

Running head: TERRORISM AND IDENTITY THREAT

Islamist terrorism as identity threat:

The case of ambivalent identification and self-stereotyping among Turkish Muslims

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Abstract

Terrorist attacks committed in 2003 by Turkish Islamist extremists threatened the social identity of Turkish Muslims by associating them with terrorism. Using a 2 x 3 experimental design, we categorized Turkish respondents and terrorists as members of a shared superordinate group (“Muslims”) or as members of separate subgroups. When sharing superordinate group membership with terrorists, less identified Turkish respondents experienced ambivalent identification, that is, they sought to maintain attachment to their group while simultaneously seeking distance from it. Ambivalent identification was reduced when respondents emphasized their typicality as members of a Muslim subgroup that did not include terrorists. The discussion focuses on ambivalent identification as a response to identity threat, and the implications for Islamist terrorism for the social identity of Muslims.

(122 words)

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In November 2003, Islamist terrorists carried out four destructive attacks in Turkey, killing 27 and injuring at least 450 people (U.S. Department of State, 2005; see also Cline, 2004). Although 99% of Turks are Muslim (CIA Factbook, 2005), the Turkish public expected the attackers to be Arabs as Turkish people were not known for their association with Islamist extremism. However, the realization that the terrorists were indeed Turkish Muslims posed a threat to the collective identity of Turks. Because the larger Turkish public and the terrorist shared the same social category membership (i.e., all were Turkish Muslims), all Turkish Muslims' religious identity was potentially tainted through their association with terrorism.

Much to the relief of the Turkish public, it was soon revealed that the attackers were members of a Muslim sect, known as Wahhabi, that is common in Saudi Arabia, but rare in Turkey, where the dominant Muslim denominations are Hanefi/Shaaafi Sunni and Alevi (Federal Research Division, 1995).¹ That is, although the Turkish public and the terrorists were both members of the same superordinate group, they were nevertheless members of different subgroups (their respective sects).

The present research examines the identity responses of Turkish Muslims to acts of terrorism committed by fellow Turks. Much research in the Muslim world has examined public support of Islamist terrorism, which is often only very limited (e.g., Kaltenthaler, Miller, Ceccoli & Gelleny, 2010; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). But although social identity has been linked to the emergence of terrorism (e.g., Schwartz, Dunkel & Waterman, 2009; Taylor & Louis, 2004), it is not yet clear what the impact is of terrorist acts committed in the name of Islam on those

¹ Technically, the people in Turkey are Alevi or Hanefi/Shaaafi Muslims, Hanefi/Shaaafi being subgroups within Sunni classification. However, these labels are not widely used among the Turkish public; instead the dominant Muslim sects are referred to as Alevi and Sunni.

Muslims who reject terrorism. How will peace-loving Muslims perceive their own religious identity when this very identity is being tainted by an association with terrorism? The answer to this question has potential implications for Islam as a group identity, its ability to unite Muslims in opposition to terrorism and the potential threat from sectarianism.

Social identity management in response to threat

Social identity theory states that people are motivated to maintain a positive and distinct identity, with the social value of group memberships having implications for one's personal sense of self (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Objectionable behaviors of deviant ingroup members threaten the reputation or positive evaluation of one's own identity. If this occurs, members tend to deploy a range of strategies aimed at re-establishing the value of their group. The literature distinguishes two general types of identity management strategies, which differ based on the target of change: *collective responses* and *individual responses* to identity threat (e.g., Blanz, Mummendey, Mielke & Klink, 1998; Breinlinger & Kelly, 1994; Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers, Doosje & Spears, 2002). *Collective responses* are aimed at re-establishing the positive value of the group in light of the threat. These include rejecting the identity threat as being baseless, or by removing the offender from the ingroup. For instance, the accusations of terrorism against ingroup members may be rejected as invalid, especially when doubts can be raised. If the evidence is unambiguous that wrongdoing did occur on the part of ingroup members, people often try to separate or ex-communicate the offending ingroup members from the ingroup (see the so-called black sheep effect; e.g., Kerr, Hymes, Anderson & Weathers, 1995; Marques & Paez, 1994). Overall, collective responses allow individual group members to defend the reputation of the group while maintaining their existing level of attachment to their ingroup.

Alternatively, members might choose an *individual response*, which aims at protecting one's personal sense of self from the association with the tainted group identity. Especially when

one's commitment to the group is weak or when a collective response is difficult, members seek to distance themselves from their ingroup (e.g., Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1997, 2002). Such a process of distancing is frequently achieved through the process of disidentification whereby ingroup members either downplay the group's importance to the self or stress that they are different from other group members (e.g. Doosje, Spears & Ellemers, 2002; Spears et al., 1997).

Terrorism and social identity threat

It is easy to see that the terrorist attacks of November 2003 posed an identity threat to Turkish Muslims. The association with terrorists threatened both the distinctiveness and the positivity of their identity as a pro-Western, democratic, yet Muslim people. How did Turks respond? In the first investigation on this issue, Uz, Kimmelmeier, and Yetkin (2009) confronted Turkish participants with reminders of the November 2003 attacks only weeks after the events. Adapting an approach by Stapel, Koomen and Spears (1999), the authors manipulated the psychological distance between terrorists and respondents by varying how terrorists were categorized and how respondents themselves were categorized in the questionnaire.² Terrorists were either labeled "Muslims" (a superordinate group shared with respondents) or as "Wahhabis" (a subordinate group not shared with respondent). Likewise, respondents were either addressed as "Muslim" (a superordinate group shared with terrorists) or as "Alevi/Sunni" (a subordinate group not shared with terrorists). Even though the recent attacks were fresh on respondents' minds, Uz et al. (2009) did not observe any disidentification effects even as the psychological distance between respondent and terrorists increased, and the motivation to dissociate oneself from the tainted category of Muslims increased. That is, regardless of whether terrorists and respondents were members of two non-overlapping categories (Wahhabis vs.

