

# Group-Based Relative Deprivation Explains Endorsement of Extremism Among Western-Born Muslims



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## Abstract

Although jihadist threats are regarded as foreign, most Islamist terror attacks in Europe and the United States have been orchestrated by Muslims born and raised in Western societies. In the present research, we explored a link between perceived deprivation of Western Muslims and endorsement of extremism. We suggest that Western-born Muslims are particularly vulnerable to the impact of perceived relative deprivation because comparisons with majority groups' peers are more salient for them than for individuals born elsewhere. Thus, we hypothesized that Western-born, compared with foreign-born, Muslims would score higher on four predictors of extremism (e.g., violent intentions), and group-based deprivation would explain these differences. Studies 1 to 6 ( $N$ s = 59, 232, 259, 243, 104, and 366, respectively) confirmed that Western-born Muslims scored higher on all examined predictors of extremism. Mediation and meta-analysis showed that group-based relative deprivation accounted for these differences. Study 7 ( $N$  = 60) showed that these findings are not generalizable to non-Muslims.

## Keywords

group-based anger, perceived injustice, group identification, violent behavioral intentions, group-based relative deprivation, birthplace, Muslim extremism, diaspora, open data, open materials, preregistered

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Politicians frequently frame jihadist threats as foreign. Donald J. Trump's executive order to stop migrants from some Muslim nations from entering the United States exemplifies this logic. Simultaneously, recent reports show that many terror attacks in the West have been orchestrated by Muslims who were born and raised in the West (Bergen, Ford, Sims, & Serman, 2017; Roy, 2017). Therefore, we aimed to explore reasons that some Western-born Muslims endorse and are psychologically more susceptible to extremism, compared with Muslims migrating to the West.

Anti-Muslim policies and rhetoric in Western countries over the past two decades have marginalized Muslims away from mainstream society and increased the salience of Muslim identity (Hervik, 2004; Rydgren, 2004). Further, Muslims in the West face increasing discrimination in education, employment, and religious

freedom (Adida, Laitin, & Valfort, 2016). A recurring debate is whether a Muslim could ever be considered a European, Frenchman, or Dane, for example (Spillemose, 2017). We suggest that this exclusionary orientation is especially salient for Western-born Muslims (henceforth, *native-born Muslims*), compared with Muslims who have migrated to the West (*foreign-born Muslims*), because they have more salient social comparisons with majority peers. Thus, we predicted that the perception of *group-based relative deprivation* is a key factor in explaining Western-born Muslims' endorsement of extremism. Group-based relative

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deprivation refers to feelings of discontent that occur when people perceive that members of their group have less than what they are entitled to (Smith, Pettigrew, Pippin, & Bialosiewicz, 2012). Other researchers have theorized that members of the second-generation Muslim diaspora are particularly vulnerable to feelings of deprivation (e.g., Sageman, 2008). To the best of our knowledge, however, this is the first empirical study to directly test this idea.

The concept of group-based relative deprivation brings together discussions about poverty, perceived injustice, and anger as explanations of extremism. In spite of speculation that poverty, low educational attainment, and lack of political influence are causes of terrorism (e.g., Tyson, 2001), no evidence to our knowledge supports this (Atran, 2003; Krueger & Malečková, 2003). In contrast, research suggests the opposite (Bhui, Warfa, & Jones, 2014). Whereas such observations are difficult to reconcile with objective deprivation as a cause of extremism, they fit with the notion of relative, perceived deprivation: Educated Western Muslims may be more likely to compare their status and earnings with those of similarly educated non-Muslims, which may fuel resentment and ultimately pose a risk that they will endorse extremism.

### **Social Identity Processes and Relative Deprivation**

Perceptions of injustice, as accompanied by anger or contempt, are predictors of violent collective action within social identity research (e.g., van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Still, a special feature of studying relative deprivation concerns the social context to which these perceptions and emotional states are tied. This inquiry links a social comparison within the person's own surroundings (e.g., a young Muslim growing up in Belgium perceiving that Muslims and Belgians are not given equal opportunities) to identification with and attachment to a global Muslim community (e.g., action on behalf of "Muslims everywhere"; "London Bomber," 2005).

