïcité*, perhaps reflecting complex debates around the funding of religions in Belgium. Indeed, funding beliefs can mean both higher support for the presence of a given religion, but also higher control of it (e.g., government funding can minimize the odds of funding by foreign, more radical religious streams; La Libre Belgique, 2017). Finally, we did not find the expected shift in attachment to *laïcité*, probably also reflecting the complex Belgian context in which *laïcité* has various meanings and is much less salient in the public debate than it is in France (Barthélemy & Michelat, 2007).

In Chapter 8, we relied on lexicometric analyses to test our malleability hypothesis of gender equality. We explored word occurrences in participants' discourse with the help of the Iramuteq statistical software and Chi-square analyses. We asked participants to elaborate on values representing the European way of life, on the differences and similarities between Catholicism and Islam, and on the (in)compatibility between Islam and feminism. Across various analyses, we found compelling evidence that right-wing antiegalitarian participants, more than other participants, relied on words related to women's status (such as 'women', 'husband', 'submission') to lay out European values, to differentiate Islam and Catholicism and to establish incompatibility between Islam and feminism. Moreover, we found that egalitarian participants not only did not point out gender rights as uniquely representative of European values (compared to their antiegalitarian counterparts), we also found that they tended to rely statistically more on words such as 'patriarchy' to argue that both Islam and Catholicism are problematic when it comes to gender equality.

What conclusions can we draw from these empirical efforts? First, our experimental results proved, overall, unable to find evidence for the malleability of ideology. Although we conducted more than 15 studies in total, only a handful of these showed encouraging results and among these, results were often inconsistent, raising concerns for false positive results. Indeed, we sometimes found the expected interaction with one measurement of antiegalitarianism (e.g., political orientation) on a specific operationalization of gender equality, finding the expected interaction with another measurement of antiegalitarianism (e.g., social dominance orientation) on another gender equality variable, without a sound explanation for this inconsistency. This suggests that we should adopt some caution in any conclusion we would like to draw.

A remarkable exception resides in the study on *laïcité* where we primed Catholicism knowlversus Islam among Belgian citizens. Results confirmed that antiegalitarian Belgians endorsed a more restrictive approach to religious signs when they had been primed with Islam, rather than Catholicism. Although it is difficult to understand why results emerged here and not in other studies, we think that the link between Islam and *laïcité* is more straightforward to participants than the link between Islam and gender equality. Furthermore, in other experimental studies looking at *laïcité*, *laïcité* scales came after gender equality scales, thus imposing a delay between the manipulations and participants' evaluations of *laïcité*. Although this choice was coherent with the literature (whereby gender equality concerns were conditions for the weaponization of *laïcité* and the emergence of new *laïcité*), this choice may mean that the effect of manipulation had already faded when participants filled out *laïcité* scales.

Next to this encouraging pattern of findings, we found a series of unexpected but interesting results. Among antiegalitarian participants, threat manipulations often fostered more antiegalitarian views. In three studies, we found patterns fitting self-categorization or reactance effects, such that high-ESJ, high-prejudice or high-SDO participants expressed less attachment to gender equality, lower ranking of gender equality and more acceptance of rape myths blaming the victim. Importantly, these effects might have coexisted with malleability effects, thus possibly creating noise. This would mean that another moderator would distinguish between these two effects. Potential moderators are discussed in the next section.

2.2 What can we conclude?

Does this set of results allow us to conclude that individuals do not weaponize gender equality and *laïcité*? We argue that a series of elements prevent us from concluding that the effect is absent.

First, the results from the study using the priming of Catholic vs. Islam on *laïcité* show a malleability in *laïcité*. Indeed, this study, wherein the link between Islam and *laïcité* was more straightforward, revealed that French-speaking Belgian antiegalitarian participants exhibit a tendency to apply double standards in the application of the 'anti-religious symbols' dimension. That is, they endorsed this restricting form of *laïcité* to a greater extent when Islam was made salient, compared to when Catholicism was made salient.

Second, the remarkably cohesive set of results in the lexicometric analysis study (in Chapter 8) substantiates the construction of a discourse among antiegalitarian individuals with regard to gender equality. Indeed, despite the fact that antiegalitarians tend to hold sexist beliefs, they also held a discourse erecting European values as uniquely gender-friendly, opposing Catholicism and Islam on this matter, and pointing to Islam as incompatible with a feminist agenda.

Third, although not directly emanating from the scope of our own research, examples abound of politicians engaging in ideological malleability, as explained in the first part of this thesis. In other words, their (antiegalitarian) political orientation and political stances, along with their fluctuating interest in gender equality issues are unmistakable (e.g., Theo

Francken, Marine Len Pen, or Matteo Salvini, Le Pen, 2018; Le Soir, 2018; Rassemblement national, 2016; Redazione ANSA, 2018). Similarly, instances abound of politicians adopting flexible interpretations of *laïcité* in their treatment of Catholicism or Islam. For instance, in November 2023, Louis Aliot – a far-right French politicians, vice president of the Rassemblement National, and mayor of Perpignan – elicited public outcry upon announcing the placement of a Catholic nativity scene in the town of Perpignan. This stance was perceived as incongruent with the party's purported commitment to advocating stringent *laïcité*, as evidenced by their desire to proscribe the wearing of the headscarf in public services (Le Parisien, 2023; Radiofrance, 2022). The consistency and the frequency of this phenomenon make it hardly disputable and suggest that this is more than a random emergence that would be alien to some underlying and indeed systematic phenomenon.

Together, this body of evidence prevents us from concluding for the absence of the weaponization of gender equality and *laïcité*. At the same time, we think, that, in light of our various attempts to establish the presence of an effect, several reasons may explain the difficulty in getting a hold on malleability of ideology in an experimental setting, specifically when using closed-ended questions. Indeed, the scales and closed-ended questions, commonly used in the experimental context, reduced the possibility for participants to express justification in their own words. Rather, they had to rely on pre-formatted scales on which they reported their adherence. This feature may have minimized the opportunity for self-presentations and justification processes to kick in. As a case in point, when participants were asked to mobilize a list of arguments against Muslim immigration (in Study 2, from Chapter 6), lexicometric analyses showed that they relied on the word ‘women’ more than participants in the control condition. Yet, this mobilization of the gender-friendly argument in the manipulation stage, did not translate into the subsequent gender equality scales. Similarly, when participants were asked to fill in the ‘Attitudes towards Women Scale’ taking the perspective of French people, or of French Muslims), results showed that high-SDO participants, attributed more sexism to French Muslims, compared to French in general. However, once again, this did not translate into the subsequent ‘attachment to gender equality’ scales. Thus, although we opted for experimental method to test our hypothesis – consisting in the interaction between antiegalitarian views, and a threatening context – the experimental method, or rather, the closed-ended scales traditionally used in this approach, likely prevented the emergence of our expected pattern, and, by way of consequence, of statistically significant results.

Moreover, it is also possible that only a portion of antiegalitarian participants – for example, the more politicized ones – engage in the weaponization of these ideologies. If this is the case, our reliance on antiegalitarianism and our experimental manipulation may have been insufficient to capture a phenomenon occurring among a more specific group of participants, namely the more politicized ones. We elaborate on possible approaches – and potential moderators (e.g., interest in politics, motivation to respond without prejudice) – that would possibly favor the emergence of an effect, in the ‘future research’ section below. In spite of the difficulties we encountered in finding significant results, this dissertation has a number of strengths that we think are definitely worth mentioning. First, as explained in the

first part of this discussion, we remain convinced that the understanding of the weaponization of egalitarian principles is crucial from both a scientific and a socio-political standpoint. This is precisely why we relied on a wide range of scenarios and methods and explored different psychological processes behind the malleability of ideologies. Notably, we made use of a variety of different analyses such as linear regression, mixed models, CFA, as well as lexicometric discourse analyses with Iramuteq, a type of analysis that is seldom used in psychological research. Finally, in line with the importance we see in adopting an open science approach, we preregistered all most recent studies on the OSF platform.