² In 2011 and 2012 an independent commission determined that Diederik Stapel falsified much of his published data (<https://www.commissielevelt.nl/>). The paper by Stapel et al. (1999) was also examined, but notably the commission did not find any evidence of fraud.

Alevi/Sunnis) or whether they were members of the same category (both Muslims), the Turkish Muslim respondents did not reduce their level of identification as Muslims.

In the absence of any individual response to the identity threat, one would have expected the Turkish respondents to engage in a collective identity management strategy in order to restore the value of the group. Because the terrorists reflected negatively on Turkish Muslims as a whole, a collective response might have occurred through an especially harsh condemnation of the terrorists when respondents found themselves uncomfortably close and as part of the same superordinate group. However, Uz et al. (2009) did not observe such a “black sheep effect,” presumably because, across experimental condition, their respondents were nearly unanimous in condemning the attacks. But in the absence of any individual or collective response, did the findings by Uz et al. (2009) imply that Turkish Muslims did not care about their identity?

Additional evidence revealed that sharing a superordinate group membership with mass murderers did indeed increase Turkish Muslim's motivation to distance themselves from this very group. When Muslim respondents found themselves sharing the same superordinate group with Muslim terrorists, the level of conflict or tension associated with one's own Muslim identity increased, a phenomenon that Uz et al. (2009) characterized as *ambivalent identification*, indicating that being closely associated with terrorists did have important consequences for the religious identity of Turkish Muslims.

Ambivalent identification

Ambivalence refers to the simultaneous presence of positive and negative evaluations, which are in conflict with each other (e.g. Priester & Petty, 1996). Entertaining such mixed feelings toward the same attitude object is often experienced as tension (e.g., Newby-Clark, McGregor & Zanna, 2002). The literature offers several suggestions regarding how to measure ambivalence. Typically, researchers assess positive/approach tendencies separately from

negative/avoidance tendencies and subsequently combine the two unipolar measurements into an index of ambivalence (Priester & Petty, 1996; Thompson & Zanna, 1995). Such ambivalence indices can be understood as reflecting evaluative conflict. Intergroup research has long relied on such indices to tap the complexity in individuals' attitudes toward various groups (e.g., Jost & Burgess, 2000; Mucchi-Faina, Pacilli, Pagliaro, & Alparone, 2009; Pagliaro, Alparone, Pacilli & Mucchi-Faina, 2012).

The present research seeks to apply the concept and measurement of ambivalence to identification with one's ingroup. Similar to attitudinal ambivalence reflecting mixed feelings about an attitude object, ambivalent identification seeks to capture conflict in individuals' identification with an ingroup. We argue that individuals sometimes feel a sense of commitment to the ingroup, while wishing to distance themselves from the very same group. Such a conflict between wanting to associate with and wanting to dissociate oneself from the group might be a common experience when one's group's reputation is seriously tarnished, but group exit is not readily possible. For instance, Kimmelmeier and Uz (2013) demonstrated that Americans experienced increased ambivalent identification when reminded of the Abu Ghraib scandal of 2004, in which the systematic abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American military personnel caused profound damage to the U.S.'s image in the world. Indeed, ambivalent identification allows members to remain committed to the ingroup while acknowledging aspects of the ingroup that motivate them to distance themselves from it. As such, ambivalent identification might be a third, qualitatively different response to identity threat. Indeed, findings by Uz et al. (2009) suggest that the identity conflict tapped by ambivalent identification is not apparent on measures of individual or collective responding to identity threat.

The present research

The present research expands on Uz et al. (2009) by examining responses of Turkish

Muslims in light of the identity threat posed by Islamist terrorists.³ Our research had five distinct objectives, which resulted in the same number of hypotheses.

First, our goal was to demonstrate that the concept of ambivalent identification allows us to capture responses to identity threat that are not already reflected in existing measures of individual and collective responses. Specifically, we hypothesized measures of ambivalent identification not to be redundant with other measures of ingroup attachment (*Hypothesis 1*). Naturally, the constructs of social identification and ambivalent identification can be expected to correlate, simply because social identification is one of two constituent elements of the concept of ambivalent identification (alongside disidentification). Nevertheless, these two constructs are analytically distinct.

Second, we tested the hypothesis that, when psychological distance is low and Turkish Muslim respondents find themselves sharing the same superordinate group with Muslim terrorists, their identification with the superordinate group of Muslims becomes laden with conflict. Conversely, ambivalent identification should be diminished as psychological distance is increased. Thus, the greater the shared category membership between the self and the terrorists, the more ambivalent one will feel about one's identification with the shared ingroup (*Hypothesis 2*).

