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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Social Identity Threats: How Media and Discrimination Affect Muslim Americans' Identification as Americans and Trust in the U.S. Government

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Politicians within the United States and across many Western societies are concerned about the extent to which Muslims are successfully integrating within their countries. The present research examined how interpersonal (discrimination) and mediated (negative news coverage of Muslims) social identity threats dynamically change young Muslim Americans' strength of identification as American and Muslim, as well as their trust in the U.S. government. Data from a three-wave longitudinal survey show that Time 1, negative news coverage of Muslims (but not discrimination), significantly reduced Time 2, strength of identification as an American, which subsequently reduced Time 3, trust in the U.S. government. Muslim identification did not change as a function of interpersonal or mediated social identity threats. These findings suggest that negative media portrayals can have adverse effects on the national identification of some minority groups, and—crucially—that these effects may be stronger than those of personally experienced discrimination.

Keywords: Media Effects, Social Identity Threats, National Identification, Political Trust, Muslims.

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There has been an increasing concern regarding the extent to which racial and ethnic minorities in the United States identify as Americans and support American values. Although many of these concerns are targeted towards immigrants, even non-immigrant minorities, such as African Americans, face criticisms of being unpatriotic

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and disloyal to their American national identity (Walsh, 2017). In this context, Muslim Americans come to the forefront, in that they are often suspected to endorse values that are incompatible with American society and accused of being unpatriotic, disloyal, and distrusting of the United States (DelReal, 2016; Howell, 2015). Echoing these concerns, about half of Americans think that Muslims in the United States want to remain distinct from American culture (Pew Research Center, 2011) and that "some" U.S. Muslims are anti-American (Pew Research Center, 2016). Interestingly, these perceptions of U.S. Muslims not integrating have been increasing since 2002 (Pew Research Center, 2002), and were especially prominent during the 2016 election.

Implicit in these sentiments is the assumption that Muslims living in America are not adopting an American identity due to their personal lack of interest and motivation (DelReal, 2016; Fang, 2011). However, research on national identification, typically in the context of immigration, highlights the importance of social contexts in influencing minorities' identification and integration with a national in-group (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Solheim, 2009; Kinket & Verkuyten, 1997). Much of this work focuses on the deleterious effects of interpersonal social identity threats, such as discrimination (e.g., Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009).

However, there is another pervasive threat to social identity that can influence stigmatized minorities' identification with the national in-group: namely, exposure to negative media portrayals of one's ethnic in-group (Saleem & Ramasubramanian, 2017; Schmuck, Matthes, & Paul, 2017). Although the stigma is not personally encountered, exposure to media in which one's minority group is represented unfavorably can threaten minority members' ethnic identities: specifically, by challenging their group's positive esteem vis-à-vis the majority group (Harwood & Roy, 2005).

The current project integrates research on media effects with the work that conceptualizes social identities and identification as a dynamic process affected by social situations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). More specifically, we examine how young Muslim Americans' identification with their American and Muslim identities change over time as a function of both interpersonal (i.e., discrimination) and mediated (i.e., negative media coverage) social identity threats. We further examine the political consequences of these processes by examining how dynamic changes in identification as a function of both social identity threats ultimately affect Muslim Americans' trust in the U.S. government. Relying on a three-wave survey, we test these unique direct and mediational effects across a nine-month timespan.

Understanding these effects is theoretically and practically important. Despite the fact that communication research consistently finds that various minority groups in general—and Muslims in particular—are negatively represented across American media outlets (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Alsultany, 2012; Dixon & Williams, 2015), most work focuses on the effects of these negative representations on the majority group's attitudes toward the depicted groups (e.g., Mastro, 2009), Muslims included (e.g., Saleem, Prot, Anderson, & Lemieux, 2017). In the limited

research testing media effects on minorities themselves (e.g., Ramasubramanian, Doshi, & Saleem, 2017), to our knowledge there is no work examining either how mainstream media coverage can change the extent to which minorities identify with their multiple social in-groups (i.e., stigmatized identity, national identity) or the political consequences of these identity changes.

In turn, much of the existing research in social psychology focuses on the influence of individually experienced interpersonal threats, such as discrimination, on identity dynamics. The potential for media to act as a macro-level social identity threat, affecting stigmatized minorities' identification with their social groups, is often overlooked in this work. Establishing that negative media coverage exerts effects above and beyond discrimination is challenging, given the presumed primacy of interpersonal, relative to mediated, experiences (see Harwood, Hewstone, Amichai-Hamburger, & Tausch, 2012, for a review).[1] However, doing so would establish media as central to the social context that influences minorities' social identities and, in turn, identity-driven behaviors. Finally, by studying these processes over time, the present study provides novel empirical evidence for the theoretical claim that unfavorable media depictions can, in the long-term, influence minorities' national identities and sociopolitical attitudes (Giles & Giles, 2012; Harwood & Roy, 2005). Studying these processes is highly consequential for understanding intergroup relations in an increasingly multicultural society, such as the United States.