2.3 Reflexivity

An important question raised during this PhD journey was the one of reflexivity. Reflexivity in research is the engagement of researchers in the evaluation of the possible influence of their beliefs and social position on their research (Eagly & Riger, 2014). As such it is ‘a process of critical self-awareness, reflexivity and openness to challenge’ (Smith, 2021, p. 168). Such interrogations arose in the early stages of this work. First, the chosen research question is not politically neutral and came with the anticipation of being labeled a ‘leftist’ researcher, as Smith puts it (2021, p. 198). On the other hand, two visions, perhaps two social identities, seemed to contrast. On the one hand, as a young researcher, the scientific engineering and methodological meticulousness inspired awe and fostered a deep belief in scientists’ ability to reach objectivity and truth. On the other hand, my awareness of the rejection of science by marginalized populations, my sense of trust towards feminist and antiracist scholars, as well as my background in (qualitative) sociology, led me to question this ideal of objectivity and to wonder whether science was put on a pedestal. For the most part of my PhD, these two visions coexisted within my head, with no real attempt to reconcile them. Yet, an editor of the *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, where we submitted our paper on lexicometric analyses, kindly requested that authors write a ‘statement of positionality’ in the method section. This made me reflect more scrupulously on this tricky matter. In what follows, I am sharing my current views on the matter. I hasten to emphasize that these views are in no way definitive. I think that intellectual humility should prevail, as I currently have little experience with regard to structural inequalities in research and the epistemological challenges they bring along.

The debate of scientific objectivity has long existed in psychology and more broadly in epistemology. Within the positivist approach, the knowledge built by science is based on observable natural phenomena through the measurement of empirical observations. These observations can be objective and devoid of ideology (Passmore, 1967). Thus, the positivist approach considers that there exists an objective and measurable reality, independent of human ideation. This idea of positivism waned as critics questioned the appropriateness of this paradigm to understand the reality, particularly in social sciences (Smith, 2021, p. 166). Post-positivists argued that although an objective, external reality exists, observations and measurements of this reality are necessarily flawed and suffer error. Thus, in their view, a full understanding of the external reality is impossible, and is best approached by means of

triangulation of methods, theories, and communities of scientists (Eagly & Riger, 2014). In this vein, Smith (2021) reminds us the following:

‘Research is highly institutionalized through disciplines and fields of knowledge, communities and interest groups of scholars, and through the academy. Research is also an integral part of political structures: governments fund research directly and indirectly through tertiary education, national science organizations, developments programmes and policies. Rich nations spend vast amounts of money on research across every imaginable dimension. [...] All of these activities are carried out by people who in some form or another have been trained and socialized into ways of thinking, of defining, and of making sense of the known and unknown.’ (Smith, 2021, p. 127).

These important disparities advocate for a need to triangulate observations, particularly in social sciences.

These considerations bear the question of reflexivity in the research process and the room it should be granted. Traditionally, qualitative research has integrated reflexivity as a core element of the research process. Quantitative research in psychology has developed an awareness of threats to research validity (e.g., Pygmalion effects, Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; experimental demands, Orne, 2017), and such biases are traditionally discussed in the method section of empirical contributions. Yet, inequalities reproduce through subtle mechanisms that are still largely ignored in the quantitative research community. For example, cognitivist researchers have long shown how the presentation of information may elicit biased representations, and Hegarty et al. (2010) have shown that the displaying of research data for men first, and women second, conveyed differences in status. In our own research, a journal editor pointed towards our biased presentation of stereotypes of Muslims. While Muslims are certainly perceived differently across the world, and some of them (e.g., feminist Muslims) advocate for a more complex understanding of their communities, our first manuscript presented a list of stereotypes associated with Muslims without indicating which samples produced the results. Similarly, the first version did not touch upon the perspective of Muslim feminists, although it would have offered a more comprehensive view of the group’s perception. My reflexivity journey has shown me that researchers often continue to reproduce biases in their research out of habit, probably more than out of malice, and above all, that researchers bear a responsibility inasmuch as their position confers them both legitimacy and the power to share incomplete or truncated realities.

These considerations also bear the question of the possibility to reach expertise on a subject that does not concern us personally (e.g., racism, as white researchers). Is criticism of sexism by Muslims, or other minorities, unfair or problematic? Should we, for instance, refrain from denouncing female genital cutting simply because it does not occur in our cultures? Several points can shed light on this epistemological debate. Firstly, membership of the group concerned is no bar to subjectivity. As Smith (2001) puts it, ‘the comment ‘she or he lives in it therefore they know’ certainly validates experience, but for researchers to assume that their own experience is all that is required is arrogant’ (p.140). Furthermore, a

clear-cut distinction between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ overlooks complex social identities (e.g., African activists opposing female genital cutting may be considered insiders, but they borrow from Western rhetoric on female genital cutting for international funding). The problem, according to Saharso (2008) does not lie in the fact that we are calling out dangerous minority practices. Instead, it lies in the double standards that we are very likely to set when we do so. In debates such as the ban on headscarf, a balance should be found between the concerns for women’s rights and the desire to respect a person’s autonomy. Yet, our evaluation of women’s autonomy is often truncated by our cultural bias. ‘This contains the risk, though, of a cultural bias that leads us to assume that if people consent to a practice that is very alien to us, they are not really capable of autonomy. [...] No matter how alien a practice is to us, and we may even find it repulsive, we still should not too quickly assume that it is not voluntarily chosen’ (Saharso, 2008, p. 17). Thus, while feminist solidarity across cultures is possible, and the condemnation of dangerous ideas and actions is needed, the trap of paternalism (*sic*) is very much real.

2.4 Limitations and future research

The conclusions of the present dissertation should be considered in light of several caveats. First, and as is often the case in psychology, we cannot assert that the collected samples are representative of the general population. This is particularly important for the examination of conceptions of *laïcité* in the French-speaking Belgian sample.

The second limitation concern the size of our samples. Although we strove to achieve acceptable levels of power in our studies, the novelty of our research question frequently presented challenges in drawing upon effect sizes from existing literature. Moreover, difficulties in collecting large numbers of French-speaking participants often meant that we had to be parsimonious in our sample sizes, or that the set numbers of participants were simply not reached. As we know, underpowered studies increase the probability of false negatives.

Third, critics could point that we relied on a variety of target categories that are hardly equivalent, namely, Muslim, Arabic, and Immigrant. We understand that this may be seen as a lack of precision. Although our initial work often relied on ‘Immigrant’ and ‘Immigration’, we progressively relied on ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islam’ as our categories because Muslims are stereotyped as particularly problematic with regard to gender equality. They evoke the most extreme case of cultural divide (Allievi, 2005) and elicit stronger prejudice from European populations (Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). Furthermore, in Eastern Europe, the ‘immigrant’ figure often equates the ‘Muslim’ (Voas & Fleischmann, 2012) which raises ambiguity between the religious and ethnic categories (Kalin, 2011). Thus, our reliance on these various categories likely activated similar stereotypes and affective reactions.

Fourth, none of our experimental studies relied on textual data as dependent variable. While we encountered difficulties in finding statistically significant results on our gender and *laïcité* scales, using open-ended questions in our experimental studies might have elicited better results. As pointed above, adopting this approach in future work on the issue could

potentially provide participants with the opportunity to actively partake in justification processes.

A number of questions certainly remain open and should be explored in future research.

First, as stated above, the malleability process is often driven by self-presentation concerns. In this regard, it is possible that interindividual differences in motivation to respond without prejudice (Bamberg & Verkuyten, 2022; Dunton & Fazio, 1997; Plant & Devine, 1998) are a determinant of this phenomenon. Indeed, authors have shown that individuals differ not only in their amount of motivation to control prejudice, but also in their source of standards for doing so. Particularly, Plant and Devine (1998) have shown that individuals may express more or less internal, and more or less external motivation to respond without prejudice. Insofar as specific profiles (i.e., individuals who are low in internal and high in external motivation to respond without prejudice), tend to exhibit greater disparities between their public and private expressions of prejudice, these individuals might be more likely to engage in malleability processes. Going a step further, it is possible that individuals exhibiting less motivation to respond without prejudice, would be inclined to engage in malleability when exposed to mobilization paradigms. Indeed, mobilization entails that one asserts their stance in front of an audience. It is therefore possible that only the antiegalitarian participants feeling no restriction in condemning immigrants' sexism, would engage in such mobilization.