The third goal of the present study was to investigate if ingroup identification would moderate the emergence of ambivalent identification. By definition, ambivalent identification is the result of the co-occurrence of an individual response (distancing oneself from the ingroup) and a collective response (affirming one's attachment to the ingroup) in the face of identity threat. Much research has documented that an individual response to identity threat is more typical for those with low levels of commitment to the group than for those with high levels of

³ Aspects of our research replicate Uz et al. (2009), but we offer critical improvements. Uz et al. did not fully cross the categorization of Turkish respondents and the categorization of terrorists. The present research corrected this omission, in addition to using expanded measures of social identification and ambivalent identification.

commitment to the group (e.g. Ellemers et al., 2002). Recent research by Pagliaro et al. (2012) on the effects of identity threat found higher levels of ingroup ambiguity among low identifiers compared to high identifiers, though this study focused on ambiguity in one's evaluation of the ingroup, not ingroup attachment. However, if ambivalent identification represents a way for ingroup members to distance themselves from the ingroup, it should be more likely to occur among low identifiers (cf. Ellemers et al., 2002). Low identifiers might not always be able to deny their relationship to a particular social identity, for instance, because group boundaries are impermeable (as in the case of race) or because, whether they want it or not, the group is too important a part of their biography (as in the case of religion or national origin). As a result, we predicted that primarily low identifiers, but not high identifiers, would experience increased ambivalent identification when exposed to identity threat (*Hypothesis 3*).

A fourth goal of our research was to test a prediction concerning how identity threat impacts group members' perceptions of similarity to others in their group. Hornsey and Hogg (1999) documented that self-stereotyping (i.e., the degree to which one perceives oneself to be similar to the typical member of a group) is often deployed as an identity management strategy. When one's group or social category includes undesirable members, individuals often emphasize their membership in a subgroup in order to differentiate themselves from these deviants. One's shared membership in the superordinate group might be beyond one's control, but emphasizing one's similarity to a specific subset of group members emphasizes the differences between the self and the deviants (assuming that the deviants are members of a different subgroup). Applied to the present case, when sharing the same superordinate group with terrorists, Turkish Muslims should be more likely to emphasize their similarity with their religious subgroup (Alevi/Sunnis) because it renders them distinct from the subgroup of the terrorists. Affirming one's typicality in a particular subgroup (religious sect) alleviates some of the threat arising from the superordinate

group (Muslims) as it highlights the heterogeneity of the latter (cf. Doosje, Ellemers & Spears, 1995). Self-stereotyping regarding the superordinate group, on the other hand, is not a differentiation strategy; rather, the literature demonstrates that it is sometimes a way in which high identifiers express group solidarity under threat (e.g. Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). Thus, it should not vary as a function of the group membership of respondents and terrorists. In short, we predicted that, when being categorized with terrorists, Turkish Muslims would increase self-stereotyping with regard to their religious subgroup, whereas self-stereotyping with regard to the superordinate group should not vary as a function of the same experimental manipulation (*Hypothesis 4*).

Lastly, we hypothesized that, to the extent that Turkish Muslims engage in one or the other identity responses, there should be less need to engage in the other (cf. Eidelman & Biernat, 2003). To the extent that Turkish Muslims feel that they are typical members of their subgroup, and thus different from the terrorists and their subgroup, they should feel less ambivalence with regard to their membership in the superordinate group, and vice versa. Thus, especially when identity threat is high, there should be a negative correlation between self-stereotyping as a member of one's sect and ambivalent identification as Muslims (*Hypothesis 5*).

Method

Participants

A total of 237 mostly undergraduate students (114 females, 117 males, 6 did not provide this information) at Hacettepe University, a large public university in Ankara, Turkey, participated in this study during December 2006. A local research assistant approached individuals and small groups on various campus locations and asked them complete a brief questionnaire. The mean age was 21.99 years ($SD = 3.42$; range 18-54), though roughly one third of respondents failed to provide any age information. In prior research it was established that all

students at this university were either Alevi or Sunni (Uz et al., 2009).

Procedure and design

Students were invited to participate in a study on religious identity. We used a 2 (Respondent: Superordinate vs. subordinate group) x 3 (Target: Superordinate group vs. subordinate group vs. control) factorial design. The introduction to the questionnaire was identical to Uz et al. (2009) and referred to the student respondents either as “Muslim” or “Alevi/Sunni”, and the terrorists either as “Muslim” or “Wahhabi”:

“This study addresses how the behaviors of members of other Muslim sects [other Muslims] affect Alevi/Sunnis [Muslims]. As you know, in November 2003 members of the Wahhabi sect [Muslims] committed a number of bombing attacks in Istanbul. We are interested in how this event affected your identity as an Alevi/Sunni [Muslim].

In the control condition, the questionnaires did not include this introduction and did not mention terrorists or the 2003 attacks. Instead respondents read as introductory statements: “We are interested in how you feel about your identity as an Alevi/Sunni [Muslim].”

Approval of the attacks. Respondents, except those in control condition, were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the actions of the terrorists. Using a 9-point scale to indicate their agreement, respondents answered the question: “Do you approve of the deeds committed by Wahhabis [Muslims] in November 2003 in Istanbul?” with 1 *not at all* and 9 *definitely yes*.

