Banning the Veil:
The Effect of Religious Clothing Restrictions on Attitudes towards Immigrants in Europe

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In recent years, many European countries have passed policies regulating the wearing of religious symbols in public places. Many see these laws as targeting religiously-observant Muslim women. What effect might these policies have on public attitudes towards immigrants from outside of Europe, many of whom are Muslim? We argue that public discussion of restricting religious symbols can influence public attitudes towards immigrants by signaling to the public that religiously-observant Muslims are not members of a socially constructed in-group and by heightening in-group/out-group distinctions, leading public attitudes to become more negative towards immigrants. To test this hypothesis, we draw on public opinion data from the Eurobarometer Survey Series to measure public affect towards immigrants between 2009 and 2018 in three European countries that passed laws banning the wearing of full-face veils: France, Belgium, and Austria. We also use Pew Global Attitudes Survey data to look closely at specific attitudes towards Muslims in France and other European countries in 2006 and 2011. This study provides a deeper understanding of anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant attitudes in Europe and how they are affected by public policy.

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In recent years, many European countries have passed policies to restrict the wearing of religious symbols in public places. Beginning in the mid-2000s, several Western European countries began discussing religious symbols bans, with some focusing specifically on banning face coverings. Since 2011, five European Union countries (France, Belgium, Austria, Denmark, and Latvia) have instituted total or partial bans on wearing face coverings. Furthermore, in addition to the Lombardy region of Italy in 2015, numerous cities, including major European hubs, such as Barcelona, have instituted bans ("The Islamic Veil Across Europe" 2018).

These laws and regulations are often perceived as targeting Muslims (Bilsky 2008, Howard 2013) arising in response to a perceived cultural threat (Scott 2005, Edmunds 2012). Given this perception, we may expect these laws to impact public attitudes towards Muslims. Yet, we know little about whether these expectations are born out in reality. When countries pass policies seen as restricting the religious practices of religious minority populations, how do public attitudes respond?

In Europe, immigration from outside the European Union is dominated by those coming from Muslim-majority countries (for more on the relationship between Islam and immigration in Europe, see Pfaff and Gill (2006)). For most Europeans, non-EU immigrants are assumed to be Muslim. Many Europeans have expressed some degree of identity threat over increasing levels of immigration into the EU by Muslims. As Pfaff and Gill (2006) write, "Most Europeans see the assimilation of Muslim immigrants into secular society as essential to preserving their heritage." In November 2020, French President Emmanuel Macron asked Muslim leaders to support a "charter of republican values" to counter Islamist separatism (BBC News 2020). To understand the impact of such policies on public attitudes towards non-EU immigrants, we use

Eurobarometer survey data from three countries that enacted laws restricting religious clothing (France, Belgium, and Austria).

We propose that policies directed at restricting the wearing of religious clothing send the public a signal about the identity of Muslims in the country; specifically, they are not part of the national in-group. Because this signal will make in-group/out-group distinctions more salient, we expect it will lead attitudes towards Muslims to become more negative. Additionally, because immigrants are overwhelmingly understood to be Muslim, we expect attitudes towards immigrants to become more negative in the time leading up to the passage of these laws. Finally, as the time from the passage of the law increases, we expect attitudes towards immigrants to return to baseline levels as public attention to the laws decreases.

Religious Clothing Restrictions

In 2004, France instituted a religious symbols ban, which restricted the wearing of "ostentatious" religious symbols in public schools. While this ban included symbols such as yarmulkes and large crucifixes, it was seen by many as targeting the Islamic veil (Croucher 2008), a religious head covering worn by observant Muslim women. In 2011, France enacted a law directly prohibiting the covering of one's face in public, a law that was perceived by many as intending to prevent Muslim women from wearing the *niqab* or *burqa*. Belgium quickly followed suit, enacting a similar law a few months later. Further still, Austria passed a law banning face coverings in 2017, Latvia also banned face coverings in 2017, and Denmark enacted a ban in 2018. While these bans on face coverings are broadly worded, they are colloquially known as "burqa bans" (Roberts 2011), indicating that they are widely viewed as being aimed at the wearing of veils by Muslim women.

What is the impetus behind such laws? Explanations for why such laws are necessary generally fall into two categories: the first, most frequently used, and most important for our argument in this study, concerns identity. A second and far less cited explanation focuses on safety concerns. For many European countries, religious symbols are viewed as inappropriate for the public square (Mullally 2011) and even offensive to secular, Western culture (Grillo and Shah 2013, Bowen 2007). This is especially true in France and Belgium, where laïcité[1] is written into national law and where visible signs of Muslim religiosity are sometimes interpreted as deliberate provocation (Bila 2019). Although some see Muslim women who wear the veil as displaying a political and not a religious symbol (Joppke 2009, 53), for many, the tension between religion and secularism has led to cultural conflict as religious immigrants have moved into Western European societies (Fernando 2014).

Looking specifically at the issue of Muslim women wearing head and face coverings, some view it as symbolizing the oppression of women (Hewitt and Koch 2011)[2] and associate it with extremist groups, such as the Taliban (Silvestri 2012). It has been argued that women, especially young girls, do not want to wear the veil and are forced to do so by men (Grillo and Shah 2013). Those who see women who veil as oppressed or ill-treated fear that cultural norms of unequal treatment of women will erode Western, liberal norms (Silvestri 2012). They view laws restricting religious clothing as liberating for women who would otherwise be forced to wear a veil they would rather not. These laws also protect Western values of equal rights for men and women.

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[1] Laïcité is a type of secularism that prescribes a prohibition of government involvement with religious organizations and a prohibition of religious engagement with the state while also promoting civic and republican ideals (Naas 2007).

