

Intergroup Toleration and Its Implications for Culturally Diverse Societies

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In recent decades, tolerance has been proposed as a necessary response to the global rise in cultural and religious diversity. Tolerance is widely embraced in community, national, and international policies, in relation to many types of differences between people and groups. However, in both public and academic discourse, the notion of tolerance appears to have various meanings, which limits our ability to create, evaluate, and implement effective policies. To discuss various policy implications of toleration, we first consider the concept of toleration and its difference from prejudice. We then discuss existing research on intergroup tolerance, the importance of perspective taking, the asymmetry of tolerance, and the boundaries of toleration. Subsequently, we discuss research that indicates that the discourse of tolerance can function as a dimension of intergroup comparison that leads to acceptance or rejection of cultural and religious minority groups. Furthermore, we consider the depoliticized effects that tolerance discourse might have and the possible negative psychological consequences for groups that are

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tolerated in society. Gaps in existing knowledge are considered and policy implications are explored throughout.

“Toleration makes difference possible; difference makes toleration necessary” (Walzer, 1997, p. xii)

“Tolerance is one of the few viable solutions to the tensions and conflict brought about by multiculturalism and political heterogeneity: tolerance is an essential endorphin of a democratic body politic” (Gibson, 2006a, p. 21).

It is not a novel idea that the management of cultural and religious diversity requires tolerance, but in the last few decades, this idea has become a prominent narrative in many settings. Tolerance is a buzzword in national, international, and organizational settings for establishing multicultural justice and peaceful coexistence. Leaders from various countries, the European Union, the United Nations (UN), and nongovernmental organizations have all emphasized the importance of policies that promote tolerance. For example, in 1996, the UN General Assembly invited Member States to observe November 16 as the International Day for Tolerance, following from the UN Year for Tolerance in 1995. In Europe, there has also been the “European medal of tolerance,” the “European day of tolerance,” and a “European model law for the promotion of tolerance and the suppression of intolerance.” Similarly, religious and civic associations as well as schools worldwide promulgate tolerance. While, the concept of tolerance is widely embraced across many settings and across many sorts of differences (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality), and across a diverse ideological and left-right political field (Brown, 2006), tolerance appears to have various meanings, which limits our ability to create, evaluate, and implement appropriate policies. In the present work, we will define and place intergroup tolerance within the social scientific literature and consider the policy implications of tolerance and a toleration-based approach. The focus here is on the acceptance of different group identities that sustain and reproduce a way of life among its group members.

Cultural and religious diversity inevitably highlights questions about the acceptance and accommodation of group differences, as well as questions about how to deal with out-group beliefs and practices that are not merely different, but are considered wrong. People have their own (strong) values and beliefs and they cannot be expected to value everything because this would imply abstention of judgment (Kim & Wreen, 2003). It is unlikely that group members who hold a strong conviction, be it cultural, religious, or political, will come to like and approve of beliefs and practices of out-group members who strongly subscribe to an alternative worldview (Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014; Brandt & Van Tongeren, 2017). Yet, there are many situations in which people nonetheless tolerate behaviors and beliefs that they disapprove of. For example, religious believers may tolerate homosexuality, gay marriage, and abortion despite

strongly disapproving of these; nonbelievers may tolerate religious teachings at school, religious parents refusing to vaccinate their children, and the wearing of religious symbols among civil servants despite their group-based disapproval for such practices. Out-group beliefs and practices that are considered in an important sense wrong or bad can be tolerated.

Our focus in this article is on intergroup situations in which the toleration of cultural and religious differences is at stake. Historically, the concept of tolerance dates back at least to the time of King Ashoka (Scheible, 2008) in ancient India (around 260 BCE) who called for religious tolerance to deal with the harmful effects of religious conflict, and in Europe the concept of tolerance evolved from efforts to find ways to manage religious conflicts in the 16th and 17th century (Walzer, 1997). In a modern variation on this, the presence of Muslims in Western countries has led to strong public debates on, for example, the building of Mosques, founding of Islamic schools, the wearing of headscarves in public places, apostasy, and the ritual slaughter of animals. Questions of tolerance of Muslim practices and beliefs within the limits of western liberal societies are at the center of these debates, particularly in Europe, but more recently, also in North America and Australasia. Therefore, the present article will give special attention to contemporary debates about Muslim minorities living in western nations.

We will consider the policy implications of a focus on toleration by first discussing the concept of intergroup tolerance and how it differs from prejudice. We will then consider existing research on intergroup tolerance by considering (i) perspective taking, (ii) the so-called asymmetry of tolerance, (iii) the reasons for toleration, and (iv) the boundaries of tolerance. Subsequently, we will consider the possibility that the political, policy and everyday discourse of tolerance can function as a dimension of intergroup comparison that leads to either acceptance or rejection of minority groups. And finally, we will discuss some darker sides of intergroup toleration by considering the depoliticized effects that tolerance discourse might have and the possible negative psychological consequences for the target group “being tolerated.” We argue that intergroup tolerance can also function as a subtle social mechanism contributing to domination (“repressive tolerance,” Marcuse, 1965). The policy implications of each of these issues will be considered throughout the article.