Ingroup identification. Four questions, which were adapted from various previous research (e.g. Cameron, 2004; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) addressed religious identification: “My religion is part of my identity,” “Being a member of this religious group is important for me,” “I feel strong ties with people in my religion,” and “I feel myself close to people from my religion” ($\alpha = .89$). Consistent with recurrent themes in the literature on social identification (Cameron, 2004; Leach et al., 2008), the first two items tap the centrality of the group to the self,

and the second two address one's connectedness to the group. Respondents used a 9-point scale to indicate whether a statement applied to them, with 1 *not at all* and 9 *definitely yes*.

Ambivalent Identification. We used three sets of items that consisted of two diametrically opposite statements, with only the first set of items having been employed by Uz et al. (2009) before: "I am glad that I belong to this religious group" vs. "I would rather belong to another religious group"; "Being a member of this group makes me feel tense" vs. "Being a member of this religious group makes me feel calm", and "I see myself as belonging to this religious group" vs. "I see myself apart from this religious group." All sets were constructed such that one item implied the semantic opposite of the other item.

We computed ambivalence ratings for each pair based on Thompson, Zanna and Griffin's (1995) Similarity Intensity Model and Priester and Petty's (1996) Gradual Threshold Model. To do so, we first identified the dominant (D) and conflicting (C) evaluative responses for each pair of evaluations of one's group membership, with D being the numerically higher rating and C being the numerically lower rating of the two. For instance, if participants responded by marking a 7 when answering how glad they are to be a member of their religious group, but with a 5 in response to the statement that they would rather be a member of a different group, the $D = 7$ and $C = 5$. That is, the response to "I am glad that I belong to this religious group" was designated as the dominant response, and the response to "I would rather belong to another religious group" was designated as the conflicting response, since the former has a higher rating than the latter. These scores were the basis for the computation of two measures of ambivalent identification. First, the Similarity Intensity Model, SIM (Thompson et al., 1995) model considers both the similarity of dominant and conflicting reactions (i.e., their difference) as well as their intensity. That is, the difference between D and C grows to be larger as the conflicting response becomes more extreme. SIM would take on values between -6 (no ambivalence) to 15 (complete

ambivalence):

$$\text{SIM: Ambivalence} = 3C - D.$$

Second, according to the Graduate Threshold Model, GTM (Priester & Petty, 1996) ambivalence is a joint function of dominant and conflicting reactions when the conflicting component is weak. However, once the conflicting reaction exceeds a certain threshold, ambivalence is considered to be exclusively a function of the conflicting reaction. GTM would take on values between -4 (no ambivalence) to 18 (complete ambivalence):

$$\text{GTM: Ambivalence} = 5C^{.5} - D^{1/C}.$$

Both measures produce outcomes that are consistent with each other and other measures of ambivalence (Jost & Burgess, 2000; Uz et al., 2009).

Subjective ambivalence. All students were asked to report on the extent to which they subjectively experienced ambivalence when thinking about their religious group. Participants responded to the statement “I have mixed feelings about being a member of this religious group” (see Newby-Clark, McGregor & Zanna, 2002; Sparks, Hedderley, & Shepherd, 1992 for similar approaches to elicit self-reports of ambivalence). Because this variable did not yield any experimental effects (all $F_s < 1$) these are not reported further.

Self-stereotyping. To capture how typical or representative participants perceived themselves to be of their groups we used two versions of an item adapted from Kashima, Kashima and Hardie (2000): “I am a typical Muslim”, and “I am a typical Alevi/Sunni.” The first item taps into self-stereotyping with regard to the superordinate group, whereas the second item refers to self-stereotyping with regard to the subgroup.

Results

Relationship between measures. Table 1 (center panel) summarizes the correlations between variables. Similar to previous research that found attitudes and measures of attitudinal

ambivalence to be related (e.g., Armitage & Conner 2000; Jonas, Diehl & Brömer, 1997; Priester & Petty, 1996; Ullrich, Schermelleh-Engel & Böttcher, 2008), ingroup identification and ambivalent identification (measured via SIM and GTM) were substantially correlated, pointing to the need of taking into account one variable when examining the other. The high correlation between self-stereotyping as Muslim and self-stereotyping as Sunni/Alevi highlighted a similar issue. Moreover, as expected based on the literature (e.g., Spears et al., 1997), identification measures were associated with greater self-stereotyping, whereas higher levels of ambivalence were negatively related to these measures. A principal component analysis resulted in two orthogonal factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1, which accounted for 75.6% of the variance. Both a varimax rotation, which assumes factors to be orthogonal, as well an oblimin rotation, which resulted in the two factors being correlated ($r = -.32$), revealed the same factor structure (see Table 1). The first factor captured mostly self-stereotyping, and the second factor ambivalence; however, ingroup identification loaded on both, though mostly on the self-stereotyping factor. This pattern is consistent with *Hypothesis 1* which predicted ambivalent identification to not be redundant with other measures of ingroup attachment.

Approval of the attacks was not correlated with any other variable, all $ps > .13$, except self-stereotyping as Sunni, $r = .18$, $p = .027$. When added to the above principal component analysis, the approval variable loaded on its own unique factor.

Approval of the attacks. Similar to Uz et al. (2009), approval of attacks was very low ($M = 1.34$, $Md = 1$) with less than 3% ($n = 7$) of respondents checking a response at or above the scale midpoint (a rating of 5 or higher on the 9-point scale). Experimental variations in psychological closeness to the terrorists did not produce variation in the rejection of ingroup deviations, all $Fs < 1.7$, $p > .20$, which would have been indicative of a collective identity management responses. Because our research was predicated on the idea that the attacks

represented a threat to respondents' religious identity, we excluded the seven respondents who approved of the attacks, as well as three participants who did not answer this question.