Previous research has shown that group identification predicts collective action, and a salient social identity may have different predictive roles in different group contexts (Becker, Tausch, Spears, & Christ, 2011; Obaidi, Kunst, Kteily, Thomsen, & Sidanius, 2018). For example, whereas disidentification predicts nonnormative collective actions in the context of student protest (Becker et al., 2011), we predicted that Muslim identification is related to violent intentions. Student identification is arguably not a highly salient group divide in broader society, but Muslim identification is likely to be more salient and possibly more potent as a predictor of nonnormative collective action.

According to self-categorization theory, intergroup comparison makes social identity salient (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). A comparison with an advantaged group may lead individuals from a disadvantaged group to view their own identities negatively. More importantly, research also shows that political protests are a common response to group-based relative deprivation (e.g., Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972). Thus, the perception of deprivation among some Muslim Westerners is a potential source of group-based collective actions, including extremism. This effect may be particularly strong for native-born Muslims because they may, compared with foreign-born Muslims, see themselves as "real" Westerners while nonetheless having experiences of exclusion and group-based inequality.

A recent article suggests that Muslims born in Denmark may be more inclined to endorse violent collective action than Muslims born in conflict areas (Obaidi, Bergh, Sidanius, & Thomsen, 2018; see also Bhui et al., 2014). Obaidi, Bergh, et al. (2018) also showed that Muslims born in Denmark perceived more injustice toward their group and felt angrier about it. Despite showing differences between Western-born Muslims and those from conflict areas, those studies stopped short of explaining why. In fact, that research was more focused on illustrating similarities between those categories of Muslims, especially if the interrelations of collective-action predictors were the same in the two populations (i.e., testing a group equivalence of an individual difference analysis). Here, we focused on why Western-born Muslims score higher, on average, on predictors and proxies of group violence, and we proposed that group-based relative deprivation is a principal explanation for those observed group differences. Providing a mechanism is important for understanding where "homegrown" jihadism in the West comes from and why it might be more challenging than its foreign-born counterpart.

### **The Current Inquiry**

Drawing on the collective-action model of social identity (van Zomeren et al., 2008) and research on relative deprivation (e.g., Smith et al., 2012), we examined whether native-born Muslims have a greater propensity to extremism than foreign-born Muslims living in the West and whether group-based relative deprivation explains these differences. The first outcome of interest was violent behavioral intentions. We focused on this variable instead of other attitudinal measures because intentions are often better proxies of behavior (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). We also assessed three variables that are reliably associated with endorsement of violent collective action in the literature on extremism, including violence on behalf of Muslims: group-based anger, group identification, and perceived injustice

(e.g., Doosje, Loseman, & van den Bos, 2013; Obaidi, Bergh, et al., 2018; Tausch et al., 2011). Statistically speaking, we expected relations between place of birth (native born vs. foreign born) and all of the above-mentioned variables and, most critically, that the relations would be mediated by group-based relative deprivation.

We examined our predictions in seven studies. Study 1 (a pilot) and three subsequent studies were conducted among Muslims in Denmark, Study 5 among Muslims in Belgium, and Study 6 among Pakistani Muslims living in 20 different Western countries. Finally, we examined whether these effects would be observed in less directly deprived non-Muslim immigrant groups (e.g., Sri Lankan Tamils) whose members were born in the West and experience anti-immigrant sentiments but are unlikely to feel that their group is singled out for particular scapegoating. Hence, they should be less likely to consistently experience feelings of relative deprivation. Overall, we predicted that birthplace would have no impact on relative deprivation or predictors of extremism among Sri Lankan Tamils (Study 7) but that we would consistently find those patterns among Muslims (Studies 1–6).

We also tested an alternative hypothesis that low socioeconomic status (an approximation of absolute, objective deprivation) may account for mean differences between native-born and foreign-born Muslims. Although poor socioeconomic opportunities have been dismissed as a cause of extremism (e.g., Atran, 2003; Krueger & Malečková, 2003), scholars still make such a connection (Tyson, 2001). Moreover, these analyses are important because socioeconomic deprivation may not by itself lead to political action but may mediate the effect of other antecedents of support for violence (e.g., Zaidise, Canetti-Nisim, & Pedahzur, 2007). To test this alternative hypothesis, we examined a model in which we replaced subjective deprivation (group-based relative deprivation) with objective deprivation (socioeconomic status) as a mediator between place of birth and the outcome variables.