Tolerance and Prejudice

Most existing initiatives and policies focusing on tolerance between different groups in society deal with combating prejudice, xenophobia, and racism. For example, the nongovernmental “European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation” focuses on fighting xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and racism in the modern world. Similarly, the “European Framework National Statute for the Promotion of Tolerance” emphasizes the need for action against hate crimes, racism, color bias,

ethnic discrimination, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-feminism, and homophobia. In the United Nations' "Declaration of Principles on Tolerance," tolerance is defined (Article 1.1.) as "respect, acceptance, and appreciation" of cultural diversity and ways of being human. Similarly, the "Museum of Tolerance" in Los Angeles and in Jerusalem is designed to educate people about worldwide racism and prejudice, with a strong focus on the history of the Holocaust (Brown, 2006). Doubtless, these policies and initiatives serve important functions, but within these initiatives and policies, tolerance is typically equated with being nonjudgmental, open, and valuing diversity, whereas criticism and rejection of specific out-group beliefs and practices is interpreted in terms of prejudice and racism.

This is similar to most social psychological research in which tolerance is typically equated with openness, being well disposed toward cultural others, or having a generalized positive attitude toward them (e.g., Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Roccas & Amit, 2011; Van Zomeren, Fischer, & Spears, 2007; Ysseldyk, Haslam, Matheson, & Anisman, 2012). In this understanding, tolerance is the opposite of dislike, disapproval, or prejudicial attitude. By contrast, the philosophical and political science literature follows the classical understanding of tolerance, which involves putting up with something that one disapproves of or is negative about (see Verkuyten & Yogeewaran, 2017; Walzer, 1997). Tolerance involves acceptance despite disapproval, and thereby, keeps negative attitudes and beliefs from becoming negative actions. It is "an attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition" (Scanlon, 2003, p. 187). Intergroup toleration is crucial because it makes differences possible, while permitting people to maintain their deeply held group-based values and beliefs, even when these conflict with those of other groups in society.

Political science and some social psychological research indicates that (in)tolerance and prejudicial attitudes are distinct phenomena (Crawford, 2014; Gibson, 2006a; Klein & Zick, 2013; Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1979; Van der Noll, Verkuyten, & Poppe, 2010; Wirtz, Van der Pligt, & Doosje, 2016). Political tolerance, for example, is closely connected to beliefs about democratic institutions and processes (Gibson, 2006a; Sullivan & Transue, 1999). Those who understand and believe in democratic norms and principles are more likely to politically tolerate their disliked or despised political adversaries, for example, by allowing them to hold a political rally, to demonstrate, and to run for public office. But the endorsement of democratic processes plays almost no role in reducing prejudice. For example, teaching middle-school students about the norms and principles of democracy was found to enhance their political tolerance of groups they disliked, but it also made their dislike of the groups in question stronger (Avery, Bird, Johnstone, Sullivan, & Thalhammer, 1992).

Relatedly, in Western Europe, people with a positive attitude toward Muslims have been found to support a ban on headscarves (Saraglou, Lamkaddem, Van Pachterbeke, & Buxant, 2009) and reject Islamic education and building of

Mosques (Van der Noll, 2014). The endorsement of liberal and secular principles plays an important role in the rejection of such practices. Those who object to what they consider unequal treatment of women and authoritarian childrearing practices among Muslim minorities do not necessarily have prejudicial attitudes toward Muslims (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). They disapprove of these practices based on their commitment to liberal values of gender equality and freedom of thought, and show no hidden dislike or hatred toward Muslims as a group. Many majority group members judge male–female relationships and the parenting style within Muslim minority communities as morally troublesome, while many Muslims reject the “liberal” gender relations and childrearing practices of western culture (Norris & Inglehart, 2002). The concept of intergroup toleration can help provide insight into how people can engage in out-group disapproval without necessarily possessing negative out-group attitudes. Such a concept is distinct from what one would expect of the classic prejudice literature. The sections that follow unpack the nature and implications of toleration.

Types of Intergroup Toleration

Forst (2013) makes a distinction between permission and respect forms of toleration. The former refers to intergroup contexts that are characterized by a difference in power and status, whereby the majority conditionally permits dissenting minority groups to live according to their way of life. The permission form of toleration is hierarchical because the majority allows minorities certain exceptions or privileges on conditions specified by them, such as allowing Muslims to pray at work, but not during office hours, or to allow religious expressions and teaching, but only if they do not disrupt the daily functioning of the school. The qualified permission to minority group members to live according to their beliefs affirms the dominant position of the majority and the conditional position of the minority.