Ingroup Identification. Recall that disidentification is an individual identity management response by which respondents distance themselves from a tainted group membership. When submitting the religious identification index to the 2 (Respondent) x 3 (Target) factorial analysis, there were no significant effects, all $F < 1$, $p > .65$, which did not change when we controlled for ambivalent identification. The fact that the distribution was normal with $M = 5.09$ ($SD = 2.27$) makes it unlikely that the absence of any disidentification was merely the result of a floor effect. Overall, this pattern is consistent with result by Uz et al. (2009) that religious identification did not vary as a function of psychological closeness to the terrorists.

Ambivalent identification. Submitting the ambivalent identification indices to the same 2 x 3 analysis, while controlling for ingroup identification, the expected Respondent by Target interaction was significant, SIM $F(1, 218) = 3.93$, $p = .021$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$ and GTM $F(1, 218) = 4.23$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that, when the respondents were categorized as Alevi/Sunni, there was no difference in ambivalent identification as a function of target categorization, $F < 1$. But when respondents were categorized as Muslims, referring to the attackers as Muslims resulted in higher levels of ambivalent identification compared to when the attackers were characterized as Wahhabi, both SIM and GTM $p = .001$, or compared to the control group, in which the attackers had not been mentioned at all, both $p < .005$ (see Table 2). This finding confirmed our *Hypothesis 2* according to which ambivalent identification was expected to be greatest when both respondents and terrorists are categorized in the same superordinate category.

Beyond simply controlling for ingroup identification, and similar to Pagliaro et al. (2012), we tested if this variable moderated the experimental effects on ambivalent identification

by adding all pertinent interactions as continuous predictor to the above design.⁴ Aside from a Respondent main effect, SIM $F(1, 213) = 4.49, p = .035$ and $\eta_p^2 = .02$, GTM $F(1, 213) = 4.31, p = .039, \eta_p^2 = .02$, the Respondent x Target interaction already reported above, SIM $F(1, 213) = 5.84, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .05$ and GTM $F(1, 213) = 4.47, p = .013, \eta_p^2 = .04$, there was a Respondent by ingroup identification interaction, SIM $F(1, 213) = 3.65, p = .057, \eta_p^2 = .02$ and GTM $F(1, 213) = 3.97, p = .048, \eta_p^2 = .02$. All effects were further qualified by a Respondent x Target x ingroup identification interaction, which was anticipated by our *Hypothesis 3*, SIM $F(1, 213) = 3.61, p = .029, \eta_p^2 = .03$ and GTM $F(1, 213) = 2.39, p = .095, \eta_p^2 = .02$. Diagnosing this three-way interaction revealed that the pattern summarized in Table 2 was pronounced among low identifiers, whereas among high identifiers there were no reliable differences between the six cells of the design. For instance, when responding to terrorists labeled as Muslims, for respondents high in ingroup identification (+1 SD above the mean) it did not matter whether they themselves were categorized as fellow Muslims or as Alevi/Sunni (SIM $M = -3.83$ vs. -3.61 ; GTM $M = -0.92$ vs. -0.80), $p > .84$. However, for respondents low in ingroup identification (-1 SD below the mean) ambivalent identification was drastically increased when they found themselves categorized as Muslims alongside the terrorists compared to when they were categorized as Alevi/Sunni (SIM $M = 3.07$ vs. -1.06 ; GTM $M = 5.52$ vs. 1.40), $p < .001$. In the face of identity threat, operationalized through shared categorization of the self alongside Islamist terrorists, ambivalent identification increased only among those with low levels of commitment to the ingroup. This pattern confirmed *Hypothesis 3*'s prediction that increases in ambivalent identification would occur primarily among respondents low in ingroup identification.

⁴ Ingroup identification was assessed after the experimental manipulation, implying that, if it was itself influenced by the manipulation, it cannot qualify as a moderator variable. As reported, there were no experimental effects on ingroup identification, nor did we find any variation in the size of correlation between ingroup identification and other variables across the different cells of the design. Thus, its use as a moderator is justified.

Self-stereotyping. We submitted respondents' ratings of self-typicality as Muslim and self-typicality as Alevi/Sunni to the 2 x 3 factorial design. As anticipated by *Hypothesis 4*, self-typicality as Muslims did not show any significant effect, all F s < 2.00, $p > .16$, $\eta_p^2 < .01$. That is, one's perceived similarity to the superordinate group did not change as a function of whether participants were categorized to be psychologically distant from or close to the terrorists, presumably because self-stereotyping in the superordinate group is not a differentiation strategy.

For self-typicality as Alevi/Sunni, the interaction effect predicted by *Hypothesis 4* did not reach significance, $F(2, 213) = 1.67$, $p = .19$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. However, the analysis revealed a target main effect, $F(2, 213) = 3.98$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Regardless of how respondents themselves were categorized, when the terrorists were categorized as Muslims, participants considered themselves to be more typical Alevi/Sunnis ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 2.66$) compared to when the terrorists were categorized as Wahhabi ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 2.92$), $p = .016$, or the control condition ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 2.78$), $p = .013$. This finding partially supported *Hypothesis 4* in the sense that it confirmed that self-stereotyping in their subgroup allowed our Turkish respondents to differentiate themselves from the overly inclusive superordinate group (cf. Hornsey & Hogg, 1999). These findings held when self-typicality as a Muslim was controlled in the analysis of self-typicality as an Alevi/Sunni. Additional analyses showed that, unlike in earlier research (Spears et al., 1997), ingroup identification did not moderate the effect of identity threat on self-stereotyping.