[2] Hewitt and Koch (2011) explicitly examine the wearing of the hijab, a headscarf that does not cover the face. Other coverings include the niqab, which covers a large portion of the face, leaving the area around the eyes clear. The burqa covers the entirety of the face, including the eyes, which are covered with a mesh screen.

Beyond women's rights issues, there are other cultural reasons why Western European countries may be uncomfortable with the overt religious symbolism displayed by Muslim women who veil. One reason may be that clothing that conceals the face is unusual and can be offensive in Western culture (Hewitt and Koch 2011). For example, Jack Straw, a leader of the UK Labour Party in 2006, published an editorial about how meeting with veiled women made him uncomfortable because he could not see whom he was talking to (Straw 2006).

The evident cultural roots of opposition to religious veils that cover all or part of the face became particularly clear after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 when many countries began to mandate the wearing of face masks for health reasons. These masks obscure the faces of the wearers in a similar way to a *niqab*, yet are accepted and even embraced by European society. As historian Joan Wallach Scott put it, "the secular science versus religious Muslim dichotomy is operating so that nobody sees it as ironic or as a contradiction at all" (McAuley 2020).

Although explanations for religious clothing restrictions that are explicitly tied to identity are the most common, some explanations focus on safety concerns. For instance, some argue that terrorists could use hijabs to hide bombs or their faces. Indeed, Yassin Omar, one of the bombers in London on July 21, 2005, fled dressed in a burqa. Likewise, Belgian convert Muriel Degauque, a suicide bomber in Baghdad on November 9, 2005, was also dressed in a burqa (Silvestri 2012). However, these safety arguments may be overstated. As Hunter-Henin (2012) writes, "the French ban on the *burqa* is therefore likely to be regarded as a disproportionate reaction to a minority practice which no evidence connects to any security threats or social unrest, except for a feeling of social discomfort."

Notably, the explanations regarding identity place Muslims as cultural and religious "others" outside of the traditional European identity (similar to how Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 2009 argue they are outsiders in American society). That is, wearing the hijab is the most visible symbol of Islam (Chakraborti and Zempi 2012). Thus, laws restricting religious symbols cast Muslims as outsiders, indicating that Muslims should not be considered entirely European.

As research on Social Identity Theory (SIT) has established, an individual's attitudes are influenced by whether someone is perceived to be a member of one's own in-group or a member of an out-group (Tajfel and Wilkes 1963, Tajfel and Turner 1979, Tajfel 1981). Moreover, those outside of one's own in-group are often thought of in less-positive terms (Pettigrew 1979, Miles 1990). These judgments are usually made based on readily-observable traits like race, ethnicity, or gender; or based on frames provided by the media or political leaders (Feezell, Glazier, and Boydstun 2019, Iyengar 1991). Much of the recent controversy in Europe around immigration and identity has centered on Muslim immigrants, and therefore, one may be tempted to focus specifically on Islam. However, there is reason to believe that feelings of identity threat are not tied to Islam or any one religion.

Research by Helbling and Traunmüller (2018) uses a survey experiment to demonstrate that, rather than Islam itself, it is the anti-liberal religious conservatism that many associate with Islam that leads many Europeans to hold negative attitudes towards Muslim immigrants. Importantly, respondents included in the experiment hold similarly negative attitudes towards anti-liberal religiously conservative Christians. This suggests that rather than any specific religion, it is values seen as different from liberal and secular values that are being rejected. This reflects some of the justifications for religious clothing restrictions (Grillo and Shah 2013,

Silvestri 2012). In simple terms, values, which are associated with social identity, are the key marker for favorability.

As political and social discussions around Muslim religious clothing, and proposed laws restricting clothing typically worn by Muslim women, became more salient in the lead up to the passage of these laws in European countries, Muslims were increasingly portrayed as being threatening outsiders who do not adhere to societal values (Carland 2011). Media coverage became more focused on the idea that Muslim women *should* not veil in public as common sense (Byng 2010) and, in France, as fundamentally *un*French (Roberts 2011, 11). Many saw the face coverings as a symbol of otherness and cultural difference (Weber 2004, 33). In France, research by Amiraux (2016) shows "the omnipresence of public discussions about religious otherness" related to Muslim women and the veil laws. In line with SIT, we posit that these discussions and the way they signal Muslims' outsider status contribute to increasing negativity toward Muslims.

Further, as attitudes towards Muslims and immigrants from outside the EU are very closely tied amongst Europeans (Echebarria-Echabe and Fernández-Guede 2006), increasing perceptions of Muslims as outsiders likely carry over to the issue of immigration. As such a large number of immigrants in Europe are Muslims, anti-immigrant sentiment is functionally anti-Muslim sentiment (Dolezal, Helbling, and Hutter 2010, Fetzer and Soper 2003). Bila (2019) describes the situation in France as one where Islam was portrayed as an entirely foreign religion with no place in French society, where the terms "immigrant", "Arab", and "Muslim" were interchangeable in public discourse.

Anti-Muslim rhetoric likely also impacts attitudes towards immigrants through another path: heightening in-group identity. As the lines between in-group and out-group are drawn more starkly, "Europeans" might find themselves on one side, with both Muslims and immigrants on

the other. By making identity more salient in daily conversation, anti-Muslim rhetoric could increase animosity towards any group perceived to be part of an out-group (Haslam et al. 1999, Reynolds et al. 2001).