Second, the malleability process requires that individuals are aware of the femonationalist or new *laïcité* discourse against Islam, and are sufficiently flexible to borrow from it. In this line, Barthélémy and Michelat (2007) have shown that the adherence to *laïcité* is related to the interest in politics. Thus, future studies may want to consider participants' interest in politics, because exposure to the public discourse, in particular the one used by politicians (Akkerman, 2015), should increase the likelihood that participants will exploit it.

Third, the process of malleability is characterized by antiegalitarian motives, but it may also be seen as a specific form of motivated reasoning. Interestingly, we might argue that while malleability has been defined as a process essentially serving antiegalitarian motivations, similar processes, whereby one shapes and exploits ideologies to serve their motives, should exist on both sides of the political spectrum. Future studies should clarify this present question, establishing how or when left-wing individuals might also engage in ideological malleability.

Fourth, the literature clearly points to the prevailing perception within the majority that it holds a superior and more morally upright position, regarding freedom of conscience and gender equality, in comparison to Muslims. Yet, we did not investigate feelings of European glorification, collective narcissism or ingroup pride (Cichocka et al., 2022; de Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Golec de Zavala et al., 2020; Kende et al., 2019).

Fifth, future studies should investigate the hijacking of LGBTQIA+-friendly discourse against Islam (Farris, 2017). Experimental data collected in Turkey has shown higher levels of homophobia among Muslims compared to Atheists, a difference explained by forms of religiosity rather than mere affiliation to Islam (Anderson & Koc, 2015). Various social

scientists point to the weaponization of same-sex marriage, or more generally LGBTQIA+ rights, to grant citizenship and control immigrants integration by the United States, Israel, and European countries (Ammaturo, 2015; Haritaworn, 2012; Luibhéid, 2018; Puar, 2013), or for double standards in the condemnation of homophobia (Hekma, 2002). These strategies, have been referred to as pinkwashing, or homonationalism (Luibhéid, 2018; Puar, 2013). Future studies should investigate psychological mechanisms underlying this phenomenon.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The question of the integration of Islam is very often on the front page in Belgium and in France. Notably, the question of expressing alleged religious symbols, such as the headscarf, or more recently, the abaya, sparks debate. Within this context, political figures have employed a discourse rooted in *laïcité* and gender equality as a rationale for the regulation of religious expression. Although social sciences scholars and activists have denounced a hijacking of gender-equality and *laïc* agendas (e.g., Cesari, 2002; Fernandez, 2009; Howard, 2012; Jacquemain, 2014), very few empirical work has examined this phenomenon. In line with Knowles et al.'s (2009) concept of 'malleable ideologies', the present dissertation aimed at shedding light on weaponization of gender equality and *laïcité* against Islam. In order to examine this phenomenon, we relied on various methods: correlational, experimental and textual data analyses. Our findings reveal a complex pattern of results and highlight the relevance of mixed-methods research.

Regarding the concept of *laïcité*, our findings indicate a multifaceted interpretation of *laïcité* in Belgium, distinct from that of France. Importantly, our results do not assert that *laïcité* inherently serves a racist agenda; instead, we observe that the three dimensions of *laïcité* exhibit contrasting relationships with intergroup outcomes. Indeed, the first, 'historic' *laïcité*, which encompasses beliefs in freedom of conscience and equal treatment for all citizens, is associated with less racism, less sexism, and less anti-Islam attitudes. In contrast, the second form of *laïcité*, which opposes the wearing of religious symbols, is statistically associated with racism, sexism and anti-Islam measures. Finally, we find a third dimension tapping resistance to State funding of recognized religious beliefs. In contrast to France, our statistical analysis reveals a statistical distinction between the latter two dimensions in Belgium. Subsequently, we explored whether *laïcité* dimensions could be differently recruited when facing Islam, or Catholicism. Using an experimental method, we find that antiegalitarian participants increase their endorsement of the *laïcité* opposing religious signs when confronted with Islam, compared to Catholicism. Our results thus suggest the weaponization of *laïcité* in Belgium. Conversely, we do not find such a shift when looking at the anti-funding dimension.

With regard to gender equality, our lexicometric analyses reveal that antiegalitarian participants rely on gender equality discourse to expound upon their anti-Islam stances. We observe that individuals holding right-wing and system-justifying viewpoints exhibit a stronger association between women's rights and the European way of life compared to other participants. They also perceive greater disparities between Islam and Christianity and view Islam as less compatible with feminism. These individuals substantiate their positions by drawing upon arguments related to gender equality.

In addition to these noteworthy findings, a significant portion of our research has been devoted to testing this hypothesis through experimental means. Surprisingly, the experimental approach has proven to be notably ineffective—or challenging—in capturing

the phenomenon at hand. Several factors could potentially account for this setback, and these are further discussed in the discussion section. Despite the near absence of statistically significant results in the experimental setting, we report a selection of studies examining the malleable endorsement of gender equality and *laïcité* in the interest of transparency and precision.

As a whole, our results confirm the timely reliance on *laïcité* and gender equality as tools against Islam in the lay population. Nevertheless, our findings stress that ideological malleability has remained largely elusive in experimental settings and is contingent upon very particular discourse scenarios. Future work should continue to examine the malleability of egalitarian ideologies (e.g., homonationalism, Puar, 2013), as group values have shown their mobilizing potential – for the best and for the worst (Reicher et al., 2008).

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Appendices

Appendices

1. Vignette materials

1.1 Vignettes from Chapter 6, Study 1

Text in italics was read by participants in the control condition. Text in bold italics was read by participants in the experimental condition.

Ce vendredi 10 janvier, les téléspectateurs ont pu assister à une scène pour le moins inhabituelle sur le plateau du ‘ Débat de l’info ’, émission de débat de Suisse2. Plusieurs intervenants étaient invités sur le plateau de Suisse2, une chaîne nationale du service public suisse. L’émission, habituellement présentée par Alicia Bertolet, était présentée ce soir-là par une journaliste moins connue des spectateurs, Marie Pertin.

Le débat était consacré à la question des dernières réformes sociales amorcées par le Conseil fédéral suisse. Sur le plateau, parmi d’autres invités, on trouvait notamment l’évêque Benoît Loschleithner (***l’imam Abdelwahab Mahjoub***), ainsi que des experts en politique. C’est entre la présentatrice et ce dernier que les affaires se sont envenimées et que le ton est peu à peu monté.

Alors que le débat commençait sans encombre, les échanges se sont tendus entre Benoît Loschleithner (***Abdelwahab Mahjoub***) et la présentatrice à la fin du premier quart d’heure. La présentatrice, s’adressant à son invité, écorche alors son nom pour la troisième fois, puis l’interroge ‘ Combien de fois par jour priez-vous ? ’. Une question qui étonne le panel des invités et que n’apprécie visiblement pas M. Loschleithner (***M. Mahjoub***), qui rétorque alors ‘ Il s’agit de ma vie privée. Je ne vois pas ce que cela apporte au débat ’. Ce dernier se déclare alors ‘ indigné ’ par ses propos.

Quelques minutes après, Benoît Loschleithner (***Abdelwahab Mahjoub***) interrompt Mme Pertin alors que celle-ci posait une question. Particulièrement agacée, elle déclare alors ‘ Ce n’est pas parce que je suis une femme que vous pouvez me traiter de la sorte, Monsieur ’. Un peu plus tard, alors que l’émission arrive à son terme, la présentatrice clôture en remerciant l’ensemble des invités, à l’exception de Benoît Loschleithner (***Abdelwahab Mahjoub***). Après être sorti du plateau, M. Loschleithner (***M. Mahjoub***) s’est exprimé sur les réseaux sociaux en déplorant ‘ le manque de professionnalisme ’ de la présentatrice Marie Pertin.

Ce différend a, sans surprise, suscité des réactions en sens divers dans le monde médiatique et politique local. Sur Twitter, les internautes se sont querellés pour savoir à qui revenait la faute. L'incident est remonté jusqu'au comité de direction de la chaîne. Cette dernière a fait savoir, par la voix de son porte-parole, qu'elle allait statuer dans les meilleurs délais quant au fait qu'il y ait eu ou non des difficultés inhabituelles au cours de ce débat, ainsi qu'aux suites éventuelles à donner.