The relation between self-stereotyping and ambivalent identification. Recall that *Hypothesis 5* predicted that, to the extent that our Turkish respondents would engage in one identity response (e.g., seeking distance from one's ingroup through ambivalent identification), the less there should be a need to engage in another (e.g. emphasizing one's distinctness as a member of one's subgroup). We calculated correlations between self-stereotyping and ambivalent identification for each cell of the design. Across the six cells of the factorial design

there was a modest, negative correlation (see Table 3). The only exception was the condition in which identity threat was highest, when it was made salient to respondents that they shared membership in a social group (Muslims) with the terrorists. In this condition, perceiving oneself as a typical member of a subgroup was strongly linked to lower levels of ambivalent identification, SIM $r = -.78$ and GTM $r = -.80$, both $p < .00001$. A series of comparisons revealed that each of these correlation coefficients were larger than those in any of the remaining five cells of the design, SIM all $p < .001$ and GTM all $p < .003$. This did not change when self-typicality as a Muslim was controlled. This pattern is consistent with *Hypothesis 5* in that greater self-stereotyping in the subgroup was related to lower levels of identity conflict with regard to the superordinate group. Conversely, when self-stereotyping as Alevi/Sunni was low, our Turkish Muslim participants had to face the fact that they share the same superordinate group with terrorists—which was related to increased ambivalence about being a Muslim. The strength of this association did not vary between individuals high or low in ingroup identification.

Discussion

This research examined the implications of Islamist terrorism on the way Muslims relate to their religious identity. For this purpose, we varied psychological closeness by manipulating how the terrorists and the Turkish Muslim respondents were categorized. We found evidence that, despite the near unanimous rejection of the terrorists, levels of ambivalent identification increased when identity threat was high. When it was uncomfortably salient to participants that they as Turkish Muslims shared membership in the same social group with mass murderers, respondents experienced greater ambivalence in their identification with Muslims.

At the same time, there was no evidence for the type of individual or collective responses to identity threat previously documented in the literature. Specifically, there was no evidence of a collective response that might have consisted of a harsher condemnation of the terrorist attacks

when respondents were categorized alongside the terrorists. Alternatively, one might have expected an increase in ingroup identification as it is often found for stigmatized groups for whom identity threat may produce expressions of solidarity and unity (e.g. Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Ellemers et al., 2002); however, no such effect occurred. Moreover, there was no evidence of a distancing from the group that might have expressed itself in a disidentification from the group—a typical individual identity management strategy (cf. Blanz et al., 1998; Eidelman & Biernat, 2003). Rather, responses to identity threat were captured uniquely by our ambivalent identification variables, which tapped simultaneously occurring approach and avoidance tendencies with regard to one's commitment to a group.

Arguably, ambivalent identification has to be characterized as an individual identity response because it reflects how an individual group member reorients himself or herself vis-à-vis the group, rather than a group member seeking to re-establish the value and reputation of the group (Blanz et al., 1998). This was corroborated by the observation that only individuals low in ingroup identification, but not those high in ingroup identification, exhibited elevated levels of ambivalent identification—consistent with low identifiers being more likely than high identifiers to choose individual identity management strategies (e.g., Ellemers et al., 2002 for a review). Whereas it is not clear why low identifiers did not simply disidentify under threat, it has to be suspected that one's religious identity is complex. Even when one's personal commitment to the faith is low, one's religious background may not be considered something that the individual can change about themselves as it also shapes one's cultural worldview and outlook on life (cf. Cohen & Hill, 2007). Thus, respondents may not have distanced themselves from their Muslim identity and instead accepted that this identity became fraught with tension.

Interestingly, high identifiers did not show any evidence of a collective identity management response. Does this mean that that this group was not affected by the terrorist

attacks of November 2003? We do not believe this to be the case, especially in light of the public outcry that followed these events in Turkey. The rejection of the deviant terrorists might have been not sensitive enough in the face of the near consensual rejection of the atrocities. However, one should not forget that, regardless of levels of ingroup identification, all respondents were more likely to consider themselves as more typical for their subgroup when the terrorists were categorized as Muslims. For high identifiers this may have represented a collective identity response if they also considered their own sect (Alevi/Sunnis) as better representatives of the overarching categories of Muslims than the sect of the terrorists (Wahhabis). Considering one's own peace-loving subgroup as more typical for what Islam and Muslims are all about may provide a back-door way of protecting the social value and reputation of the superordinate category. It is up to future research to examine this possibility.