Thus, in considering the impact of laws prohibiting religious symbols, we expect to see a negative effect on attitudes towards both Muslims and immigrants. Time, however, is an important component of understanding the impact of these laws on individual attitudes. The passage of the laws and the public discussion around them places Muslims outside of the national in-group and heightens feelings of division between the in-group and out-group. It follows, therefore, that there will be greater discussion of in-group/out-group boundaries when the passage of a veil ban approaches. These conversations are likely to trigger negative attitudes towards both Muslims and immigrants, who are perceived as part of Europe's out-group. Thus, we hypothesize:

> *H1: Attitudes towards immigrants will grow more negative as the passage of a religious symbols ban approaches.*

After the passage of the laws, we expect public discussion, and heightened in-group/out-group divisions, will decline. Thus, we hypothesize:

> *H2: Attitudes towards immigrants will grow more positive as time since the passage of a religious symbols ban increases.*

Research Design

To test our expectations, we use individual-level data from the Eurobarometer Survey Series from 2009 through 2018 in France, Belgium, and Austria (i.e., three countries that have passed bans on face coverings). We also compare Pew Global Attitudes data in France in 2006, when there was little public discussion of banning full-face veils, to 2011, when the law banning full-

face coverings was passed. We compare the French data to data from three other European

countries: Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The primary statistical model discussed

below uses data from the Eurobarometer Survey Series. Compared to the Pew data, it contains a

more complete dataset in terms of having consistent questions asked over time and having

necessary control variables. The dependent variable we use in testing the above expectations is

individual affect towards immigrants in France, Belgium, and Austria.

This variable is operationalized using the question, "Please tell me whether each of the

following statements evokes a positive or negative feeling for you…Immigration of people from

outside the EU." Respondents were asked to indicate if their feeling was "very positive," "fairly

positive," "fairly negative," or "very negative." Respondents who indicated a "very positive"

feeling were coded with a value of 0, while those with a "very negative" feeling were coded with

a value of 3. The mean for this variable is 1.804, with a standard deviation of 0.862.[3] As the

dependent variable in this study ranges from 0 to 3, all analyses use ordered logistic regression.[4]

We use two main independent variables to test the above hypotheses. First, we expect

that public attitudes towards immigrants will grow more negative as the passage of a religious

symbols ban approaches and that attitudes towards immigrants will grow more positive as time

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[3] For descriptive statistics regarding all variables in this study, see Table A.1 in the appendix.

[4] Observations are nested in countries. Ideally, we would cluster standard errors on the country. However, as we have limited data in Austria after the ban, clustering standard errors by country creates a highly singular variance matrix, making it challenging to calculate confidence intervals for marginal effects. Therefore, we do not cluster our standard errors on the country in our main analysis. However, we have run a similar model in which we cluster the standard errors on the country (see Model A.1 in Table A.2 in the appendix). The results of this model are nearly identical to the results in our primary model, in which standard errors are not clustered. Further, we also run models in which dummy variables for Belgium and Austria are included (see Model A.2 in Table A.2 in the appendix). As these dummy variables make substantive interpretation difficult, they are not included in the main models. However, the results are nearly identical to those of the primary model of this study.

after the passage of a religious symbols ban passes. Simply put, we expect a curvilinear relationship.

Therefore, the first main independent variable measures the number of months before or after the passage of a religious symbols ban in a country an observation occurs. For example, the religious symbols ban was passed in France in April 2011. In Belgium, it was passed in June 2011. In Austria, a ban was passed in February 2017. The range for this variable is -27 to 77, with a mean of 32.856 and a standard deviation of 33.924. The second main independent variable included is a quadratic of the number of months before or after the passage of a religious symbols ban an observation occurs. This second independent variable accounts for the curvilinear expectation.[5]

Beyond the main independent variables, several control variables are also included in the following analysis. First, as there is a likelihood that the overall number of immigrants in a country might influence public attitudes towards immigrants, we include a control for the proportion of the population that is foreign born. The data regarding the number of foreign-born residents in a country is derived from the OECD, while data regarding the population of each country is derived from Eurostat. Importantly, for each country in the analysis, the proportion of foreign-born residents to the total population grows each year, except in 2012 in Belgium and 2016 in France, where there are drops of less than .001.

Further, several individual-level demographic variables are included. As the left-right position of an individual is likely to be correlated with attitudes towards immigration, we include

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[5] Our choice of modeling strategy—using months before and after the passage of a religious symbols, as well as the quadradic—in order to capture the curvilinear nature of the public opinion, means that modeling countries that did not pass bans impossible. We are able to compare attitudes between countries with and without bans using Pew data later in the paper.

a measure of each respondent's self-reported position on a left-right scale, 1 being the most left and 10 being the most right. Additionally, we include a dummy variable indicating if a person is employed or not.[6] We also include a variable indicating the age at which a respondent completed their education, with a higher value likely indicating a higher degree of education. A variable indicating respondent age is also included. Further, a variable indicating a respondent's gender is included with a value of 1 if a respondent identified himself as male and a value of 0 if a respondent identified herself as female. Moreover, a dummy variable for marital status is included, with a married respondent being denoted with a value of 1 and all others as zero. Finally, as anti-immigrant attitudes may have increased with time, due in no small part to political contestation over this issue, we include a variable indicating the year of an observation.[7]

While the Eurobarometer survey asks about immigrants from outside the EU, it does not ask directly about attitudes towards Muslims. We can more directly gauge the influence of laws restricting religious clothing on attitudes towards Muslims by looking at Pew's Global Attitudes data. Unfortunately, the Pew data is limited in several ways. First, France is the only European country with such a law for which data exists. Second, a very small number of control variables makes inferential modeling impossible. What we can do is compare attitudes in 2006, prior to much of the conversation regarding veil bans in France, to attitudes in 2011, after more than a year of intense public discussion (Adrian 2015, Roberts 2011) and the ultimate passage of Law 2010-1192: Act prohibiting concealment of the face in public spaces. We can also compare other European countries for which the same data is available for the same time periods (e.g., the

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[6] Ideally, we would include a variable indicating a respondent's self-reported income. However, this variable does not exist in the Eurobarometer data. However, the dummy variable indicating if an individual is employed should pick up the effects of income as it is likely highly correlated with income.