1.2 Vignettes from Chapter 6, Study 3

Participants in the control condition read the following vignette:

Les scientifiques estiment que d'ici la fin du siècle, nous devrions nous attendre à une augmentation de 1,5 à 3,5 degrés Celsius de la surface du globe par rapport à 1990. Actuellement, nous nous dirigeons vers un réchauffement de 3,2 degrés. Ce réchauffement des températures provoquerait une importante fonte de glaciers et une hausse du niveau de la mer pouvant atteindre jusqu'à 95 centimètres d'ici la fin du 21^e siècle. Les basses-terres côtières, où vivent plus 50% de la population de la planète, seraient ainsi exposées aux inondations.

De plus, les recherches appréhendent une augmentation d'événements météorologiques extrêmes ayant le potentiel de produire des impacts catastrophiques. Nous pouvons citer l'exemple de l'augmentation de la fréquence des ouragans, des tempêtes majeures, des orages violents ou des vagues de chaleur causant alors des incendies plus étendus et plus destructeurs. L'augmentation du nombre de périodes de canicule amènera une hausse notable des décès liés à la chaleur, de l'incidence des allergies et de maladies respiratoires et cardiovasculaires (surtout chez les jeunes enfants et les aînés et les personnes les plus fragiles).

Au niveau agricole, la productivité sera perturbée, aggravant ainsi le risque de famines (surtout dans les régions arides des zones tropicales et subtropicales). Si une des grandes régions agricoles était frappée par une catastrophe climatique, nous assisterions à l'effondrement des rendements des cultures, ce qui impacterait directement les revenus des producteurs et les personnes les plus précaires. Une baisse extrême de la production entraînerait alors immédiatement une réaction en chaîne négative (multiplication des achats de précaution, entraînant à son tour une inévitable hausse des prix) en plus des pénuries alimentaires possibles.

Tous ces changements climatiques contribueront également à la perturbation des écosystèmes et à l'extinction massive d'espèces animales sauvages et indigènes. En effet, selon WWF-Belgique, si les températures mondiales venaient à augmenter trop, les climats des régions méditerranéennes deviendraient inadaptés pour bon nombre de plantes et animaux (jusqu'à 80 %

des mammifères dans certaines régions). De plus, l'Amazonie pourrait perdre 69 % de ses espèces végétales. Enfin, le réchauffement planétaire augmentera les risques de transmission de maladies infectieuses comme la malaria ou la fièvre jaune, alourdissant d'autant le fardeau qui pèse sur nos systèmes de soins de santé.

D'un point de vue politique, toutes ces menaces climatiques auraient également des conséquences non négligeables. En effet, l'ONU met en lumière les conséquences du manque d'accès à l'énergie, à l'eau, la nourriture et autres ressources rares ainsi que les mouvements de populations très importants qui en découleraient, avec des risques majeurs de conflits.

Participants in the threat condition read the following:

Au cours des trente dernières années, la question de l'accommodation de la religion musulmane et des minorités culturelles prend une place croissante dans l'espace médiatique et politique public.

Bien que les Belges ne soient pas tous d'accord quant aux stratégies à adopter face à la diversité des croyances et des cultures, un sondage représentatif de la population belge montre que 64% des Belges pensent que toutes les cultures sont égales (European Social Survey, 2014).

D'ailleurs, l'actualité est riche d'exemples de citoyens qui militent activement pour une plus grande tolérance envers l'Islam et, plus globalement, pour les minorités culturelles et religieuses. A titre d'exemple, ces groupes de pression se sont élevés contre l'interdiction de l'abattage rituel (abattage 'halal'). Récemment, ils ont aussi milité pour l'autorisation d'événements en 'non mixité' (événements autorisés uniquement aux personnes 'non-blanches' ou uniquement aux femmes musulmanes, dans ce cas). Réclamant une plus grande écoute et tolérance vis-à-vis des minorités, nombreux sont ceux qui se sont aussi positionnés en faveur du déboulonnage des statues de figures historiques comme Léopold II.

En réaction à ces mouvements, certains dénoncent des dérives et craignent que l'on ne porte atteinte à l'unité et à la cohésion sociale. En renvoyant sans cesse les citoyens à une identité fondée sur leur origine ou leur religion (par exemple 'non blanc' ou 'musulmane'), on se diviserait et on oublierait l'identité et les valeurs belges communes qui nous rassemblent.

Il est vrai que certaines pratiques traditionnelles ancrées dans l'histoire de la Belgique ont subi des modifications dans le but de mieux prendre en considération la sensibilité des minorités religieuses. Par exemple, la Belgique a modifié en 2013 le nom des vacances scolaires : ne parlez plus des traditionnelles 'vacances de Noël' ou 'vacances de Pâques' mais des vacances d'hiver ou de printemps.

Ici aussi, certaines personnes s'inquiètent de la mise à mal des aspects traditionnels et/ou folkloriques chers à une grande partie des citoyens. Ces voix dénoncent une perte de nos repères historiques et de nos traditions.

En somme, il est manifeste que la stratégie à adopter face aux minorités religieuse et culturelles fait débat. Bien qu'une partie importante des citoyens veuille plus de tolérance et d'écoute pour les revendications émises par les minorités, c'est loin d'être l'avis de tous. Bref, le sentiment, tout au moins dans certains cercles, est qu'une minorité trop tolérante prendrait carrément le pays en otage et orienterait le débat public dans un sens d'une trop grande complaisance à l'égard de cultures arrivées récemment sur notre territoire au détriment d'un ancrage historique et civilisationnel ancestral.

2. Tasks

2.1 Argument listing task from Chapter 6, Study 2

Text in italics was read by participants in the control condition. Text in bold italics was read by participants in the experimental condition.

Les médias abordent souvent la question *de l'écologie (de la religion musulmane)* et celle-ci et fait parfois l'objet de débats. Nous voudrions connaître et comprendre votre avis par rapport à cette thématique. Nous voudrions vous demander de donner une série d'arguments concernant votre position personnelle vis-à-vis de *l'immigration des personnes musulmanes en Belgique (l'écologie)*. Imaginez que les différents arguments servent à convaincre quelqu'un d'incertain, souhaitant s'informer davantage au sujet de *l'immigration des personnes musulmanes en Belgique (l'écologie)*. Comme une partie non négligeable des Belges, cette personne n'aurait pas d'avis sur cette question. N'hésitez pas à faire appel à des thèmes différents dans chaque argument. Nous voudrions vous encourager à fournir le plus possible d'arguments possibles, au minimum 5. C'est important pour l'étude.'

Participants then saw 10 text blocks in which they were asked to list arguments. Below, a screenshot from the immigration condition.

Argument 1

Inscrivez dans le champ ci-dessous un premier argument pour défendre votre position personnelle concernant l'immigration des personnes musulmanes en Belgique.

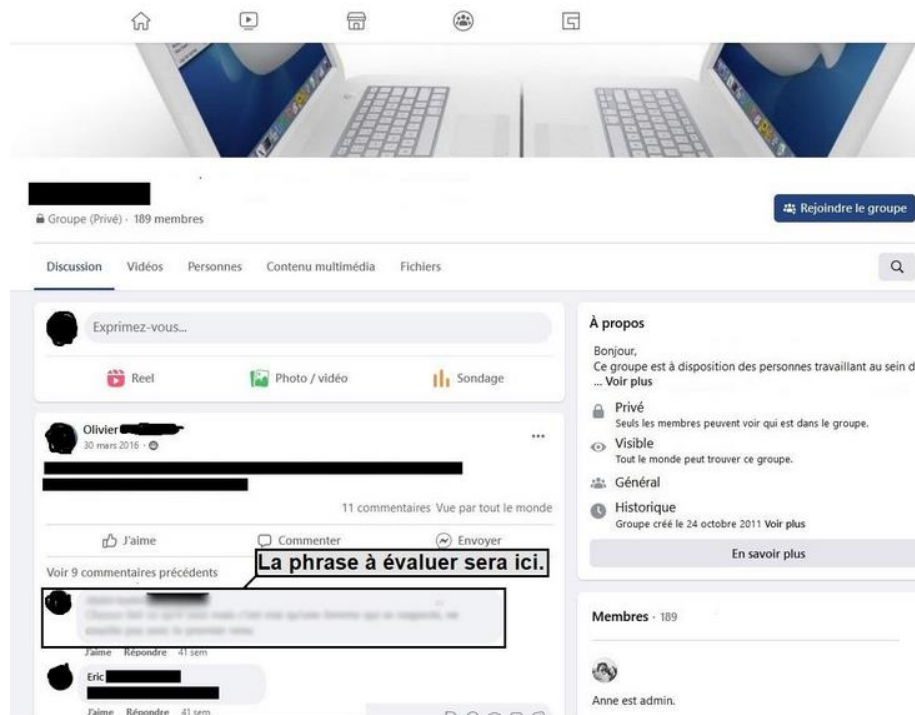
Argument 2

Inscrivez dans le champ ci-dessous un deuxième argument pour défendre votre position personnelle concernant l'immigration des personnes musulmanes en Belgique.