The present research is among the first studies to highlight the utility of the ambivalent identification concept (see also Uz et al., 2009; Kimmelmeier & Uz, 2013). This construct seeks to capture what students of intergroup relations have been known for a long time: That people may be supportive of and loyal to their ingroups, yet acknowledge negative aspects of their social identity. This is perhaps most evident in the literature on patriotism which distinguishes blind and constructive patriotism, with the latter kind acknowledging negative as well as positive aspects in one's group or nation (Schatz & Staub, 1997; Schatz, Staub & Lavine, 1999; see also Bar-Tal, 1997). However, the concept of ambivalent identification is broader as it is primarily based on a methodological tool borrowed from research on attitudinal ambivalence, which merely requires the use of opposite-valenced pairs of items that tap the same semantic dimensions (e.g. Priester & Petty, 1996). As such, the concept of ambivalent identification is flexible and can be used for a diverse set of purposes when researchers wish to know about the degree of conflict that individuals associate with their membership in a group.

Note that Ullrich et al. (2008) recently challenged measures of attitudes ambivalence, arguing that many findings produced with measures such as the SIM must be considered statistical artifacts. Ullrich et al. (2008) exclusively focused on studies that examined ambivalence as moderator variable; this criticism does not apply to investigations in which ambivalence is treated as an outcome measure, as was the case in the present research. Moreover, Ullrich et al.'s (2008) central concern, that measures of attitudinal ambivalence are necessarily confounded by (univalent) attitudes, does not apply in the present context—to the contrary. We not only treated ambivalent identification as an outcome variable, but we also controlled for ingroup identification; thus, ambivalent identification was not merely an aspect of ingroup identification.

Another important aspect of the present findings is that, when Muslim respondents find themselves in the same social category as Muslim terrorists, ambivalent identification is strongly and negatively related to self-stereotyping in the subgroup. That is, whereas for some of our Turkish respondents the salience of the shared group membership with terrorists increased ambivalent identification, for others this increased self-stereotyping with regard to their particular Muslim sect. Both are responses to a threatened identity, but the former implies shouldering the burden of all that is associated with one's group membership, whereas the latter implies emphasizing one's distinctness from a superordinate group that also includes the terrorists. Future studies should examine the conditions under which these different identity responses can be substituted for one another.

Eidelman and Biernat (2003) argued that, when facing an identity threat, participants seize upon the first opportunity that offers itself to fend off the threat, regardless whether that opportunity reflects an individual or a collective identity management strategy. Our research did not confirm Eidelman and Biernat's (2003) finding that the mere rejection of an ingroup deviant (a collective response) is a sufficient identity management strategy as to obviate further identity

responses. Unlike Eidelman and Biernat (2003), the present research did not find any evidence for disidentification (an individual response), but we nevertheless documented the emergence of ambivalent identification and, alternatively, self-stereotyping with the subgroup even after participants had the opportunity to distance themselves from the terrorists. We submit that, even three years later, our Turkish Muslim respondents felt the identity implications of the terrorist attacks very keenly, and were highly motivated to distance themselves from the attacks.

Depending on the salience of the group membership of the terrorist, self-stereotyping with one's subgroup seemed to allow individuals to respond to the fact that terrorists who were "Muslims" were psychologically closer to them than when they were "Wahhabis." Emphasizing their own likeness to a typical Alevi/Sunni allowed participants to differentiate their own identity from that of the over-inclusive groups of Muslims. At the same time, it is not entirely clear why respondents' own categorization as Muslim or Alevi/Sunni was inconsequential for one's self-stereotyping as Alevi/Sunni. Potentially, the inclination to self-stereotype as Alevi/Sunni when identity threat was greatest (both oneself and the terrorists were categorized as Muslims) was matched by the fact that, in the Alevi/Sunni condition, this particular subgroup identity was simply more salient. Identity salience tends to be associated with increased self-stereotyping (e.g., Hogg & Turner, 1987). Therefore, we speculate that when our Turkish respondents were asked to think about themselves as Alevi/Sunni, they also engaged in increased self-stereotyping with their subgroup, and this may have counteracted the expected interaction effect.

Yet, the condition in which Muslim respondents found themselves in the same superordinate group as the Muslim terrorist (i.e. when identity threat was greatest) did have clear implications for self-stereotyping. Thinking about oneself as a stereotypical Alevi/Sunni was associated with substantially lower levels of ambivalent identification with Muslims. This relationship was substantially reduced in all other experimental condition where identity threat

was weaker. This pattern supports the contention that self-stereotyping in this context seemed to serve as a tool for subgroup differentiation (Hornsey & Hogg, 1999).⁵

Implications

In the aftermath of two decades of Islamist terrorism (starting with the first World Trade Center bombing of 1993), Westerners are often highly skeptical of Muslims and consider them to be accepting of terrorism (Fischer, Greitemeyer & Kastenmüller, 2007; Raiya, Pargament, Mahoney & Trevino, 2008; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). Rather than allowing the imagination to run wild, the present findings provide a better understanding of how Muslims respond to terrorism committed in the name of Islam. At the very foundation, the Turkish Muslims on whom the present research focused, like the majority of Muslims in the world, reject terrorism (cf. Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). Being associated with terrorists presents a threat to their religious identity and, at least among low identifying Muslims, we observed an increase in ambivalence about one's identification with this group. Yet, there was no evidence that Muslims jettisoned their Muslim identity because of any association with terrorism. Likely, one's religion or religious background is too important an aspect of one's cultural being in a society, even when one is not totally committed to the faith (e.g., Cohen & Hill, 2007). Indeed, it appears that, even for some less identified Turkish Muslims, terrorism affirmed their religious identity in the sense that they considered themselves a more typical member of their sect. In this sense, responses to Islamist terrorism might serve to strengthen the religious identity of Muslims regardless of their level of commitment to their faith. This is consistent with the argument of Durkheim (1895/1964) who argued that deviance (terrorism, by implication) serves to define the moral boundaries of a