[7] As radical right (i.e., anti-immigrant) political parties exist in all three countries included in this analysis, we do not include a variable indicating if a radical right party exists in a country as there would be no variance in this variable.

United Kingdom, Spain, and Germany) to see whether those countries experienced similar changes.

Results

We begin by analyzing data from the Eurobarometer Survey. After that, we present descriptive statistics regarding France and three other European countries using Pew data. Hypothesis 1 argues that attitudes towards immigrants will grow more negative as the time until the passage of a religious symbols ban decreases. Further, Hypothesis 2 posits that attitudes towards immigrants will be more positive as time after the passage of a ban increases. Thus, we expect a curvilinear relationship. Model 1, presented in Table 1, displays the results of a direct test of these hypotheses.

Table 1: Effect of Time Before or After Ban on Affect Towards Immigration

DV: Affect Towards Immigration	Model 1
Months Before or After Ban**	0.003 (0.001)
Months Before or After Ban^2***	-0.0001 (0.000)
Proportion of Population Foreign Born**	-2.656 (0.965)
Ideological Position***	0.294 (0.008)
Education (Age at Completion)***	-0.066 (0.004)
Age***	0.004 (0.001)
Married	-0.19 (0.031)
Employed***	-0.235 (0.039)
Male	-0.051 (0.031)
Year**	-0.065 (0.020)
N	15,058
Pseudo R^2	0.057

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$

The main independent variables are the number of months before or after the passage of a face-coverings ban and its quadratic. As Table 1 illustrates, the non-quadratic variable is

statistically significant and positive. As a higher value for the dependent variable indicates greater negativity towards immigrants, this finding suggests that attitudes towards immigrants have grown more negative due to the passage of a religious symbols ban. The quadratic variable is also statistically significant but negative. This indicates a curvilinear relationship, suggesting that the effect of the ban on religious symbols diminishes over time. These inferential findings suggest support for hypotheses 1 and 2.

As we expect the effect of the laws banning full-face coverings to change depending on the temporal distance from the law's passage, it is particularly important to examine the marginal effects of these variables. Figure 1 plots the effect of the time until and after a religious symbols ban on the probability that an individual is very positive towards immigrants. The x-axis ranges from -27 to 77, indicating the time, in months, before and after the passage of a religious symbols ban, with 0 representing the time at which the ban is passed. The y-axis is the likelihood of an individual feeling very positively towards immigration. The solid black line shows the expected likelihood of an individual feeling very positively towards immigration. The dashed lines are the 90% confidence interval.

As seen in Figure 1, 27 months prior to the introduction of a religious symbols ban, an individual's likelihood of feeling very positively toward immigrants is nearly 0.055. This finding is, of course, not exceptionally high and indicates that even more than two years prior to a religious symbols ban, individuals were unlikely to feel very positively toward immigrants. However, as the passage of a ban approaches, one sees a decline in the likelihood that an individual feels very positively toward immigrants. At the time of a religious symbols ban, an individual's likelihood of feeling very positively toward immigrants is roughly 0.047.

Importantly, Figure 1 also shows that the decline in very positive attitudes toward immigration begins to level off after the passage of a ban. For example, the likelihood that an individual feels very positive toward immigration begins to increase about 25 months after the passage of a religious symbols ban. Eventually, the likelihood that an individual feels very positive towards immigration recovers to the level 27 months before the ban is passed. However, this does not happen until about 65 months (about 5.5 years) after the ban is put in place. This finding indicates that attitudes do rebound after the passage of the ban. However, the rebound effect does not occur as quickly as the initial decline.

Figure 1: Effect of Religious Symbols Ban on Likelihood of Feeling Very Positive Towards Immigrants from Outside the EU
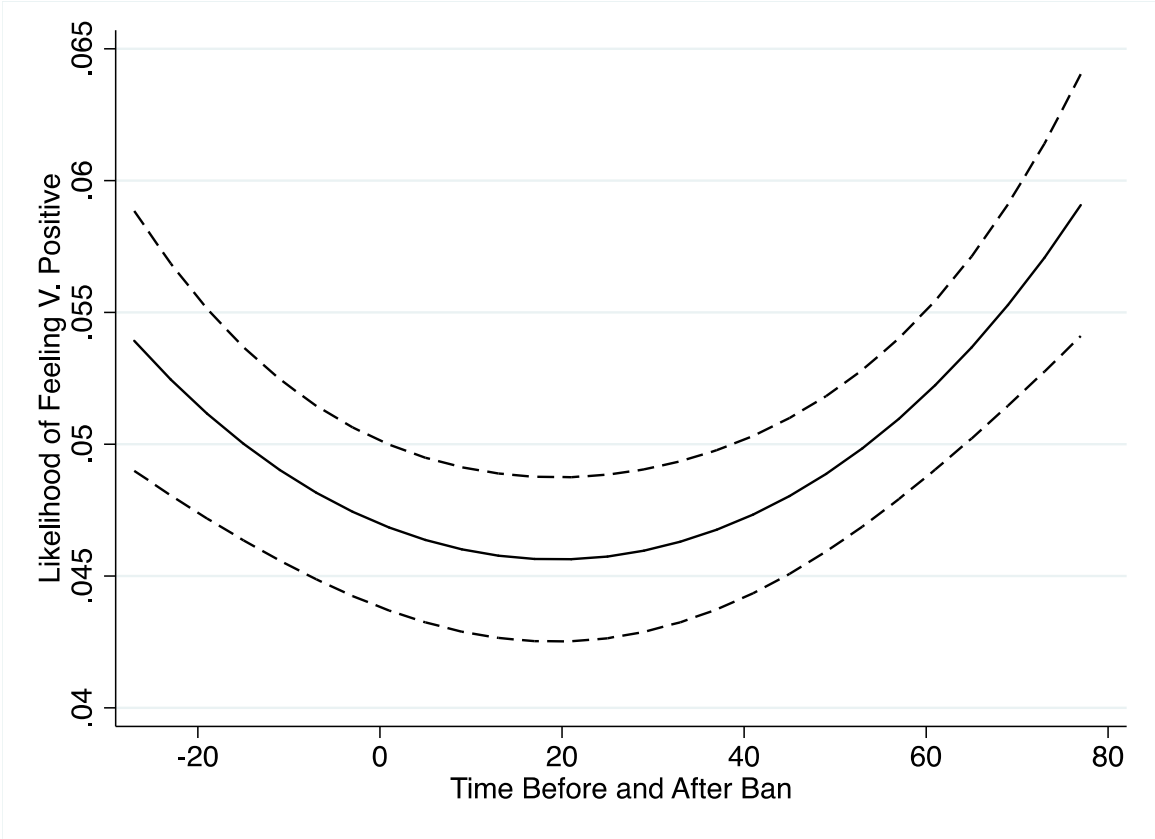
It should be noted that the changes in the likelihood that an individual feels very positive toward immigration are relatively modest. Further, the 90% confidence overlaps for nearly the entirety of time period examined, until about 60 months after the passage of a ban. Thus it is impossible to say with certainty that a ban influenced the likelihood of feeling very positive. However, these findings do fit with our theoretical expectations.