2.2 Evaluation of sexist comments from Chapter 6, Study 4

Before evaluating the comments, participants read the following introduction:

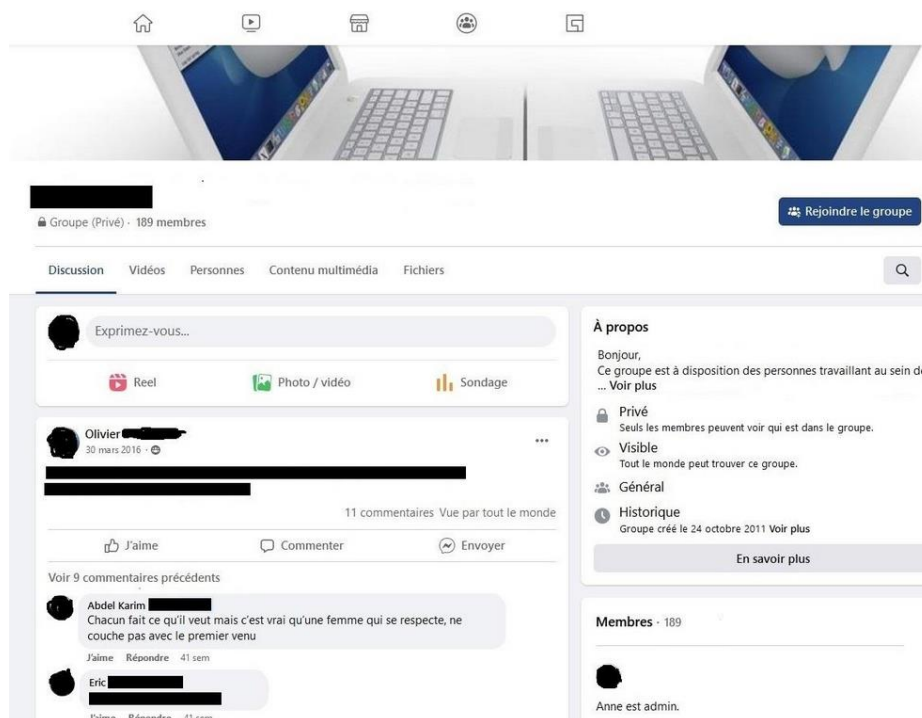
Merci d'avoir répondu aux différentes questions qui vous ont été présentées. A présent, nous voudrions vous demander de réagir à une série de phrases. Comme vous le verrez, notre objectif ici est simplement d'étudier la façon dont les gens s'expriment sur les médias sociaux et comment leurs propos sont perçus. Vous allez donc être confronté(e) à une série de phrases écrites par le même individu, en l'occurrence ici, sur un groupe Facebook. Nous allons simplement vous demander de réagir à ces phrases. Très concrètement, nous allons vous présenter chaque phrase telle que reprise sur le réseau social, puis vous demander de l'évaluer. Avant de passer à la suite, et afin de vous familiariser avec la tâche, nous aimerions vous montrer une copie d'écran du groupe Facebook sur lequel nous avons recueilli les phrases.



Then, participants read four comments from a pool of seven comments, allegedly posted on a (face) Facebook group. Participants saw and evaluated each comment separately. Comments were either made by a man named 'Abdel Karim' (Abdel Karim condition) or by a man named 'Benoît' (Benoît condition). The pool of seven comments was the following:

- Chacun fait ce qu'il veut mais c'est vrai qu'une femme qui se respecte, ne couche pas avec le premier venu
- Les femmes féminines c'est quand même plus joli

- Je trouve ça triste qu'on ne puisse plus tellement aborder les femmes dans la rue. Le jeu de drague mettait du piment dans notre quotidien.
- Quand j'aime pas les vêtements que ma femme porte, je le lui fais savoir
- Pour moi, une femme, ça n'a rien à voir avec un homme
- Entre femmes et hommes, on n'est pas fait pareil, on n'a pas les mêmes rôles et c'est très bien comme ça
- Ma femme s'occupe plus de notre fils que moi : après tout, comme les femmes donnent naissance, elles sont naturellement plus proches des enfants



Then, participants saw another Facebook page screenshot, this time only including the comment, and evaluated it.



Abdel Karim

Chacun fait ce qu'il veut mais c'est vrai qu'une femme qui se respecte, ne couche pas avec le premier venu

J'aime Répondre 41 sem

Indiquez ce que vous pensez de ces propos en utilisant une échelle allant de 1 (tout à fait anodin, normal, inoffensif) à 10 (tout à fait problématique, choquant, condamnable).

Tout à fait

anodin,

normal,

inoffensif

Tout à fait

problématique,

choquant,

condamnable

(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)



(7)



(8)



(9)



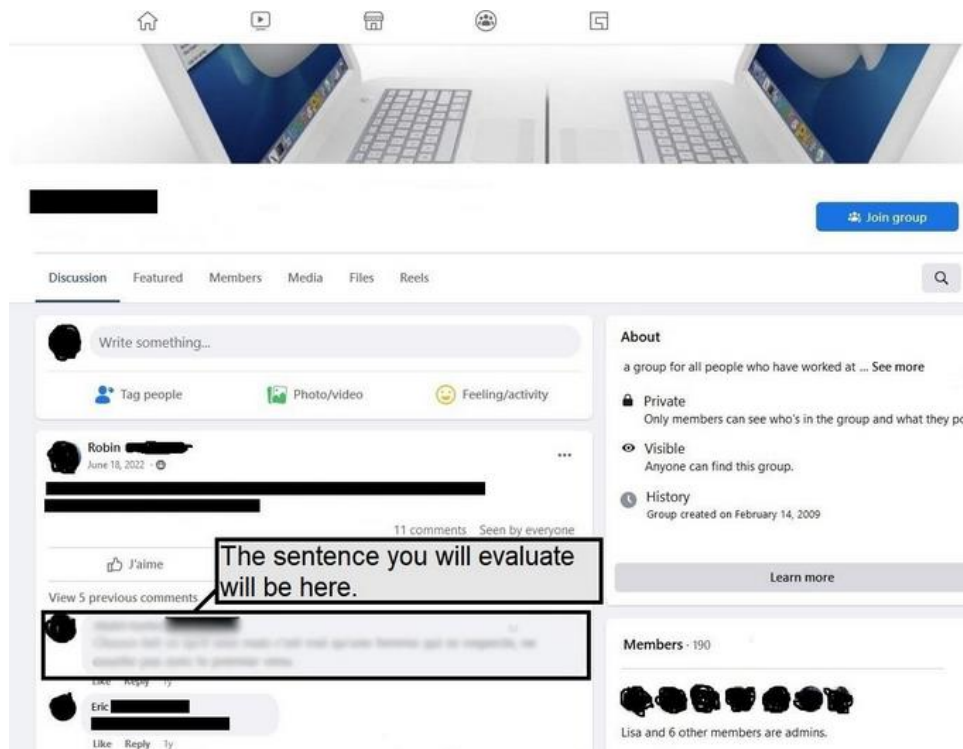
(10)