## Method

### *Participants*

Most of the countries where the studies were conducted have been active in Western warfare in Muslim countries. It is further evident that many of these countries have exported Islamist fighters to Syria and Iraq. Belgium and Denmark are of special interest because these countries have exported more Islamist fighters than any other Western countries, per capita (Neumann, 2015).

We aimed to collect a set of diverse samples and thus approached participants at different online forums as

well as various Muslim community centers and mosques. We aimed to include more than 150 participants in each study—except for the pilot study, which was intended to provide an initial examination of our measures and predictions—because this would provide a more stable estimate of the population correlation (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013). Prior to data collection, a decision was made to terminate data collection after 3 months from the start date. We were not able to recruit 150 participants in two cases because of practical difficulties (Studies 5 and 7). Generally, the samples in our studies constitute prime examples of hidden and hard-to-reach populations. Nevertheless, using the effect sizes from the pilot study (first and smallest), we still had a power of .74 ( $\alpha = .05$ ;  $N = 59$ ; point-biserial  $r = .29$ , the smallest correlation in Study 1) to replicate those effects (power analysis conducted in G\*Power Version 3.1.9.2; Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). An overview of the samples is provided in Table S1 in the Supplemental Material available online.

Study 1 (pilot) comprised 59 participants (23 women) from various Muslim community centers and mosques in three major cities in Denmark. For a detailed description of recruitment procedures for each study, see “Detailed Description of Recruitment Procedures” in the Supplemental Material. To ensure that both genders were presented, we aimed to target community centers and mosques that were frequented by both men and women. Of the total sample, 44% were born in Denmark, and 56% were born outside Denmark. Participants’ ages ranged between 18 and 74 years, with the majority (76.3%) being between 18 and 34 years. Participation was rewarded with a gift card (~\$5). For information about the socioeconomic status of all study participants, see Table S2 in the Supplemental Material.

Study 2 comprised 232 participants (134 women) from 32 different Islam-related Facebook sites in Denmark. These websites were chosen to provide diversity in demographics as well as attitudinal dimensions. Of the total sample, 33% were born in Denmark, and 67% were born outside Denmark. The ages of the participants ranged between 16 and 74 years, with the majority (88.5%) being between 18 and 34 years. Participation was voluntary, and participants did not receive any reward; instead, we paid approximately \$4 to a charitable cause chosen by each participant.

The recruitment procedure for Study 3 was the same as for Study 2. This study comprised 259 Muslims (177 women); 45% were born in Denmark, and 55% were born outside Denmark. The majority (82.9%) of participants were between 18 and 34 years of age.

Participants in Study 4 were recruited using snowball sampling among Afghan Danes. The study comprised 243 participants (113 women); 48% were born in Denmark,

and 52% were born outside Denmark. Participants ranged in age between 18 and 65 years, and the majority (63.9%) were between 18 and 30 years old. Participation was rewarded with a gift card (~\$5).

The recruitment procedure for Study 5 was the same as for Studies 2 and 3, in which we recruited our participants from 15 different Islam-related Facebook sites in Belgium. This sample consisted of 104 Muslims (56 women); 49% were born in Belgium, and 51% were born outside Belgium. The majority (90%) of participants were between the ages of 18 and 45 years. Participation was rewarded with a gift card of 3 euros (~\$3).

The sample for Study 6 was collected using convenience and snowball sampling and comprised 366 Pakistani Muslims living in the United Kingdom (22.7%), United States (19.7%), Canada (10.7%), Germany (7.7%), Norway (4.1%), France (3.8%), Australia (3.6%), Sweden (3.6%), and Switzerland (3.3%). For more details, see Table S3 in the Supplemental Material. Of the total sample, 49% were women, 51% were born in Pakistan, and 49% were born in the West. Participants' ages ranged between 15 years (1 participant) and 45 years; the majority (99%) were between 18 and 45 years old. Participation was voluntary.

The recruitment procedure for Study 7 was based on snowball sampling. This final sample consisted of 60 non-Muslim Sri Lankan Tamils (27 women) living in Denmark; 53% were born in Denmark and 47% were born outside Denmark. This sample was smaller because of the size of the population of Sri Lankan Tamils in Denmark. However, averaged across the Muslim samples, the correlations between birthplace and relative deprivation with dependent variables was at least .278, which would give us a power of .72 to detect equivalent effects in this sample. Of the total sample, 93% identified as Hindu and 7% as Christian. The majority (80%) of participants were between the ages of 18 and 40 years. The participants were entered in a lottery draw of 500 Danish krone (~\$80) as payment.