Practically, some studies have shown that racial minorities tend to have lower political trust than majority members (e.g., Guterbock & London, 1983; Michelson, 2003), making it important to understand whether and how minorities' dynamic identification with the national in-group ultimately influences their trust in the national government. Also, the religious identity of Muslims is increasingly stigmatized within mainstream American media, especially news media (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017), and accusations of Muslims not integrating within America were especially prominent during the 2016 U.S. presidential election (DelReal, 2016), the context of this study. In these circumstances, frequent identity threats experienced via discrimination or negative media coverage likely affected how young Muslim Americans identified with their national and religious in-groups, as well as their trust in the U.S. government.

Social identities

Experiences that negatively reflect on our social identities act as social identity threats, given the strong motivation for individuals to maintain a positive group identity (Major & O'Brien, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals may experience social identity threats interpersonally (i.e., being a target of discrimination), as well as through social contexts that make salient the culturally known stereotypes about our in-group (i.e., negative media portrayals in our study; Appel & Weber, 2017; Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gerhardstein, 2002; Ellemers, Kortekaas, &

Ouwerkerk, 1999). Social identity threats are especially critical in understanding the dynamics of social identification for individuals who simultaneously identify with a national in-group (e.g., American) and a stigmatized minority group (e.g., Muslim). Although identification with ethnic and national identities is conceptually independent (Berry et al., 2006), research reveals that the stigmatization of racial and ethnic identities often precludes minorities from identifying with the national in-group (Huynh, Devos, & Smalarz, 2011). Much of this work focuses on recent immigrants, although even second- and third-generation immigrants (e.g., Asian Americans) and non-immigrant minority groups (e.g., African Americans) face identity denial with respect to their American identity (Huo & Molina, 2006). The current project attends not only to the effects of social identity threats on minorities' identification with their social in-groups, but also to their indirect impact on trust in the national government, as a factor that signals sociopolitical integration (Schildkraut, 2011).

Interpersonal threats: Discrimination

Interpersonal threats, such as discrimination, can inhibit minorities' and immigrants' identification with the national in-group and their trust in its political system (Berry et al., 2006; Güngör, Fleischmann, Phalet, & Maliepaard, 2013; Huo & Molina, 2006). These negative experiences signal to minorities that they are not welcomed or accepted as part of the national in-group, often due to their racial, ethnic, and/or religious differences (Schildkraut, 2011). Discrimination is a serious concern for U.S. Muslims, as reflected in the record high number of assaults in 2016, surpassing the numbers reported in 2001, the year following the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). According to the Rejection Dis-identification Model, such threatening contexts prevent minorities from developing a sense of belonging and can lead to distancing and dis-identification from the national identity (see Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009, for a review). This is a self-protective strategy, as distancing the self from an ostracizing group in which one is devalued ultimately serves to protect one's self-esteem (Ellemers et al., 1999; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). Indeed, evidence for the negative relationship between discrimination and strength of national identification has been observed in many minority groups, across different countries (Berry et al., 2006; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Mähönen, & Ketokivi, 2012; Schildkraut, 2011). Hypothesis 1 of the present study aims to replicate these findings:

> H1: Time 1, instances of religious discrimination, will reduce Time 2, strength of American identification for Muslim Americans.

Higher identification with a national in-group is not only important for a sense of connection and belongingness to the nation, but is also associated with trust in its political system (Hetherington, 1999; Huo & Molina, 2006). For immigrants and various racial, ethnic, or religious minorities, trust in the national government represents the extent to which they feel the national government system is

responsive to their needs (Huo & Molina, 2006) and is predictive of their political interest and engagement in that society (Kelly, 2009). Based on this reasoning, we derived the following hypothesis:

> H2: Time 2, strength of American identification, will increase Time 3, trust in the U.S. government, amongst Muslim Americans.

In addition to the adverse effect on national identification, social identity threats can also influence minorities' identification with the identity that is being threatened in a given context (e.g., racial, ethnic, or religious identity), as described in the Rejection Identification Model (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Similar to the Rejection Dis-identification Model, this model also proposes that enhanced identification with the threatened identity is self-protecting, as it buffers the harmful effects of being excluded by the dominant group (Branscombe et al., 1999). This is especially true in contexts where social mobility (i.e., acceptance and identification with the high-status group) is not possible (Ellemers, 1993). For immigrants, however, social mobility is possible to some extent via membership in the national in-group and, thus, discrimination is often unrelated to immigrants' threatened identities (Mähönen & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2012). In several longitudinal studies, Jasinskaja-Lahti and colleagues (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2009, 2012) found that discrimination is negatively associated with immigrants' identification with the host society, but has no significant effect on identification with the threatened ethnic identity. Given these ambiguities, we examined the association between discrimination and Muslim identification as a research question.

> RQ1: Will Time 1, instances of religious discrimination, be positively or negatively associated with Time 2, strength of Muslim identification in Muslim Americans?

Mediated threats: Negative media coverage

Whereas interpersonal threats to identity dynamics are rather well-known, parallel effects of mediated threats are substantially less understood, especially in the context of racial and ethnic minority groups. Thus, the main objective of this study was to attend to media coverage as another crucial factor that influences minorities' social identities and, thereby, other identity-relevant outcomes. In fact, communication theorizing and research has shown that media can serve as agents that shape one's social and political identity in various, dynamic ways (e.g., Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2011; Slater, 2007). However, that work has not focused on racial minority groups. Yet, there is theoretical reason to expect media depictions of minority groups to change the ways in which minorities identify with those social groups (Harwood & Roy, 2005). Indeed, media are powerful informational agents through which minorities learn about themselves and their group's esteem and status vis-à-vis the majority group (Giles & Giles, 2012). More specifically, the quantity and

quality of minority representations in mainstream media are indicators of the group's status in the larger society (Abrams & Giles, 2007).