Figure 2: Effect of Religious Symbols Ban on Likelihood of Feeling Fairly Positive Towards Immigrants from Outside the EU
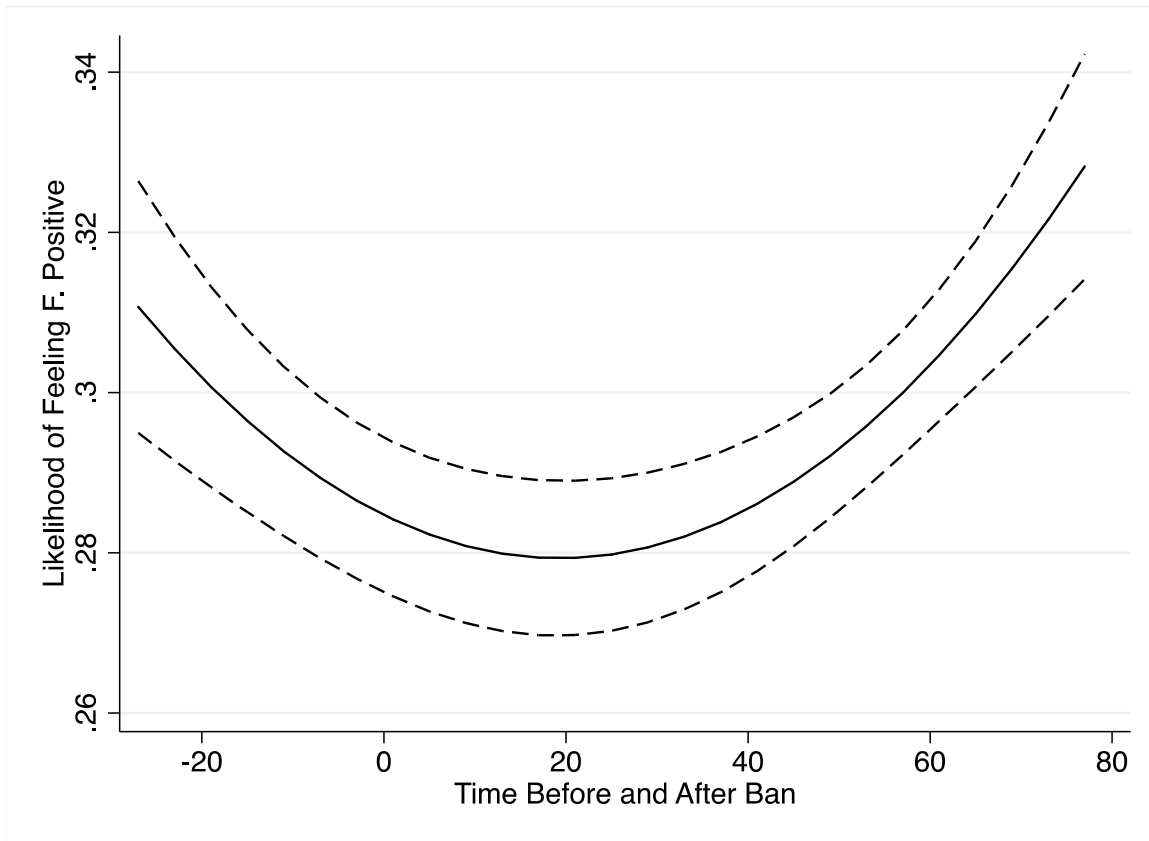

Figure 2 plots the marginal effects of the time before and after the passage of a religious symbols ban on the likelihood that an individual feels fairly positive towards immigration. The likelihood of feeling fairly positive towards immigration 27 months prior to the passage of a religious symbols ban is 0.31, substantially higher than the likelihood of an individual feeling

very positive at the same time. The overall shape of the curve in Figure 2, however, is very similar to that seen in Figure 1. The likelihood of viewing immigration fairly positively drops to about 0.29 at the time of the passage of a ban, with the effect flattening out before rebounding about 35 months after a ban is passed.

Unlike Figure 1, the 90% confidence interval in Figure 2 does diverge, with the upper bound of the 90% confidence interval at around 20 months after the passage of a ban dropping below the lower bound of the 90% confidence interval at 27 months prior to the passage of a ban. This finding provides greater certainty that there is a substantive effect. Further, the overall results firmly fit with the aforementioned theory and expectations.