2.3 Evaluation of sexist comments from Chapter 6, Study 5

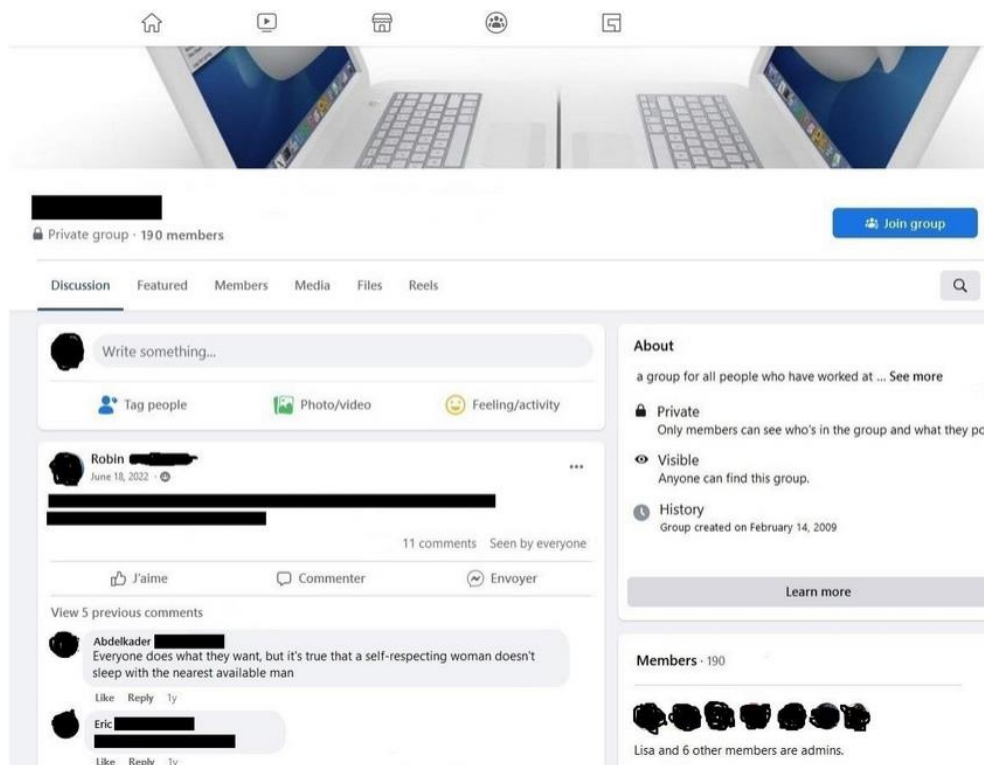
Before evaluating the comments, participants read the following introduction:

Now we would like to ask you to react to a series of sentences. As you will see, our aim here is simply to study how people express themselves on social media and how their words are perceived. You will be confronted with a series of comments written by the same individual, in this case on a Facebook group. We will simply ask you to react to these sentences. Specifically, you will see each sentence as it appears on the social network, and then you will be asked to evaluate it. Before moving on, and in order to familiarise yourself with the task, we would like to show you a screenshot of the Facebook group where we collected the sentences:



Then, participants read four comments from a pool of seven comments, allegedly posted on a (face) Facebook group. Participants saw and evaluated each comment separately. Comments were either made by a man named 'Abdelkader' (Abdelkader condition) or by a man named 'John' (John condition). The pool of seven comments was the following:

- Everyone does what they want, but it's true that a self-respecting woman doesn't sleep with the nearest available man.
- Feminine women are certainly more attractive
- I think it's sad that we can't approach women in the street so much anymore. The seduction game used to spice up our daily lives
- When I don't like the clothes my wife is wearing, I let her know
- For me, a woman is nothing like a man
- Women and men are not the same, we don't have the same roles and that's fine
- My wife looks after our son more than me: after all, because women give birth, they are naturally closer to the children.



Then, participants saw another Facebook page screenshot, this time only including the comment, and evaluated it.

Abdelkader [redacted]
Everyone does what they want, but it's true that a self-respecting woman doesn't sleep with the nearest available man

Indicate how you feel about this statement using a scale from 1 (completely harmless, normal, inoffensive) to 10 (completely problematic, shocking, condemnable).

Completely harmless, normal, inoffensive										Completely problematic, shocking, condemnable (10)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)		
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Scales

Table 1. *Economic system justification scale: selection of 8 items from Jost and Thompson (2000)*

Items
1. On ne peut pas éviter les grandes différences économiques qui existent entre les gens
2. Les inégalités de richesse dans la société s'expliquent par des lois naturelles
3. Il est presque impossible d'éliminer la pauvreté
4. La plupart des gens qui ne réussissent pas dans notre société ne doivent pas rendre responsable le système, ils ne peuvent s'en prendre qu'à eux-mêmes
5. La distribution égalitaire des ressources est possible dans notre société (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
6. Les différences de classes sociales reflètent l'ordre naturel des choses
7. Dans notre société, les différences économiques sont le reflet d'une distribution inégalitaire des ressources (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
8. Si les gens le voulaient, ils pourraient changer le système économique pour le rendre plus égalitaire (<i>reverse-coded</i>)

Table 2. *Support for the presenter*

Items
1. La présentatrice a le droit de défendre l'égalité homme-femme et elle ne devrait donc pas être sanctionnée par la chaîne
2. L'invité devait être traité de façon plus respectueuse même si cela semblait difficile pour la présentatrice (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
3. Licencier la présentatrice de son travail est une atteinte au principe de l'égalité homme-femme qu'elle a défendu
4. La chaîne de télévision devrait sanctionner la présentatrice car elle a visiblement dérapé au cours de l'émission (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
5. La présentatrice a fait une erreur en plaçant d'emblée les interactions sur le registre des relations homme-femme (<i>reverse-coded</i>)

Note. Due to poor psychometric properties, we relied on an item-per-item analysis approach.

Table 3. *Prejudice scale (Guimond and Dambrun, 2001)*

Items
1. Les immigrants qui vivent en France devraient avoir le droit de vote aux élections locales (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
2. On ne devrait pas accorder facilement la nationalité française
3. Les Français devraient être prioritaires en matière d'emploi
4. Il est normal que les immigrants en situation irrégulière soient renvoyés dans leur pays d'origine
5. La société française est injuste à l'égard des immigrants (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
6. Les Français devraient avoir la priorité en matière de logement
7. On peut facilement comprendre la colère que ressentent les immigrants en France (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
8. La diversité qu'apportent les immigrants est un enrichissement pour le pays (<i>reverse-coded</i>)

Table 4. *Identification to Belgium scale (adapted from Klein et al., 2011)*

Items
1. Je me sens belge
2. Je m'identifie à la Belgique
3. Être belge est un aspect important de la façon dont je me définis
4. Je suis heureux(se) d'être belge
5. J'aime la Belgique

Table 5. *Gender equality attitudes*

Items
1. Les autorités devraient se préoccuper bien davantage de la question de la drague insistante et des regards déplacés de certains hommes sur la voie publique
2. Les inégalités dans la répartition des tâches ménagères dans le couple sont un des premiers freins dans l'émancipation professionnelle des femmes
3. Il est anormal que les hommes puissent donner leur avis sur l'apparence et les tenues de leur compagne
4. La possessivité et la jalousie de certains hommes vis-à-vis de leur compagne est le souvent une expression de leur amour (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
5. Il est choquant au 21ème siècle qu'une femme soit financièrement dépendante de son compagnon

Table 6. *Laïcité scale (adapted from Roebroek & Guimond, 2017)*

Items	Factor
1. Autant que possible, les pratiques religieuses doivent être à caractère privé et non public	NL
2. Chaque citoyen doit être libre de pratiquer la religion de son choix	HL
3. Dans un état démocratique, toutes les religions doivent être considérées comme égales	HL
4. Il est important de respecter l'égalité devant la loi de tous les cit sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion.	HL
5. Il est normal qu'en Belgique, les pouvoirs publics subsidient la construction et l'entretien d'églises, de mosquées, de synagogues et de temples. (<i>reverse-coded</i>)	NL
6. La <i>laïcité</i> est un principe important	AL
7. Il faut interdire les signes d'appartenance religieuse pour toute personne travaillant dans une administration	NL
8. Il me semble tout à fait normal que les signes religieux visibles soient interdits dans les écoles du réseau officiel	NL
9. Je ne veux pas qu'on définisse les gens en Belgique en fonction de leurs origines ou de leur religion	HL
10. Je suis favorable à la séparation de la religion et de l'Etat en Belgique	NL
11. Je suis opposé à ce que l'Etat finance les édifices religieux	NL
12. La <i>laïcité</i> est un principe qui me tient beaucoup à cœur	AL
13. La société belge est composée de citoyens avant toute chose et non pas de communautés de gens	HL
14. Pour le bon fonctionnement du pays, les individus doivent être considérés comme citoyen avant de l'être comme belge de souche ou immigré, femme ou homme, homosexuel ou hétérosexuel, etc.	HL
15. Un Belge doit être pris en considération en tant que tel et non pas en tant que membre d'une communauté religieuse, sexuelle, etc.	HL

Note. HL = Historic *laïcité*, NL = New *laïcité*, AL = Attachment to *laïcité*.