⁵ Note that this pattern is consistent with the explanation offered concerning the absence of an interaction effect for self-stereotyping as an Alevi/Sunni. When self-stereotyping is a response to identity threat (in the Muslim/Muslim condition), then ambivalent identification can be fended off by differentiating oneself as a member of a subgroup, and there should be a strong native relationship. However, when self-stereotyping as a subgroup member is merely the result of this particular subgroup being salient (when the Muslim identity of the terrorists and one's own Alevi/Sunni is highlighted), then no such negative correlation would be expected.

community and often unites it in opposition. Thus, with terrorist acts perpetrated by Islamist highlighting the religious identity of peace-loving Muslims, Islam itself might be the most powerful force to prevent the spread of terrorism and its ideology among Muslims.

On the other hand, there are often substantial efforts to protect one's religious identity from the adverse implications of being linked with Islamist extremism, an approach that corresponds to what Tajfel and Turner (1986) called "social creativity." For instance, in the Turkish case the Turkish media quickly suggested terms such as "Middle Eastern Islam," "Mediterranean Islam" or "liberal Islam," in order to insulate Turkish Islam from more radical forms (e.g. Berkan, 2003). Thus, when confronted with threats, Muslims are likely to preserve their identity, especially when their religion is being claimed by deviant members who declare to be acting in the name of the faith as a whole (as is often the case for Islamist extremists). This hints at the social importance of Muslim identity, especially in a traditionally secular country such as Turkey, where a resurgence of Islam over the last decades has exposed religion as an increasingly potent force in the political process (e.g., Keyman, 2007). But to the extent that Muslim identity is defined in contradistinction to Islamist terrorist, this implies that the risk of Islamist terrorists emerging from a country such as Turkey is reduced, even when the increased importance of religion seems to weaken aspects of the secular state (Grigoriadis, 2009).

Still, the present research also revealed a finding with possibly troubling implications. Muslims are a group that includes roughly one billion individuals who form a large variety of sects and other groups (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007); moreover, there are many divisions among Muslims based on religious tradition and practice (e.g., Lie & Verkuyten, 2012). The present study hinted that Islamist terrorist attacks have the potential of fostering sectarianism where Muslims of one sect emphasize the distinctness of their own religious faction from that of the sect of the attackers. The same finding might also reveal a certain irony: Even when religiously-

motivated terrorism seems to challenge one's identity as a peace-loving Muslim, the terrorism might end up affirming one's religious identity at the level of the subgroup, and potentially lead to polarization and sectarianism (see also Rutchick & Eccleston, 2010). It is easy to see how Islamist terrorism might not only hurt the individuals who are directly affected by it, but might also set the stage for future sectarian conflicts within the broader Muslim community. Indeed, with sectarian divides being sources of violence and conflict in the Middle East, especially contemporary Iraq and Syria, politicians and religious leaders are called on to develop strategies that allow Muslims to bridge these divides.

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Table 1

Correlations between variables and factor solution (rotated)

	Factor Analysis								
	Zero-Order Correlations					Varimax		Oblimin	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	I	II	I	II
(1) Identification						.72	-.46	.68	-.34
(2) Ambivalent ident. (SIM)	-.57					n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
(3) Ambivalent ident. (GTM)	-.54	.97				-.36	.77	-.26	.73
(4) Subjective ambivalence	-.35	.49	.49			-.01	.90	.12	.92
(5) Self-stereotyping: Muslim	.71	-.49	-.47	-.15		.87	-.27	.86	-.12
(6) Self-stereotyping.: Sunni	.43	-.33	-.27	-.25	.59	.85	.03	.89	.19

Note: All zero-order correlations coefficients are statistically significant. Because ambivalent identification was computed in two different ways (SIM, GTM) only one of the resulting indices was included in the factor analysis. The table reflects the results from a principal components analysis which included the GTM variable; a corresponding analysis including SIM produced virtually identical results.

Table 2

Ambivalent identification as a function of respondents' and terrorists' categorization.

Target	Respondent					
	Muslim			Alevi/Sunni		
	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>
Muslim						
SIM	-0.52 ^a	(4.19)		-2.19 ^b	(3.24)	
GTM	2.17 ^a	(4.07)	35	0.43 ^b	(3.28)	34
Wahhabi						
SIM	-2.67 ^b	(3.70)		-2.63 ^b	(3.34)	
GTM	-0.09 ^b	(3.95)	37	0.02 ^b	(3.53)	38
Control						
SIM	-1.92 ^b	(3.54)		-1.75 ^b	(3.67)	
GTM	0.36 ^b	(3.74)	43	0.95 ^b	(3.96)	38

Note. Higher values reflect higher levels of ambivalence in identification. Means with different superscripts differ at $p < .05$.

Table 3

Correlation between ambivalent identification and self-stereotyping as Alevi/Sunni

	Respondent	
	Muslim	Alevi/Sunni
Muslim		
SIM	-.78***	-.32+
GTM	-.80***	-.20
Wahhabi		
SIM	-.24	-.27
GTM	-.25	-.23
Control		
SIM	-.28+	-.30+
GTM	-.24	-.27

*** $p < .001$; + $p < .10$