## Measures

The surveys for Studies 1 to 6 included measures of group-based relative deprivation (e.g., "Muslims will always be at the bottom and non-Muslim Westerners at the top of the social ladder";  $\alpha$ s = .79–.92; Smith et al., 2012), Muslim identification (e.g., "I strongly identify with other Muslims";  $\alpha$ s = .72–.94; adapted from Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995), perceived injustice (e.g., "Muslims in Muslim countries suffer because of the foreign policy of Western countries";  $\alpha$ s = .60–.89; Obaidi, Bergh, et al., 2018; Tausch et al., 2011), group-based anger (e.g., "I feel angry when I think of Western

countries' foreign policies towards Muslim countries";  $\alpha$ s = .59–.94; adapted from Tausch et al., 2011),<sup>1</sup> violent behavioral intentions ("I am ready to do everything in my power to change Western countries' foreign policy towards Muslim countries" and "I am ready to use violence against other people in order to achieve something I consider very important";  $\alpha$ s = .61–.89) to defend or support Muslims or Islam (Doosje et al., 2013), and finally, place of birth (for detailed information about item content, see Table S4 in the Supplemental Material). All of the examined variables in this research also differentiated former jihadists from the general population in Afghanistan (Jihadists scoring higher), attesting to their validity (Obaidi, Bergh, Akrami, & Dovidio, 2019). Except for place of birth, all items were scored on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

The survey for Study 7 included the same scales and items but with reference to Tamils instead of Muslims (e.g., "I feel strongly connected to other Tamil people"). The reliabilities ( $\alpha$ s) of the scales varied between .68 and .96 (see Study 7 in Tables S5 and S12 in the Supplemental Material). To examine the interrelations between all the study variables, we ran multigroup confirmatory factor analyses. Specifically, we examined whether Muslim identification, perceived injustice, group-based anger, group-based relative deprivation, and violent behavior intentions would comprise five factors in each Muslim sample (Studies 1–6). Overall, the measurements varied little across samples and tapped the intended structure in all studies (see "Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analyses" and Table S6 in the Supplemental Material).

## Results

Initially, for Studies 1 through 6, we computed correlations between the four dependent variables on the one hand and group-based relative deprivation as well as birthplace (foreign born = 0, native born or born in the West = 1) on the other hand. These results show that Muslims born in Western countries, compared with foreign-born Muslims, scored significantly higher on Muslim identification, perceived injustice, group-based anger, and violent behavioral intentions, with a couple of exceptions (see Table 1). For detailed statistics, see Tables S7 and S8 in the Supplemental Material.

In the next step, we examined group-based relative deprivation as a mediator between birthplace and the variables associated with collective violence. Specifically, we conducted analyses with birthplace as the independent variable, group-based relative deprivation as the mediator, and collective-violence measures as the dependent variables (i.e., four mediation analyses

**Table 1.** Bivariate Correlations Between Key Variables (Studies 1–6)

Variable	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6
Birthplace <sup>a</sup>						
Group-based relative deprivation	.82*	.06	.13*	.38*	.70*	.54*
Muslim identification	.33*	.30*	.29*	.29*	.49*	.39*
Perceived injustice	.64*	.11	.05	.24*	.46*	.42*
Group-based anger	.45*	.18*	.10	.20*	.46*	.41*
Violent behavioral intentions	.29*	.11	.05	.31*	.66*	.34*
Group-based relative deprivation						
Muslim identification	.38*	.32*	.35*	.50*	.62*	.42*
Perceived injustice	.72*	.46*	.47*	.49*	.68*	.56*
Group-based anger	.55*	.58*	.60*	.51*	.67*	.65*
Violent behavioral intentions	.44*	.25*	.34*	.37*	.76*	.54*

<sup>a</sup>Birthplace was coded 0 (foreign-born Muslim living in the West) or 1 (Western-born Muslim living in the West).