Content analyses reveal that minorities are generally underrepresented and negatively represented in mainstream American media (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). This is especially true for Muslim representations, both in media in general (Alsultany, 2012) and in news more specifically (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Dixon & Williams, 2015). Consequently, exposure to such media informs minorities that their in-group is not held in high esteem, challenging their positive distinctiveness and ultimately acting as a social identity threat (Saleem & Ramasubramanian, 2017). As a result, exposure to negative media portrayals of one's in-group is associated with a host of detrimental outcomes for minorities, such as reduced self-esteem, low perceived individual and group worth, lower academic performance, higher perceived discrimination, and increased perceptions of ostracism and exclusion by the majority group (Appel & Weber, 2017; Fujioka, 2005; Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Schmuck et al., 2017; Tsfati, 2007).

Despite these contributions, it remains unclear whether media portrayals can change the ways in which racial and ethnic minorities identify with their multiple social groups. Though there is work suggesting that minorities' social identities (a) derive media choices, and (b) can moderate the effects of media on various outcomes (see Comello, 2013, for a review), less empirical work has focused on the possibility that media can change or alter minorities' social identification with their multiple in-groups (see Harwood, Giles, & Palomares, 2005, for a similar criticism). Akin to interpersonal threats, such as discrimination, negative depictions in mainstream media should result in minorities distancing themselves from mainstream society (Giles & Giles, 2012).

Some evidence supports these claims. For example, Schmuck et al. (2017) found that exposure to political ads derogating Muslims increased Austrian Muslims' perceptions of discrimination and, in turn, decreased national identification. Similarly, Saleem and Ramasubramanian (2017) showed that exposure to news depicting Muslims negatively reduced Muslim Americans' desire to be accepted by other Americans and increased intentions to avoid majority members. Finally, in a survey study, Tsfati (2007) found that Arab-Israelis who perceived media as biased against their ethnic group also perceived greater ostracism from the Israeli society. These findings suggest that exposure to media negatively depicting one's in-group can have an adverse effect on minorities' identification with and successful integration into the national in-group. We thus expected the following effect:

> H3: Time 1, reported negative media coverage of Muslims, will reduce Time 2, strength of American identification in Muslim Americans.

Because negative media portrayals, similar to discrimination, are an identity threat, exposure to such portrayals may lead to increased identification with the threatened identity (Branscombe et al., 1999). As with discrimination, evidence supporting this claim is mixed. Some work has shown that perceived media bias is

inversely associated with disabled individuals' affirmation of their disability identity (Zhang & Haller, 2013). Yet other—and more directly relevant—studies have found no relation between exposure to political ads that negatively depict Muslims and Muslim identification (Schmuck et al., 2017). Consequently, the current project advanced a research question regarding media effects on Muslim identification.

> RQ2: Will Time 1, reported negative media coverage about Muslims, be significantly associated with Time 2, strength of Muslim identification in Muslim Americans?

Lastly, the reviewed literature suggests that both identity threats (discrimination and negative media coverage) should reduce minorities' trust in the national government via reduced identification with the national in-group. Accordingly, we advanced a mediational hypothesis:

> H4: Time 1, (a) discrimination and (b) negative media coverage of Muslims, will indirectly reduce Time 3, trust in the American national government, via reduced Time 2, strength of American identification.

Objectives of the present research

The goal of this research was to examine how interpersonal and mediated social identity threats change Muslim Americans' identification with their multiple identities and, in turn, their trust in the U.S. government. Accordingly, we tested the unique and long-term effects of discrimination and negative media depictions on Muslim Americans' strength of identification with their national (American) and stigmatized religious (Muslim) identity, as well as the strength of their political trust. We tested these processes within a three-wave longitudinal survey, which allowed us to (a) control for baseline assessments of hypothesized mediators and outcomes to assess residual change from one time point to another, (b) show the directionality of the studied processes, and (c) appropriately test for mediation effects (Maxwell, Cole, & Mitchell, 2011).

With respect to our sample, we focused on young adults, as well as recent and past generations of Muslim Americans. The focus on younger adults was due to the fact that they are not only more likely to experience identity threats, due to increased contact with majority members, but are also within a developmental period in which they are exploring, forming, and negotiating their multiple social identities (Sirin & Fine, 2008). The focus on recent and past generations was because accusations of Muslims not integrating within the United States have focused on the religious identity of Muslims, rather than their immigration status, as a barrier to their successful integration within America (Islam, 2016). Indeed, the speculation that Muslim values are inherently incompatible with American values threatens the belongingness of all Muslims living in the United States (Sirin & Fine, 2008). Thus, even among Muslims who are not recent immigrants (e.g., third- or

fourth-generation Arab immigrants), their religious identification as Muslims often precludes their acceptance as Americans (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Awad, 2010). Further, policies that are focused on harsher civil and security restrictions for Muslims—such as President Trump calling for a national registry for all Muslims living in the United States—apply to all Muslims living in America, regardless of their immigration and citizenship status (Saleem et al., 2017; Saleem, Yang, & Ramasubramanian, 2016).