Table 7. *Intergroup threat: selection of 6 items from Stephan et al. (1999)*

Items
1. Les immigrés de confession musulmanes devraient apprendre se conformer aux règles et aux normes de la société belges dès leur arrivée
2. L'immigration des personnes de confession musulmane met à mal la culture belge
3. Les valeurs et croyances des immigrés de confession musulmane ne sont pas compatibles avec les croyances et valeurs de la plupart des belges
4. Les immigrés de confession musulmane profitent de ce pays plus qu'ils n'y contribuent.
5. La présence des immigrés de confession musulmane rend plus difficile l'accès au marché de l'emploi aux autres belges
6. Les immigrés de confession musulmane constituent un fardeau pour les services sociaux et les soins de santé

Table 8. *Social Distance Scale (Mather et al., 2017)*

Items
1. Je serais prêt à accepter un(e) immigré(e) de confession musulmane comme parent proche par alliance
2. Je serais prêt à accepter un(e) immigré(e) de confession musulmane comme ami proche
3. Je serais prêt à accepter un(e) immigré(e) de confession musulmane comme voisin
4. Je serais prêt à accepter un(e) immigré(e) de confession musulmane comme collègue
5. Je serais prêt à accepter un(e) immigré(e) de confession musulmane comme citoyen(ne) de mon pays
6. Je serais prêt à accepter un(e) immigré(e) de confession musulmane comme visiteur dans mon pays
7. Je n'exclurais pas un(e) immigré(e) de confession musulmane de mon pays

Table 9. *Social Dominance Orientation Scale (Duarte et al., 2004)*

Items
1. Certains groupes de personnes sont tout simplement inférieurs aux autres groupes
2. Il est normal que certains groupes de personnes aient plus de chance dans la vie que d'autres
3. Pour aller de l'avant dans la vie, il est parfois nécessaire d'écraser d'autres groupes
4. C'est probablement une bonne chose qu'il y ait certains groupes au sommet et d'autres en bas
5. Les groupes inférieurs devraient rester à leur place
6. Ce serait bien si les groupes pouvaient être égaux (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
7. L'égalité des groupes devrait être notre idéal (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
8. Améliorons l'égalité sociale (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
9. Il y aurait moins de problèmes si l'on traitait les gens de façon plus égalitaire (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
10. Aucun groupe ne devrait dominer dans la société (<i>reverse-coded</i>)

Table 10. *Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression Scale (Helmke et al., 2014)*

Items
1. Pour autant qu'elles n'aillent pas trop loin, les remarques suggestives et les allusions disent simplement à une femme qu'elle est attractive
2. C'est un impératif biologique que les hommes cèdent à la pression sexuelle de temps en temps
3. Beaucoup de femmes tendent à mal interpréter un geste bien intentionné comme une 'agression sexuelle'
4. Interpréter des gestes inoffensifs sans conséquences comme du 'harcèlement sexuel' est une arme populaire dans la guerre des sexes
5. Pour obtenir la garde de leurs enfants, les femmes accusent souvent leur ex-mari d'une tendance à la violence sexuelle
6. Beaucoup de femmes tendent à exagérer le problème de la violence des hommes
7. Les femmes accusent souvent leurs maris de viol conjugal pour se venger de l'échec d'une relation
8. Le débat sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail a principalement entraîné que dans beaucoup de cas un comportement inoffensif est interprété comme du harcèlement
9. Lorsqu'une femme commence une relation avec un homme, elle doit être consciente que l'homme réclamera son droit à une relation sexuelle avec elle
10. Beaucoup de femmes se plaignent fortement d'agression sexuelle sans raisons valables, juste pour apparaître libérées
11. Les femmes aiment se montrer timides. Cela ne veut pas dire qu'elles refusent une relation sexuelle

Note. In Study 3, all eleven items were shown to participants. In Study 4, only items 1, 3 and 6 were shown to participants.

Table 11. *Right Wing Authoritarianism Scale (Bizumic and Duckitt, 2018)*

Items
1. C'est formidable que de nombreux jeunes d'aujourd'hui soient prêts à défier l'autorité (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
2. Ce dont notre pays a le plus besoin, c'est de discipline, et que tout le monde suive nos dirigeants dans un esprit d'unité
3. Les lois de Dieu sur l'avortement, la pornographie et le mariage doivent être suivies à la lettre avant qu'il ne soit trop tard
4. Il n'y a rien de mal à avoir des relations sexuelles avant le mariage (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
5. Notre société n'a PAS besoin d'un gouvernement plus dur et de lois plus strictes (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
6. Les faits concernant la criminalité et les récents troubles publics montrent que nous devons sévir davantage contre les auteurs de troubles, si nous voulons préserver la loi et l'ordre

Table 12. *Identification to France scale (adapted from Klein et al., 2011)*

Items
1. Il y a beaucoup de choses dont la France peut être fière
2. La réputation de la France dans le monde n'est plus à faire
3. Je me sens français(e)
4. Je m'identifie à la France
5. Être français(e) est un aspect important de la façon dont je me définis
6. Je suis heureux(se) d'être français(e)

Table 13. *Social dominance scale (Pratto et al.,1994)*

Items
1. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom
2. Inferior groups should stay in their place
3. Superior groups should dominate inferior groups
4. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place
5. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups
6. If certain groups of people stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems
7. Some groups of people are just more worthy than others
8. In getting what your group wants, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups
9. Group equality should be our ideal (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
10. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
11. Increased social equality would be a good thing (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
12. It would be good if all groups could be equal (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
13. We would have fewer problems if we treated different groups more equally (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
14. All groups should be given an equal chance in life (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
15. No one group should dominate in society (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
16. We should strive to make incomes more equal (<i>reverse-coded</i>)

Table 14. *Right-wing Authoritarianism (Bizumic and Duckitt., 2018)*

Items
1. It's great that many young people today are prepared to defy authority (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
2. What our country needs most is discipline, with everyone following our leaders in unity
3. God's laws about abortion, pornography, and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late
4. There is nothing wrong with premarital sexual intercourse (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
5. Our society does NOT need tougher government and stricter laws (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
6. The facts on crime and the recent public disorders show we have to crack down harder on troublemakers, if we are going preserve law and order

Table 15. *Identification to the United States Scale (adapted from Klein et al., 2011)*

Items
7. There are many things the United States can be proud of
8. The US's reputation in the world is well established
9. I feel American
10. I identify with the US
11. Being American is an important aspect of how I define myself
12. I am happy to be American

Table 16. *Intergroup threat: selection of 6 items from Stephan et al. (1999)*

Items
1. Muslim immigrants should learn to conform to the rules and norms of American society as soon as possible after they arrive.
2. Immigration of Muslim immigrants is undermining American culture.
3. The values and beliefs of Muslim immigrants are not compatible with the beliefs and values of most Americans.
4. Muslim immigrants get more from this country than they contribute.
5. The presence of Muslim immigrants makes it more difficult for other American people to access the labour market.
6. Muslim immigrants are a burden on social services and health care.