\* $p < .05$  (two-tailed).

for each study, one for each dependent variable) to address the interrelations between our variables. We used the PROCESS tool in SPSS to run the mediation analyses (e.g., Hayes & Rockwood, 2017). The results showed that the bootstrapped indirect effect of birthplace on dependent variables was significant in 19 of the 24 conducted analyses. All nonsignificant effects except one were from Study 2 (see Table 2).

In light of some inconsistencies in the outcome mentioned above (Study 2), we aimed to synthesize and estimate the magnitude of the indirect effects meta-analytically. Specifically, we conducted four separate random-effects meta-analyses—one for each dependent variable. We used the unstandardized indirect effects and their standard error and conducted the analyses using Comprehensive Meta-Analysis software (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2014). In the present set of studies, the unstandardized indirect effect provided a meaningful metric that was comparable across studies because our measures were based on the same item-response scales. We chose to perform random-effects analyses to deal with potential differences in the sample populations. The outcome of the meta-analysis showed that the weighted mean effect (indirect effect of birthplace on dependent variables) was significant for all four dependent variables (see Table 3).

Further, we ran a series of additional analyses to test alternative models, replacing group-based relative deprivation as the mediator with other key variables in our study (e.g., group-based anger, perceived injustice, and Muslim identification). Using these analyses, we showed that group-based relative deprivation was the most powerful candidate mediator for the effect of birthplace on violent intentions (for these and additional mediation analyses with alternative models, see Table S10 in the Supplemental Material).

We also wanted to rule out an alternative explanation for why birthplace relates to extremism, namely, low socioeconomic status (for the relation between socioeconomic status and other variables, see Table S9 in the Supplemental Material). Specifically, a recent report showed that 84 of the 150 Danish foreign fighters received public benefits such as welfare and unemployment benefits while being part of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (Jensen, 2018), which suggests that poor socioeconomic conditions may play a role after all. Therefore, we reran all mediation analyses in Studies 1 to 6 using socioeconomic status as a mediator instead of group-based relative deprivation. These analyses showed no indirect effect of birthplace on any of the dependent variables in any of the 24 analyses (four dependent variables in six studies; see Table S11 in the Supplemental Material). Thus, socioeconomic status is unlikely to explain why Western-born Muslims endorse violent collective action.

We now turn our attention to the Sri Lankan Tamils sample (Study 7), included to examine the discriminant validity of our findings. For correlations, reliabilities, and means (standard deviations) for the variables in Study 7, see Table S12. First, we examined mean scores of group-based relative deprivation across the seven studies by conducting a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with study number (1–7) as the independent variable and group-based relative deprivation as the dependent variable. Focusing on pairwise comparisons (Tukey's honestly significant difference test) with the Tamil sample, we found that this sample scored significantly lower on relative deprivation than all Muslim samples (see Table S13 in the Supplemental Material). Another one-way ANOVA with self-reported socioeconomic status (see Table S14 in the Supplemental Material) as the independent variable showed no differences

**Table 2.** Bootstrapped Unstandardized Coefficients From the Analyses With Group-Based Relative Deprivation as a Mediator Between Birthplace and the Four Variables Associated With Collective Violence (Studies 1–6)

Study	Muslim identification	Perceived injustice	Group-based anger	Violent behavioral intentions
1	0.44 (0.25) [−0.03, 0.99]	1.15 (0.32) [0.55, 1.84]	0.83 (0.33) [0.29, 1.58]	1.04 (0.43) [0.20, 1.91]
2	0.06 (0.08) [−0.08, 0.24]	0.07 (0.09) [−0.10, 0.27]	0.13 (0.14) [−0.15, 0.41]	0.04 (0.05) [−0.04, 0.16]
3	0.12 (0.06) [0.00, 0.26]	0.17 (0.09) [0.01, 0.38]	0.27 (0.14) [0.01, 0.57]	0.09 (0.05) [0.01, 0.22]
4	0.48 (0.10) [0.31, 0.69]	0.41 (0.08) [0.27, 0.60]	0.46 (0.09) [0.30, 0.66]	0.29 (0.08) [0.15, 0.47]
5	1.03 (0.22) [0.60, 1.45]	1.03 (0.20) [0.67, 1.44]	1.12 (0.23) [0.72, 1.62]	0.97 (0.24) [0.50, 1.46]
6	0.44 (0.11) [0.23, 0.65]	0.72 (0.10) [0.53, 0.92]	1.00 (0.11) [0.79, 1.24]	0.84 (0.11) [0.63, 1.07]

Note: The table shows standard errors in parentheses and 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Birthplace was coded 0 (foreign-born Muslims) or 1 (native-born Muslims or Muslims born in Western countries). All analyses were conducted using the PROCESS tool in SPSS with 5,000 bias-corrected bootstraps.

in socioeconomic status between the Sri Lankan Tamils sample and any of the other samples. Thus, although the Tamil and Muslim participants did not differ in socioeconomic status, the Tamil participants reported less group-based relative deprivation, the mechanism we proposed to explain why Western-born Muslims are disproportionately likely to endorse violent collective action.