Methods

Participants

Young Muslim Americans were recruited through various cultural student organizations at a large Midwestern university, in exchange for monetary compensation. This method is preferred over recruiting from mosques, as it allows for greater variation in religious identification (see Amer & Bagasra, 2013, for a critique on mosque recruitments). Only participants who self-identified as Muslim in a preliminary demographic questionnaire were included in the main analyses. Of the 237 participants, 141 self-identified as female and 96 as male ($M_{age} = 24.40$, $SD = 6.04$). In terms of racial and ethnic groups, the majority of participants identified as Arab ($n = 117$, 49.37%) and South Asian ($n = 76$, 32.07%), which are the two biggest racial/ethnic categorizations of Muslim immigrants in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2017). The remaining participants identified as White,[2] Black, East Asian, Hispanic, and Other ($n = 44$, 18.56%). The majority reported being born in the United States ($n = 137$, 57.81%). Of those who were not born in the United States, the majority reported living in the United States for between 15 and 20 years ($n = 37$, 15.61%), followed by 21 years or more ($n = 36$, 15.19%), between 7 and 14 years ($n = 18$, 7.59%) and between 1 and 6 years ($n = 9$, 3.80%).

Timeline

The data discussed in this research are part of a larger, ongoing, longitudinal survey on young Muslim Americans involving multiple waves before and after the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Data from the three time points discussed in the current research were collected in September 2016 (Time 1), December 2016 (Time 2), and April 2017 (Time 3).[3] We will refer to these survey assessments as T1, T2, and T3, respectively. There was a fairly low level of attrition on the final outcome between T1 and T3 across the 9 months (16%).

Materials

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics and correlations of key measures. A detailed list of all items mentioned below is included in the Supporting Information.

Discrimination (assessed at Time 1 and Time 3)

Participants were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) with five items, such as "I have personally been

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Key Measures

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Born (0 = not in United States, 1 = in United States)	-										
2. Negative media (T1)	−.13	-									
3. Negative media (T3)	−.14	.38**	-								
4. Muslim ident. (T1)	−.18**	.28**	.15*	-							
5. American ident. (T1)	−.02	.24**	.13	.46**	-						
6. Muslim ident. (T2)	−.05	.10	.01	.47**	.23**	-					
7. American ident. (T2)	.08	−.07	−.02	.19**	.53**	.48**	-				
8. Discrimination (T1)	.01	.32**	.31**	.19**	−.02	.06	−.13	-			
9. Discrimination (T3)	.02	.20**	.28**	.08	−.08	.02	−.12	.70**	-		
10. Trust in gov. (T2)	.06	−.42**	−.37**	−.01	.02	.12	.20**	−.32**	−.26**	-	
11. Trust in gov. (T3)	.08	−.18*	−.30**	−.06	.12	.21**	.29**	−.30**	−.38**	.52**	-
Means	0.58	4.80	4.55	6.03	4.99	6.23	5.47	3.44	3.45	2.10	2.012
Standard Deviations	0.49	1.04	1.00	1.26	1.63	1.08	1.43	1.14	1.01	0.76	0.712
Skew	−0.32	−1.03	−0.56	−1.33	−0.52	−1.77	−0.88	−0.48	−0.42	0.39	0.18

Notes: ident. = identification; gov. = government; T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2; T3 = Time 3.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

discriminated because of my religion" and "others have avoided social contact with me because of my religion" (T1 α = .91, T3 α = .89; see Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002).

Negative news about Muslims (assessed at Time 1 and Time 3)

Perceptions that American news media coverage is negative toward Muslims—specifically, that it depicts Muslims perpetuating violence—were used as a proxy of negative media coverage for two reasons. First, news media is the main source of information about Muslims for the majority of Americans (Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2006; Pew Research Center, 2007). Second, Muslims are overwhelmingly represented as perpetrators of violence, aggression, and terrorism in the American news media (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Dixon & Williams, 2015). Three items, which had been validated in previous research, were used (Saleem et al., 2017). Examples include, "how often have you seen news stories of Muslims perpetrating violence?" and "how often have you seen news stories about Muslims being aggressive or violent towards the United States?" (1 = never, 6 = almost every day; T1 α = .91; T3 α = .86). Higher numbers represented more negative news about Muslims.

American identification (assessed at Time 1 and Time 2)

Participants rated four items assessing their strength of American identification on a 7-point rating scale (1 = do not agree at all, 7 = completely agree; T1 α = .92, T2 α = .92; Ellemers et al., 1999). Example items included "I see myself as American" and "I feel strong ties with fellow Americans."

Muslim identification (assessed at Time 1 and Time 2)

Using a parallel, four-item battery, participants reported their strength of Muslim identification (e.g., "I feel strong ties with fellow Muslims"; T1 α = .93, T2 α = .91).