The effect of time to and after the passage of a religious symbols ban on the likelihood that an individual feels fairly negatively towards immigration is plotted in Figure 3. The likelihood that an individual feels fairly negatively towards immigration 27 months before a religious symbols ban is passed is relatively high, about 0.44. We see very small increase in this likelihood by the time a ban is passed.

Importantly, however, the likelihood of viewing immigration fairly negatively continues to increase slightly until about 20 months after the passage of a religious symbols ban, when this likelihood begins to decline. Similar to the results seen in Figure 1, one does not see a return to the likelihood seen 27 months before the passage of a religious symbols ban until more than 60 months after the passage of the ban. It should be reiterated that the effect in Figure 3 is modest. The change in likelihood across time is more than 0.02, and the 90% confidence intervals overlap for the entirety of the time period examined. However, as with Figures 1 and 2, the overall trend in Figure 3 does fit with theoretical expectations.

Figure 3: Effect of Religious Symbols Ban on Likelihood of Feeling Fairly Negative Towards Immigrants from Outside the EU
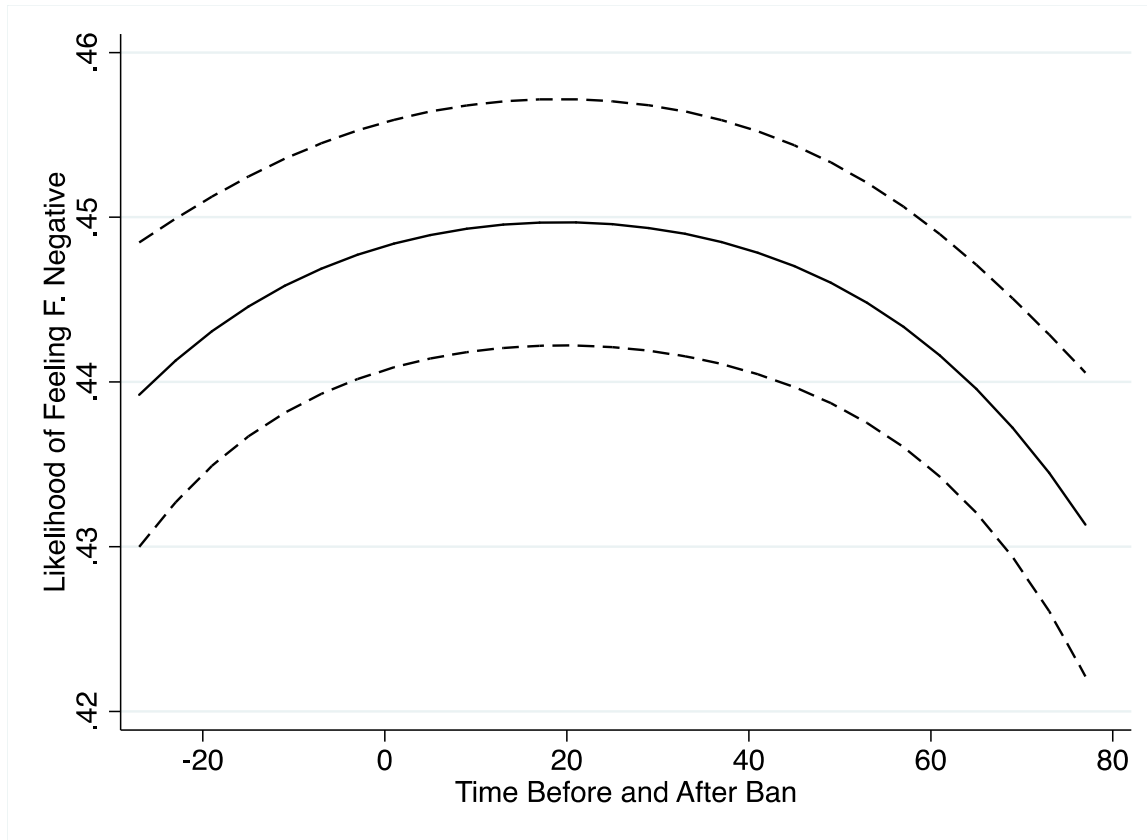

Figure 4 plots the effect of time until and after the passage of a religious symbols ban on the likelihood that an individual feels very negatively toward immigration. As can be seen, 27 months prior to the passage of a religious symbols ban, the likelihood that an individual feels very negatively toward immigration is just under 0.20. However, when a ban on religious symbols passes, the likelihood of feeling very negatively toward immigration increases to 0.22. Further, the likelihood of feeling very negatively continues to increase until about 20 months after the passage of a religious symbols ban, when it reaches about 0.23. After which, the likelihood decreases, reaching a likelihood of 0.20 about 60 months after the ban is passed.