Further analyses showed that birthplace was unrelated to all of the dependent variables in the Tamil sample (see Table S12). Thus, there were no mean differences in group-based relative deprivation, in-group identification, perceived injustice, group-based anger, or violent behavioral intentions as a function of birthplace. This outcome diverged from the Muslim samples in which native-born, compared with foreign-born,

Muslims scored significantly higher on the dependent variables in 22 of 24 comparisons (see Table 1). Further, although group-based relative deprivation (the mediator variable) correlated significantly with perceived injustice, group-based anger, and violent behavioral intentions, it was unrelated to group identification (which suggests that these participants do not believe that they are worse off specifically because of their Tamil identity). More importantly, mediation analyses showed no significant indirect effect of the independent variable (birthplace) on any of the dependent or outcome variables (see Table S15 in the Supplemental Material). These findings support the discriminant validity of our findings; the predicted mediation effect is valid for Muslims but not for other minority groups with similar socioeconomic status.

**Table 3.** Weighted Mean Indirect Effect of Birthplace on Each Collective-Action Variable With Group-Based Relative Deprivation as a Mediator (Studies 1–6)

Dependent variable	Weighted mean effect	SE	95% CI	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Muslim identification	0.38	0.11	[0.16, 0.60]	3.36	.001
Perceived injustice	0.53	0.14	[0.25, 0.80]	3.69	.001
Group-based anger	0.61	0.16	[0.29, 0.93]	3.74	.001
Violent behavioral intentions	0.43	0.13	[0.17, 0.69]	3.25	.001

Note: The table shows unstandardized indirect effects. CI = confidence interval.

Finally, we examined whether age and gender could be possible alternative explanations for our results. We reran all mediation analyses by adding gender as a covariate. These analyses showed no change in the pattern of results reported above (see Tables S16 and S17 in the Supplemental Material). In regard to age, our data included specific values for age only in Studies 4 to 7 (in the earlier studies, age was reported in 5-year spans, which allowed too little nuance for the current purpose). Thus, we reran all mediation analyses in Studies 4 to 7 by adding age as a covariate. These analyses showed no change in the pattern of results reported above (see Tables S18 and S19 in the Supplemental Material).

## Discussion

Results from six studies showed that, compared with foreign-born Muslims, native-born Muslims in Western countries scored higher on key determinants of extremism. Mediation analyses indicated that the link between birthplace and the four outcome variables is explained by group-based relative deprivation in most cases. The meta-analytic results and the diversity of our samples support the robustness and generalizability of our findings.

Although mediation is statistically indistinguishable from confounding (MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000), the latter is an implausible explanation here: Group-based relative deprivation could not possibly change a person's birthplace. Thus, if the association between birthplace and endorsement of violence is indirect by group-based relative deprivation, the findings point toward genuine mediation (born in Western countries → experience of group-based relative deprivation → greater endorsement of violence). Although we cannot rule out more complex causal structures from these data (Fiedler, Harris, & Schott, 2018), this causal flow is also consistent with existing explanations of Muslim radicalization (e.g., Sageman, 2008). We tested but did not find evidence of another potential mechanism, low socioeconomic status, to explain the differences between native-born and foreign-born Muslims.

In the final study, we further examined an immigrant group (Sri Lankan Tamils) with similar socioeconomic status to Muslims in Denmark to test the unique experience of being born as Muslim in Europe or the West. Hindu and Christian Tamils have certain appearances and cultural practices in common with Muslims, but unlike Muslims, they are not singled out in political rhetoric as a unique societal problem (Danmarks Statistik, 2017). The Tamils felt less deprived than the Muslim participants, and the deprivation they did experience was not associated with their Tamil identity. Being born

in Denmark did not make them extra vulnerable to feeling deprived, nor did it make them more at risk of extremism.