Trust in the American government (assessed at Time 2 and Time 3)

This outcome variable was assessed through four items that were adapted from previous work (Cho et al., 2009; Hetherington, 1999). Example items included "I trust our government" and "people running the government are crooked" (reverse scored) (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; T2 α = .79, T3 α = .81).

Results

Analysis strategy

The hypothesized relations were tested in a path analysis using Mplus 8.0. Autoregressive paths from baseline assessments to the mediators and outcomes were included in order to assess residual change as a function of the hypothesized predictors. Standard errors and confidence intervals were obtained through bias-corrected bootstrapping, to account for any issues pertaining to non-normality (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). Because birth status is known to influence identification with a national in-group (Schildkraut, 2011; Sirin & Fine, 2008),

we controlled for this by adding birth status (1 = born in the United States; 0 = not born in the United States) as a predictor for the hypothesized mediators and outcomes. Correlations among T1 variables were freely estimated along with all correlations among the residuals for T2 variables.

Attrition checks indicated that 38 participants did not answer the primary dependent variable at T3. A check of differences between those who completed the survey and those who did not found no significant differences on key predictors and outcomes. A maximum likelihood estimation was used to include participants with missing data. Standard errors, indirect effects, and confidence intervals are based on 1,000 bootstrap samples.

Preliminary analyses

Figure 1 depicts the results of the hypothesized relations (see Table 2 for complete results). The overall model fit was determined by using the fit statistics recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999). The fit indices indicated a good fit ($\chi 2$ [4] = 10.71, p = .03, CFI = .98, SRMR = .03). As expected, autoregressive paths revealed that the mediators and the outcome variable were positively and strongly associated with their earlier assessments. Specifically, T3, trust, was positively associated with T2, trust ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$). Similarly, for T2, both strength of American and Muslim identification were positively and strongly associated with their T1 assessments (βs = .56, .47, ps < .001). Birth status was not significantly related to any of the outcomes.

Test of hypotheses and research questions

T1, discrimination, did not significantly effect either T2, American identification ($\beta = -.08$, $p = .15$), or T2, Muslim identification ($\beta = -.06$, $p = .36$). These findings contradict H1, which predicted that discrimination would lower American identification, and also provide useful information for RQ1, which referred to an association between discrimination and Muslim identification.

In contrast, T1, reported negative news about Muslims, significantly reduced T2, strength of identification as an American ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .02$), supporting H2. This is an important finding, as the model tests for the effects of negative news on American identification, over and above the effects of discrimination. Answering RQ2, T1, reported negative news about Muslims, did not significantly influence T2, Muslim identification ($\beta = .02$, $p = .79$).

Consistent with H3, T2, strength of American identification, significantly increased T3, trust in the American government ($\beta = .19$, $p = .01$). Hypothesis 4 predicted that T1, discrimination and exposure to negative news about Muslims, would indirectly influence T3, trust in the American government, via T2, reduced American identification. The indirect effect was marginally significant for negative news ($b = -.03$, $SE = .02$, $p = .055$, 95% CI −.07 to −.01; H4b), such that reported negative news about Muslims weakened their American identification and, in turn,

lowered their trust in the American government. The parallel indirect effect was non-significant for discrimination ($b = -.01$, $SE = .01$, $p = .237$; H4a).

Though we were mostly interested in the extent to which our hypothesized predictors led to changes in the outcomes of interest across time points, it is useful to note that both T1, discrimination ($\beta = -.20$, $p = .004$), and T1, negative media coverage ($\beta = -.39$, $p < .001$), were negatively and significantly related to T2, trust. These data suggest that there is an inverse and significant cross-sectional relationship between both discrimination and negative media coverage and Muslim Americans' trust in the U.S. government.

It is worthwhile to mention that there could be a reciprocal relationship between the hypothesized predictors, mediators, and the outcome variable. The data allow us to test this relationship. To increase our confidence in the causal chain tested here (from media coverage to American and Muslim identification to trust in the American government), we estimated a post hoc model predicting changes in reported negative news media coverage of Muslims at T3 from T2, American identification; T2, Muslim identification; T2, trust in government; and T1, reported negative news coverage. Not surprisingly, there was a significant effect of T1, reported media coverage ($\beta = .28$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$), on T3, reported media coverage of Muslims. More importantly, the model found that changes in T3, negative media perceptions, were not significantly associated with T2, American identification ($\beta = .05$, $SE = .08$, $p = .56$), or T2, Muslim identification ($\beta = .04$, $SE = .07$, $p = .62$), but were significantly and negatively associated with T2, trust in the American government ($\beta = -.28$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$). These results, along with establishing temporal precedence and controlling for baseline assessments of the tested variables, suggest that reported negative media coverage is an antecedent, rather than the consequence, of American and Muslim identification. However, because T2, trust, was significantly and inversely associated with T3, reported negative media coverage of Muslims, the relationship between these constructs is likely non-recursive, at least in the present sample.