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Figure 4: Effect of Religious Symbols Ban on Likelihood of Feeling Very Negative Towards Immigrants from Outside the EU
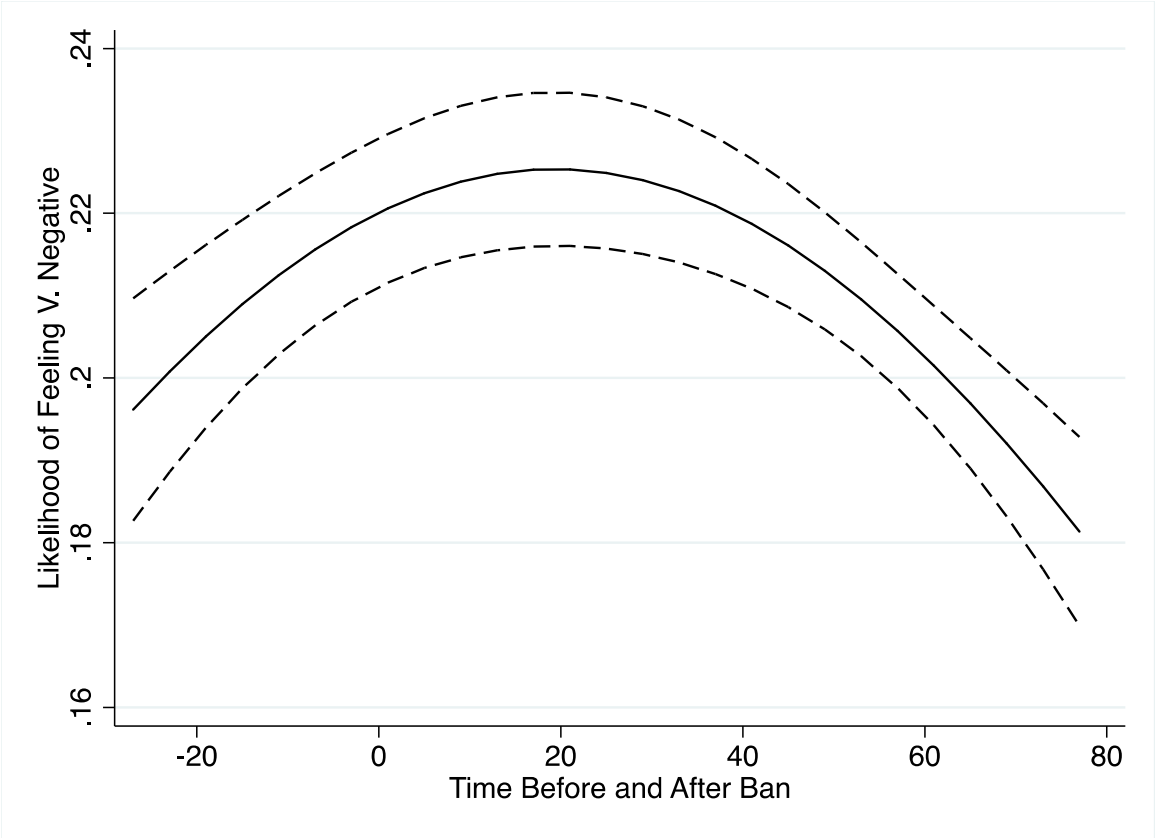
While the substantive effects in Figure 4 are relatively modest, the 90% confidence intervals do not overlap across the entirety of the time. This indicates that a clear substantive effect can be seen in Figure 4. Further, the overall trend in Figure 4 fits with the above theory.

In sum, the results in Table 1 suggest support for both hypotheses. Additionally, the marginal effects displayed in Figures 1 through 4 paint a clear picture. In the lead-up to the passage of a religious symbols ban, attitudes towards immigration grew more negative. This greater negativity eventually dissipated after the passage of a religious symbols ban. However, public affect took a substantial amount of time to return to the levels they were before the increased in-group/out-group salience, approximately two years after the passage of a religious symbols ban.

Several control variables in the models are statistically significant. First, the proportion of the population that is foreign-born is statistically significant and negative. This finding indicates that when the proportion of the population made up of immigrants is larger, positivity towards immigrants is greater. Additionally, an individual's left-right position is positively and significantly related to affect toward immigration. This indicates that those further to the right are more negative towards immigration. Older respondents are also more negative towards immigration, while those who completed their education at a later age and those who are employed are more positive towards immigrants. Finally, the year is negative and statistically significant, indicating that attitudes towards immigration were more positive in later years.

Descriptive Statistics using Pew Data

The theoretical explanation we propose for this pattern is based on Social Identity Theory—restricting the visible markers that identify Muslims as members of an out-group makes their out-group status more salient to the public and makes in-group and out-group identity more salient in general. In 2006 and 2011, the Pew Global Attitudes survey included a number of questions to ascertain a country's non-Muslim population's views of Muslims. There are only four European countries for which data are available: France, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Only one of these countries passed a veil ban. France meets our theoretical standard, as they had more public conversations about religious symbols due to the passage of Law 2010-1192 regarding face-covering in public spaces in 2011. Thus, we expect a greater percentage of French respondents in 2011 to hold negative views of Muslims.

To check that any changes we see are not part of a broader European trend, we compare them to a pooled sample of the other three European countries for which we have data: the

United Kingdom, Spain, and Germany. The data for France is presented in Table 2, showing the percent of French respondents who believe Muslims want to adopt French customs vs the percent who believe they want to be distinct from larger French society, as well as the percent who associate Muslims with a variety of positive and negative characteristics.

There are two statistically significant changes in the French data in Table 2. From 2006 to 2011, there is actually a decline in the percent of people who say that Muslims want to be distinct from French culture, which is counter to our expectation about an increase in viewing Muslims as outsiders. The other significant change is a decline in views of Muslims as tolerant, which is in line with our expectation of increasingly negative views of Muslims as discussion of the veil ban becomes more prominent in French society.

Table 2. French Respondents' Views of Muslims

	2006	2011	Change
Adopt Customs	44.95	45.22	+0.27
Be Distinct	53.47	47.11	-6.36[*]
Respect Women	23.96	22.31	-1.65
Tolerant	45.15	36.16	-8.99[***]
Fanatical	49.05	49.80	+0.75
Violent	39.80	41.83	+2.03

Note: $p < .05$ [*] $p < .01$ [**] $p < .001$ [***]

We can compare the French data to the pooled sample of data from the United Kingdom, Spain, and Germany, which is presented in Table 3. The data from the pooled sample reveal four statistically significant changes from 2006 to 2011. There is an increase in the percentage of people saying the Muslims want to adopt their country's customs, as well as a large decrease of almost 15 points in the percentage saying that Muslims want to be distinct. There is also a significant increase in people who see Muslims as tolerant and a decrease in those who see them as fanatical across these two time periods.