Our empirical research aligns with more anecdotal evidence that group-based relative deprivation is linked to extremism among some Muslims born in the West. Many second- and third-generation Muslims in the West, compared with other immigrant groups, struggle with feelings of deprivation (e.g., Adida et al., 2016), and it has been theoretically argued that this makes them vulnerable to extremist ideologies (e.g., Döring, 2007). Previous studies also have shown that the feeling of discrimination is most pervasive in societies with an exclusive self-image (Simonsen, 2016), in which it is more difficult for newcomers to feel welcome. The Western countries where our data were collected can indeed be perceived as such nations. Our findings further corroborate personal accounts of Western foreign fighters in Syria, who suggested that feelings of alienation and deprivation were among the main drivers behind foreign fighters' decision to travel to Syria and fight for the Islamic State (Lindekilde & Bertelsen, 2015). These analyses, together with our results, illustrate that the context of intergroup relations in host societies is a significant factor in explaining extremism.

## Caveats and Limitations

We do not claim that relative deprivation is the only cause of extremism or that deprivation will lead to violence in all cases. Our results highlight an antecedent of extremist violence among Western Muslims; they do not lead to the conclusion that Western Muslims are more violent than other people in Western countries. Nevertheless, our findings contribute to and complement a growing body of empirical and theoretical approaches to extremism that emphasizes the importance of social psychological processes as risk factors of extremism (e.g., Ellis & Abdi, 2017). For instance, our findings are in line with recent arguments that the loss of personal significance can lead some individuals to engage in violence to restore their psychological sense of significance (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2014).

Collecting data via the snowball method and from Facebook users may limit the generalizability of our results. Yet it is important to emphasize that the sheer size of Facebook's users implies that even the most underrepresented groups are relatively large. Second, we collected data among Muslims in more than 20 Western countries, providing further sampling heterogeneity, but we found the same pattern of results. It is important to note that although this type of sampling has limitations, this method remains one of the few ways to access a "hidden" subpopulation such as that in our samples.

Finally, one can argue that the uncertain legal status of some foreign-born Muslims may make them more vulnerable to deportation and hence affect their survey responses. However, if the mean differences between native-born and foreign-born participants were due to differential concerns about deportation, we could have expected to see the same pattern among the Sri Lankan Tamils; this suggests that deportation concerns do not explain our results.

## Concluding Remarks

Our results help explain why a major part of Islamist terrorist plots in the West have been coordinated by Muslims who were born and raised in Western societies. Ironically, the group-based inequality may motivate Western-born Muslims to ally with the very same militant groups that drove their families out of Muslim countries and into the West. Perhaps, then, the best advice to Westerners opposing Muslim immigration, and who are concerned about terrorism, is to treat Western-born Muslims with the same dignity that they grant to other minority groups (e.g., foreign Christians).

## Action Editor

Ayse K. Uskul served as action editor for this article.

## Author Contributions

M. Obaidi, R. Bergh, and N. Akrami developed the concept and design of the present research. M. Obaidi collected the data for Studies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7; G. Anjum collected the data for Study 6. M. Obaidi, R. Bergh, and N. Akrami analyzed the data and drafted the manuscript. All the authors participated in each round of revision. All the authors approved the final manuscript for submission.

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## Supplemental Material

Additional supporting information can be found at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0956797619834879>

## Open Practices



All data and materials have been made publicly available via the Open Science Framework and can be accessed at [osf.io/zny2m](http://osf.io/zny2m). The study was preregistered on AsPredicted, and a copy of the preregistration can be found on [osf.io/zny2m](http://osf.io/zny2m). The complete Open Practices Disclosure for this article can be found at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0956797619834879>. This article has received the badges for Open Data, Open Materials, and Preregistration. More information about the Open Practices badges can be found at <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/publications/badges>.

## Note

1. Previous research has documented somewhat different effects of group-based contempt and anger on nonnormative collective action (Obaidi, Bergh, et al., 2018; Tausch et al., 2011). Hence, in Studies 2 and 3, we measured both anger and contempt to address this discrepancy. Our results showed, however, that these two variables were highly correlated (e.g.,  $r = .87$ ). Therefore, we focused on anger alone to reduce multicollinearity.

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