Discussion

Mainstream media are considered an important social factor through which minorities come to learn about themselves and their group's worth in the larger society (Abrams & Giles, 2007). Yet, few empirical studies have systematically examined the role of media—specifically, negative media portrayals—in dynamically changing the extent to which minorities identify with their multiple in-groups and the effects of these changing identities on minorities' sociopolitical integration. The present study addressed this gap by testing the unique and long-term effects of both self-reported discrimination and negative media coverage of one's in-group on Muslim Americans' identification with their national and religious identities, using a three-wave, longitudinal survey. We further examined the downstream consequences of

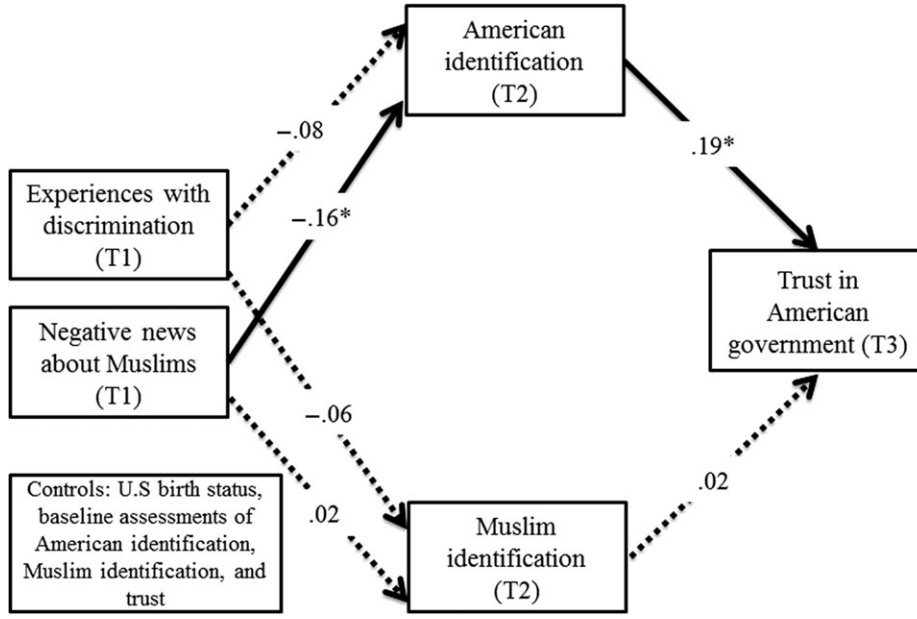

Figure 1 Path analysis results, testing the hypothesized effects of T1, discrimination and reported negative news about Muslims, on T2, American and Muslim identification, and T3, trust in the American national government. The model controlled for birth status. In addition, autoregressive paths from baseline assessments to the hypothesized mediators and outcomes were included, but those results are omitted from the figure for clearer interpretation. Standardized coefficients are shown. Solid lines indicate significant paths and dotted lines indicate non-significant paths. $N = 237$. T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2; T3 = Time 3. $^*p < .05$.

both interpersonal and mediated social identity threats on trust in the U.S. government.

Our findings suggest that perceptions of negative media depictions of one's in-group can, in fact, lower minorities' identification with the national in-group. This effect emerged even after accounting for individuals' baseline strength of American identification, suggesting that T1, perceptions of negative news, decreased strength of identification as an American at T2. In turn, this weakened American identification lowered trust in the U.S. government, as gauged at T3. Mediation results further revealed that T1, reported negative media coverage, decreased T3, governmental trust, by reducing T2, identification as an American. Given the marginally significant mediation effect, however, caution should be taken when interpreting this finding.

Surprisingly, there were no parallel effects of discrimination on subsequent American identification. This finding is inconsistent with several studies in which discrimination was shown to be inversely associated with minorities' identification with a national in-group (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009; Schildkraut, 2011). One possible explanation for this lack of correspondence with prior evidence is the

Table 2 Results of the Path Analysis

Outcome	Predictor	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI
T2 Muslim identification (77.30% variance explained)				
	Muslim identification (T1)	.47***	.09	.29 to .63
	Negative news about Muslims (T1)	.02	.09	−.16 to .19
	Discrimination (T1)	−.06	.07	−.20 to .06
	American identification (T1)	.03	.09	−.16 to .22
	Born (T1)	.05	.06	−.07 to .17
T2 American identification (67.40% variance explained)				
	American identification (T1)	.56***	.09	.37 to .72
	Negative news of Muslims (T1)	−.16*	.07	−.29 to −.03
	Discrimination (T1)	−.08	.05	−.19 to .03
	Muslim identification (T1)	.02	.09	−.16 to .21
	Born (T1)	.06	.06	−.06 to .19
T2 Trust in the American gov. (78.20% variance explained)				
	American identification (T1)	.04	.08	−.10 to .20
	Muslim identification (T1)	.12	.08	−.06 to .26
	Negative news of Muslims (T1)	−.39***	.08	−.53 to −.23
	Discrimination (T1)	−.20**	.07	−.34 to −.07
	Born (T1)	.04	.07	−.10 to .16
T3, trust in the American gov. (69.30% variance explained)				
	Trust in the American gov. (T2)	.48***	.09	.25 to .64
	Muslim identification (T2)	.02	.06	−.09 to .15
	American identification (T2)	.19*	.07	.05 to .31
	Born (T1)	.06	.06	−.07 to .18
Indirect effect of negative Muslim media exposure (T1) on trust (T3)				
Trust (T3)	Via American ident. (T2)	−.03+	.02	−.07 to −.01

Notes: The path analysis tested the unique effects of discrimination and exposure to negative news about Muslims on American identification, Muslim identification, and trust in the American national government, controlling for U.S. birth status and earlier assessments of hypothesized mediators and outcomes. Standardized estimates are reported. Standard errors are based on 1,000 bootstrap replicates. Born: 1 = in United States; 2 = not in United States. $N = 237$.

ident. = identification; gov. = government; T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2; T3 = Time 3.