Table 17. *Attitudes towards Women (Spence & Hahn, 1997).*

Items
1. Les jurons et les obscénités sont plus répugnants s'ils sont tenus par une femme plutôt que par un homme
2. Dans une économie moderne, où les femmes sont actives en dehors du foyer, les hommes devraient partager les tâches ménagères comme laver la vaisselle et faire la lessive (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
3. C'est insultant que les femmes doivent obéir à leur mari (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
4. Une femme devrait être aussi libre qu'un homme de faire une demande en mariage ou de proposer de se 'pacser' (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
5. Les femmes devraient moins se soucier de leurs droits et plus de devenir de bonnes épouses et de bonnes mères
6. Si les femmes gagnent aussi bien leur vie que la personne qu'elles fréquentent, elles devraient assumer à parts égales les dépenses lorsqu'elles sortent ensemble (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
7. Les femmes devraient prendre la place qui leur revient dans l'économie et dans toutes les professions, au même titre que les hommes (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
8. Une femme ne devrait pas s'attendre à aller exactement aux mêmes endroits ou à avoir la même liberté d'action qu'un homme
9. Les garçons dans une famille devraient recevoir plus d'encouragement à aller à l'université que les filles
10. Il est ridicule pour une femme de conduire une locomotive et pour un homme de reprendre des chaussettes
11. En général, le père devrait avoir plus d'autorité que la mère dans l'éducation des enfants
12. Le leadership intellectuel d'une communauté devrait être en grande partie dans les mains des hommes
13. La liberté économique et sociale a bien plus de valeur pour les femmes que d'accepter l'idéal de féminité fixé par les hommes
14. Il y a de nombreux emplois dans lesquels on devrait préférer les hommes plutôt que les femmes lors de l'embauche ou de la promotion (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
15. Les femmes devraient avoir les mêmes chances que les hommes en ce qui concerne l'apprentissage dans les différents métiers

Table 18. *Anti-headscarf attitudes (adapted from Saroglou et al., 2009).*

Items
1. En général, le port du voile dans certains endroits me dérange (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
2. Je trouve complètement normal que les femmes musulmanes portent le voile
3. Le port du voile par le membre du personnel des fonctions publiques (administrations, hôpitaux, etc) me dérange (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
4. Le port du voile dans la rue me dérange (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
5. Le port du voile chez des élèves de l'enseignement secondaire me dérange (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
6. Le port du voile chez des élèves de l'enseignement supérieur me dérange (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
7. Le port du voile me dérange partout (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
8. Les femmes musulmanes devraient pouvoir porter le voile partout où elles le veulent
9. Le port du voile musulman devrait être interdit dans certains endroits (<i>reverse-coded</i>)

Table 19. *Conspiracy Islam (adapted from Uenal, 2016).*

Items
1. La plupart des Musulmans en Belgique sont de mèche avec des groupes radicaux qui visent une Islamisation de notre société
2. Beaucoup de Musulmans rêvent en réalité d'établir la Charia en Belgique
3. Il n'y a aucune raison de penser que l'islam conspire contre l'Occident (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
4. Dans leur énorme majorité, les Musulmans de Belgique n'ont aucune intention d'islamiser notre pays (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
5. Si on n'intervient pas, il y aura bientôt plus de Musulmans que de non-Musulmans en Belgique
6. L'évolution de la proportion de Musulmans dans la population belge ne pose aucun problème (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
7. En encourageant la natalité et l'immigration, une grande partie des Musulmans espère devenir un jour le groupe majoritaire en Belgique
8. Les Musulmans ne cherchent pas délibérément à accroître leur nombre dans la population de notre pays (<i>reverse-coded</i>)

Table 20. *Beliefs about the headscarf (adapted from Uenal, 2016).*

Items
1. Les femmes qui portent le voile le font de façon libre (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
2. Une femme portant le voile ne fait rien d'autre que de vivre sa foi (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
3. Le voile est le signe d'une oppression envers les femmes
4. Autoriser le port du voile dans l'espace public, c'est aller trop loin dans l'acceptation
5. Les femmes voilées sont manipulées par des religieux radicaux
6. En portant le voile, les femmes voilées essaient de nous islamiser petit à petit
7. Interdire le port du voile dans l'espace public contribue à l'émancipation des femmes voilées
8. Permettre aux femmes musulmanes de porter le voile est nécessaire pour leur donner toutes les opportunités (<i>reverse-coded</i>)

Table 21. *Modern sexism (Swim et al., 1995).*

Items
1. La discrimination envers les femmes n'est plus un problème aujourd'hui en Belgique
2. Les femmes ratent souvent les bons emplois du fait de discriminations sexuelles (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
3. Il est rare de voir les femmes traitées de manière sexiste à la télévision
4. En moyenne, les hommes et les femmes sont traités équitablement dans notre société
5. La société a atteint un stade où les hommes et les femmes ont des opportunités de réussite égales
6. Il est facile de comprendre la colère des mouvements féministes en Belgique (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
7. Il est facile de comprendre pourquoi les mouvements féministes en Belgique sont encore inquiets au sujet des limites sociales des opportunités pour les femmes (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
8. Ces dernières années, le gouvernement et la presse ont montré plus d'inquiétude au sujet du traitement des femmes que ne le justifie le traitement réel des femmes

Table 22. *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Swim et al., 1995).*

Items	Factor
1. Quel que soit son niveau d'accomplissement, un homme n'est pas vraiment 'complet' en tant que personne s'il n'est pas aimé d'une femme	BS
2. Sous l'apparence d'une politique d'égalité, beaucoup de femmes recherchent en fait des faveurs spéciales, comme un recrutement en entreprise qui les favorise	HS
3. Lors d'une catastrophe, les femmes doivent être sauvées avant les hommes	BS
4. La plupart des femmes interprète des remarques ou des actes anodins comme étant sexistes	HS
5. Les femmes sont trop rapidement offensées	HS
6. Les gens ne sont pas vraiment heureux dans leur vie s'ils ne sont pas engagés dans une relation avec une personne de l'autre sexe	BS
7. Les féministes veulent que les femmes aient plus de pouvoir que les hommes	HS
8. Beaucoup de femmes ont une espèce de pureté que la plupart des hommes n'ont pas	BS
9. Les femmes devraient être protégées et être aimées par les hommes	BS
10. En général, une femme n'apprécie pas à sa juste valeur ce qu'un homme fait pour elle	HS
11. Les femmes recherchent le pouvoir en ayant le contrôle sur les hommes	HS
12. Tout homme devrait avoir une femme qu'il adore	BS
13. Les hommes sont 'incomplets' sans les femmes	BS
14. Les femmes exagèrent les problèmes qu'elles rencontrent au travail	HS

15. Quand une femme a réussi à faire en sorte qu'un homme s'engage envers elle, elle essaie souvent de le tenir en laisse	HS
16. Quand les femmes perdent une compétition honnête contre un homme, elles se plaignent pourtant d'être l'objet de discrimination	HS
17. Une femme parfaite doit être mise sur un piédestal par son compagnon	BS
18. Il y a beaucoup de femmes à qui cela plaît d'exciter les hommes en faisant semblant sexuellement intéressées pour ensuite refuser leurs avances	HS
19. Les femmes, comparées aux hommes, ont tendance à faire preuve d'un plus grand sens moral	BS
20. Les hommes devraient subvenir financièrement aux besoins des femmes, quitte à sacrifier leur propre bien-être	BS
21. Les féministes ont des demandes tout à fait exagérées concernant les hommes	HS
22. Les femmes, comparées aux hommes, ont tendance à être plus cultivées et à avoir plus de bon-goût	BS

Note. BS = Benevolent sexism, HS = Hostile sexism.

Table 23. *Acculturation preferences (adapted from Berry & Kalin, 1995).*

Items
1. Les personnes qui viennent vivre en Belgique devraient adapter leur comportement afin qu'il soit conforme à celui des Belges
2. Les parents immigrants devraient encourager leurs enfants à conserver la culture et les traditions de leur pays d'origine (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
3. Une société composée de différents groupes culturels est davantage apte à faire face aux problèmes qui peuvent survenir (<i>reverse-coded</i>)
4. L'unité du pays est affaiblie par l'attachement des groupes ethniques à leur ancien mode de vie
5. Les immigrants doivent faire plus d'efforts pour s'adapter aux traditions culturelles Belges s'ils souhaitent vivre ici
6. Les minorités ethniques vivant en Belgique devraient être aidées afin que leur héritage culturel soit préservé (<i>reverse-coded</i>)