Table 3. Pooled Sample (United Kingdom, Spain, and Germany) Respondents' Views of Muslims

	2006	2011	Change
Adopt Customs	20.12	26.09	+5.97***
Be Distinct	67.29	52.32	-14.97***
Respect Women	17.29	15.96	-1.33
Tolerant	25.06	28.32	+3.26*
Fanatical	66.20	61.41	-4.79**
Violent	45.50	46.45	+0.95

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

The data presented in Table 4 explicitly compares the change in public opinion from 2006 to 2011 in France—where a veil ban was passed—to those in the pooled sample of three other European countries where no such bans took place. The values in the two columns correspond to the values presented in Tables 2 and 3, with statistically significant changes for each sample highlighted in bold.

Table 4. Comparison of Change in Public Opinion from 2006 to 2011 between France and Pooled Sample of European Countries (Great Britain, Germany, Spain).

	France	Pooled Sample (GB, DE, ES)
Adopt Customs	+0.27	**+5.97***
Be Distinct	**-6.36***	**-14.97***
Respect Women	-1.65	-1.33
Tolerant	**-8.99***	**+3.26***
Fanatical	+0.75	**-4.79***
Violent	+2.03	+0.95

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

The asterisks in Table 4 are the statistically significant differences between the two samples, making clear that, although respondents from France did decline in terms of the percentage that view Muslims as wanting to be distinct, at 6.36 points, that decline was

significantly less than the decline for the rest of the European countries for which we have data, which was nearly 15 points. The starkest difference in Table 4 is on the question of tolerance, where respondents in France significantly decline in their views of Muslims as tolerant, while those in the other European countries increase their views of Muslims as tolerant.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand how the passage of bans on religious symbols in three European countries influenced public attitudes towards Muslims and immigrants in those countries. Specifically, we draw on Social Identity Theory to argue that discussion of these laws in the public square necessarily leads Europeans to see Muslims, and by extension, immigrants, as members of an out-group. This "othering" of Muslims and immigrants leads individuals to view these groups more negatively. However, we also argued that as time moved on after the passage of the ban, attitudes towards Muslims and immigrants would return to previous levels.

We tested our theoretical proposition using both Eurobarometer Survey data and descriptive statistics from Pew. First, we used ordered logit regression to examine the Eurobarometer data, finding support for our hypotheses. In particular, we found that as the ban drew closer, negative attitudes towards immigrants in France, Belgium, and Austria increased, with those negative attitudes receding as the time since the ban's passage increased. Moreover, the descriptive statistics using Pew Global Attitudes data suggest that in France, attitudes towards Muslims were significantly more negative at the time of the passage of a ban in comparison to 5 years prior to the passage of a ban, especially when we look at data from other European countries during the same time period.

These findings have important implications for understanding attitudes towards Muslims and immigrants in Europe. In essence, we show that laws targeting Muslims do not assuage concerns of cultural threat in European countries but instead may contribute to growing concern among the public about Muslims and immigrants. Furthermore, in the context of the rise of radical right xenophobic and Islamophobic parties in Europe, these findings indicate that anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant policies may contribute to these parties' electoral fortunes. This is particularly problematic as research suggests that as niche parties, such as radical right parties, become more electorally successful, they influence the positions of mainstream parties (Meijers 2017, Williams and Ishiyama 2018), which in turn affects the likelihood of mainstream parties losing voters to radical right parties (Meijers and Williams 2018).

Of course, these findings are only one step in understanding how policies, such as face-covering bans influence public attitudes towards Muslims and immigrants. Future research should dig more deeply into the effects of these laws on Muslims specifically. For instance, Abdelgadir and Fouka (2020) find that religious clothing restrictions in France led to lower educational attainment and lower workforce participation for Muslim women, directly counter to the gender equality goals they claimed to hope to achieve. Additionally, it may be fruitful to examine how the enforcement of these laws affects public attitudes. Finally, this study examines how these bans influence public attitudes generally. It is important to examine how these laws affect the attitudes of the group that is being "othered" by the law. That is, when Muslims and immigrants are targeted by laws, what effect does that have on not just their attitudes, but their behaviors.

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Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics for Eurobarometer Data

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Affect Towards Immigrants	15,058	1.804	0.862	0	3
Months Before or After Ban	15,058	32.856	33.924	-27	77
Proportion of Population Foreign Born	15,058	0.158	0.024	0.116	0.189
Ideological Position	15,058	5.137	2.061	1	10
Education (Age at Completion)	15,058	19.108	4.334	0	87
Age	15,058	52.435	16.702	15	1
Married	15,058	0.523	0.499	0	1
Employed	15,058	0.542	0.498	0	1
Male	15,058	0.489	0.500	0	1
Year	15,058	2015.581	0.998	2014	2017

Table A.2: Additional Models

DV: Affect Towards Immigration	Model A.1	Model A.2
Months Before or After Ban	0.003	0.016
	(0.001)**	(0.007)*
Months Before or After Ban^2	-0.0001	-0.0002
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Proportion of Population Foreign Born	-2.656	-22.119
	(0.267)***	(10.845)*
Ideological Position	0.294	0.294
	(0.048)***	(0.008)***
Education (Age at Completion)	-0.066	-0.066
	(0.013)***	(0.004)***
Age	0.004	0.004
	(0.000)***	(0.001)***
Married	-0.19	-0.020
	(0.063)	(0.031)
Employed	-0.235	-0.236
	(0.029)***	(0.039)***
Male	-0.051	-0.051
	(0.041)	(0.031
Year	-0.065	-0.071
	(0.014)**	(0.072)
Belgium	.	0.827
		(0.459)
Austria	.	1.794
		(0.832)*
N	15,058	15,058
Pseudo R^2	0.057	0.057
Number of Clusters	3	.

Note: Model A.1 clusters standard errors by country. Model A.2 includes dummy variables for Beligum and Austria. Standard Errors are in parentheses; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$