+ = .055, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

sociopolitical context in which our study was conducted: namely, the midst of the 2016 American presidential election. During that time, several inflammatory and pernicious remarks that were made about Muslims were extensively discussed in the U.S. media (Johnson & Hauslohner, 2017). This context likely increased the salience of media coverage over and above the effects of discrimination. Indeed, in a post hoc test, we compared whether the influence of shifting one standard deviation across reported negative media coverage of Muslims was a stronger predictor of T2,

American identification, than a similar shift across reported discrimination, using parametric bootstrapping (Effron, 1992). We resampled cases from our data set with replacements and ran 10,000 ordinary least squares regressions predicting T2, American identification, with T1, discrimination, negative media coverage, Muslim identification, American identification, and birth status. In 7,892 of the resamples, T1, reported negative media coverage, yielded a stronger effect than T1, discrimination, on T2, American identification (one-tailed $p = .21$; 1-[7,892/10,000]; two-tailed $p = .42$).[4]

Another explanation for the inconsistency with some prior work could be due to individuals' tendency to report greater bias for their group, relative to themselves (i.e., personal-group discrepancy: Kessler, Mummendey, & Leisse, 2000). Whereas the media measure assessed perceptions of Muslims as a group being negatively represented in news media coverage, the measure of discrimination assessed perceptions of the individual being personally mistreated. Thus, it is possible that in our study, the negative media portrayal measure was a proxy for perceptions of group discrimination, which tends to not only be higher than perceptions of individual discrimination (Kessler et al., 2000), but also yields a stronger effect on minorities' strength of American identification (Schildkraut, 2011). Future work can clarify these ambiguities by empirically investigating whether a self-reported media bias against one's in-group is more closely linked to minorities' perceptions of group-based or individually-experienced discrimination.

Another noteworthy finding regards one's identification with the threatened religious identity. Neither discrimination nor reported negative news coverage of one's in-group influenced subsequent changes in respondents' strength of identification as a Muslim. On the one hand, discrimination is known to increase racial/ethnic identification in some minority groups (Branscombe et al., 1999). On the other hand, research has revealed that when acceptance into a dominant group, such as a national in-group, is likely (i.e., social mobility), discrimination may not increase identification with the threatened minority identity (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). In this context, identification with the threatened identity could be considered as an obstacle to successful integration within the dominant group (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). The present study also found a ceiling effect with respect to Muslim identification at T1 and T2 (Ms = 6.03, 6.23, respectively), which could have influenced the results obtained. High levels of group identification are usually observed in minority samples (Branscombe et al., 1999), Muslims included (Amer & Bagasra, 2013).

This project also establishes that mediated threats may have downstream consequences, affecting not only minorities' identification with the national in-group but, subsequently, their trust in the national government. Though many studies on media effects and minorities have considered the role of social identities as an antecedent of media use or as a moderator in understanding the link between media exposure and behaviors, relatively less work has considered the potential for social identities to act as mediators (see Comello, 2013, for a review). We show that negative media depictions may further perpetuate the political distrust minorities have

in the national government (Guterbock & London, 1983; Michelson, 2003), especially regarding concerns over the extent to which the government cares about or responds to minority groups' needs. Such distrust is especially concerning for the Muslim American community, as they have faced increased government scrutiny after 9/11 and, more recently, under the Trump administration (Youmans, 2017). That said, though exposure to mediated identity threats can undermine trust in mainstream institutions, it may be an important factor in motivating collective actions aimed at improving one's in-group status in society through the process of increased group consciousness and increased perceptions of unjust and unfair treatment (Guterbock & London, 1983; Saleem, Hawkins, Wojcieszak, & Roden, 2018). In short, researchers need to differentiate between system-supporting and system-challenging outcomes of exposure to negative media coverage among minorities.

When interpreting these findings, several limitations need to be kept in mind. First, we relied on self-reported measures of negative media coverage of Muslims. Self-reports can lead to inaccurate and/or biased responding, consistent with motivated reasoning effects. Inasmuch as self-reports of media exposure are inaccurate (see Prior, 2013), it would be beneficial to experimentally manipulate exposure to media content (e.g., by assigning participants to see or read media content that is positive, negative, or neutral toward Muslims). That said, whereas experimental manipulations are adept at detecting changes in identity salience (e.g., Wojcieszak & Garrett, 2018), longitudinal designs may be more sensitive to assessing changes in other facets of social identification (Leach et al., 2008).

The battery gauging negative media depictions of Muslims was also limited. For one, it assessed participants' perceptions of news media only. This was due to the fact that Muslims are overwhelmingly represented in a negative light in the news, relative to other forms of media (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017). Also, the measure focused specifically on news in which Muslims are portrayed as terrorists or as violent, because the depictions of Muslims in the American news media are largely within the context of terrorism and violence (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Dixon & Williams, 2015). Nevertheless, the specificity of only considering such depictions could have impacted the results obtained, as well as increased the frequency with which participants recalled such news. Further, by not considering other forms of media (e.g., entertainment) and by not asking about negative media depictions unrelated to violence, the current study may have overlooked some additional nuances. Future studies should not only analyze the content of the various media formats, genres, and story topics, but also systematically compare their potentially distinct effects on minority audiences.

Certain limitations apply to our sample. Although our interest was in studying how identity threats affect young Muslim Americans, who are more likely to experience threat as a result of greater contact with majority members and are in the midst of negotiating their multiple social identities (Sirin & Fine, 2008), it would be interesting to examine how older adults respond to such identity threats. Also, because we did not assess participants' immigration status, we do not know whether

it moderates the studied effects and processes; future studies should assess and control for such status, as it may affect national identification (Berry et al., 2006).

It is similarly uncertain whether the results generalize beyond Muslims to other minority groups in the United States. Given the implicit association of Whiteness with the American identity (Devos & Banaji, 2005), we speculate that other non-White groups whose racial, ethnic, or religious identities are stigmatized in the American society are likely subject to the same processes. Indeed, even third- and fourth-generation immigrant groups (e.g., Asian Americans), as well as non-immigrant groups, such as African Americans, are subject to identity denial with respect to their American identity (Huo & Molina, 2006). Having said that, it would be interesting to examine the similarities and differences across various minority groups in the ways in which interpersonal and mediated social identity threats affect their identification and integration with mainstream American culture. Because the quality of media representations differ across minority groups (Tukachinsky et al., 2015), groups depicted more positively in mainstream media may display more accommodating behaviors, including identification with the national in-group, as opposed to groups that are depicted more negatively.

Finally, one could argue that the tested constructs are non-recursive. In other words, Muslim Americans who do not strongly identify as an American are especially likely to pay attention to negative media coverage and see the coverage as negative when it is, in fact, neutral (i.e., the hostile media effect; Gunther & Schmitt, 2004). Though possible, it is important to note that the use of a longitudinal design allowed us to (a) establish temporal precedence between the constructs of interest, and (b) assess dynamic changes in the outcomes as a function of media exposure. Further, post hoc analyses support the claim that media exposure was most likely an antecedent, as opposed to a consequence, of changes in American identification.

Despite these limitations, this project makes important contributions to communication scholarship on media effects and to social psychological work on the dynamics of social identities. Theoretically, we establish negative media depictions as a key factor influencing identification with the national in-group among stigmatized minorities. Perhaps most crucially, we also show that negative portrayals of one's in-group can exert effects above and beyond—in fact, stronger than—interpersonal threats, such as discrimination. This is noteworthy, as previous work comparing interpersonal and mediated effects has often found that the former trumps the latter (see Harwood et al., 2012, for a review; also see Wojcieszak & Azrout, 2016). Finding these dynamics and establishing causal effects from media exposure to the tested outcomes in a longitudinal design clearly shows that broader social contexts that transcend individual, personal experiences matter and should be accounted for in research on stigmatized minorities.

Also, this study provides empirical support for theoretical perspectives, emphasizing that the ways in which mainstream media depict minorities ultimately affects intergroup relations between minority and majority groups (Giles & Giles, 2012; Harwood & Roy, 2005). Negative media representations both communicate to

minority members that they hold low vitality in the larger society (Abrams & Giles, 2007; Harwood & Roy, 2005; Tukachinsky et al., 2015) and influence integration-related attitudes and behaviors (Saleem & Ramasubramanian, 2017; Tsfati, 2007). This project shows that long-term exposure to negative media coverage leads to adverse effects for minorities' identification with and trust within the mainstream culture; these are outcomes that were not previously tested and are highly consequential for a cohesive society.

Practically, this project suggests that Muslims are not the only ones to blame for the alleged problems with their integration into the American society. The ways in which their religious group is depicted in the American mainstream media indirectly reflect their group's worth. If one does not feel welcomed and valued, especially on the basis of an existing, important identity (e.g., the religious identity for Muslims), one is not likely to actively strive to fit in or seek acceptance within a society. Thus—perhaps unsurprisingly—showing Muslims as terrorists and radical extremists in mainstream media (Alsultany, 2012; Dixon & Williams, 2015) is likely to distance Muslims from successfully integrating within American society and further trusting in its political institutions. This project aimed to reveal these complex relationships, which are potentially more salient in the current political climate than ever before.

Supplementary material

Supplementary material are available at Journal of Communication online.

Notes

1 For instance, in studies examining the simultaneous effects of direct and mediated contact, direct contact often trumps the effect of mediated contact in affecting majority members' attitudes towards minority groups (Harwood et al., 2012).
2 Many Arab Americans racially identify as White (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007). Indeed, the U.S. Census racial category of Whites includes Arab Americans (Census, 2018).
3 Data collection for the third wave was delayed, in order not to interfere with midterm exams/projects.
4 We thank Dr. Josh Pasek, associate professor at the University of Michigan, for this recommendation.

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