By contrast, the respect understanding of toleration requires a more egalitarian relationship between groups, such as full and equal citizenship for all (Galeotti, 2015; Honneth, 1995). While groups hold very different beliefs about the good life and have different cultural or religious beliefs and practices, they can recognize and respect each other as equal citizens with the same rights and liberties. The basis of this form of toleration is respect for others as equal citizens but without valuing or approving the out-group beliefs and practices one is tolerating (Crane, 2017; Scanlon, 2003). Unlike approval, respect is based on the equality of all citizens and all human beings: “respecting people is entirely compatible with thinking their views are wrong, confused, irrational, or wicked” (Crane, 2017, p. 181). For example, in cross-sectional and longitudinal research on religious toleration among Muslims living in Germany, it was found that the disapproval of out-group beliefs and practices goes together with tolerance based on respect for others

as fellow citizens (Simon & Schaefer, 2016, 2017). Furthermore, disapproval of specific beliefs and practices can exist without dislike of the group. One can tolerate an out-group member doing something one disapproves of, and one can reject certain minority practices (e.g., ritual slaughter), while thinking well of the minority group (e.g., Jews). The result is not the valuing of all cultural differences, as in forms of multiculturalism, but rather the toleration of other ways of life to which one continues to object to. Furthermore, the respect understanding of toleration implies that the boundaries of tolerance lie in the citizenship rights, duties, and liberties. One cannot tolerate illiberal practices when citizenship is defined in terms of liberal principles.

The policy implication of this is that the pursuit of toleration does not have to involve trying to change people's evaluation of out-group practices, but rather being able to learn how to disagree within a framework of broad national equality. This may require that people are taught how to disagree and debate contentious issues while ensuring equal protection. Other citizens should have equal opportunities to take part in public debates and are just as entitled as we are to contribute to defining what society should look like. Tolerance without equality is a limited and problematic strategy for managing cultural diversity (Vogt, 1997). However, sometimes people get the impression that double standards are applied. If an imam calls homosexuals inferior people and this causes public outcry including questions raised in national parliament, but a Protestant minister doing the same only elicits raised eyebrows, the minority group perceives a double standard. Similarly, when Muslims offend someone, there is the accusation of inciting hatred, but when Muslims are offended, it is explained as freedom of expression (White & Crandall, 2017). Such a feeling that double standards are applied in public debate, or at school, by the police or in the labor market is disastrous for mutual toleration. Double standard raise concerns about fair and just procedures (see Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997). When people feel they have been treated fairly and with respect, they are much more likely to accept unfavorable decisions. And when this is the case, authorities are also appreciated in a more positive way. Fair procedures indicate that one belongs to the moral community and that they are valued as a full member of that community. Applying double standards creates a feeling of unfairness and exclusion, making it hard to accept decisions and to trust authorities. The implication of such an idea is that toleration should not be considered a substitute for equality. Moreover, people should be able to disagree with an out-group's beliefs and practices within a framework of national equality such that cultural groups do not perceive a double standard.

Perspective Taking

Tolerance is not indifference (i.e., a “whatever” reaction), apathy (i.e., a “who cares” reaction), or cultural relativism with an abstention of judgment (i.e., an

“anything goes” approach). Intergroup tolerance implies a commitment to try to understand other groups: e.g., “we atheists should attempt to understand religion, and . . . we should attempt to tolerate it – within limits” (Crane, 2017, p. xi). Tolerance does not mean that the objection is removed, but rather implies a dual form of thinking. On the one hand, there is what one sincerely believes is true and right, but on the other hand, one must be able and willing to try to understand the perspective of other groups. The ability to entertain the perspective of another is an important ingredient in tolerance and distinguishes it from acceptance based on indifference, misunderstandings, fear, or a lack of knowledge (Graumann, 1996). One has to understand the reasons behind dissenting beliefs and practices in order to be able to accept the right to be different.

Perspective taking has been shown to reduce stereotyping and increase positive attitudes toward out-groups (for a review, see Todd & Galinsky, 2014). It broadens people’s horizons by recognizing the value of other cultures and thereby putting their own taken-for-granted cultural standards into perspective, making them less in-group centric (Galinsky, 2002). However, perspective taking in the context of toleration is not concerned with improving out-group attitudes, but rather with the acceptance of what one continues to object to, while also trying to convince the other to change their ways without force or oppressive means (Schuyt, 1997). Being able to think about controversies from more than one perspective encourages tolerance (Barber, 2003). Taking the perspective of others allows one to understand the rationale for dissenting beliefs and practices. This in itself can lead to greater tolerance and, importantly, forms the basis for further dialogue. The policy implication of this is that it is important to stimulate social interactions in, for example, culturally diverse schools, organizations, and neighborhoods. Interaction is the “basis and the medium for the reciprocity of perspectives, the mutuality of perspective-taking, that is, an essential ingredient of tolerance” (Graumann, 1996, p. 47). There is a large literature on the positive effects of intergroup contact for the reduction of prejudices (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011), but what is needed in toleration is to learn to understand the position of the other without reducing one’s disapproval or compromising one’s own position.

However, it is not only important to come to know and understand differing beliefs and practices; it is also necessary to understand the importance and difficulty of practicing tolerance. In educational settings and for stimulating tolerance, civics curricula and various intervention programs have been proposed such as the “Tolerance for Diversity Belief” (Avery et al., 1992), the “Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion” (Lind, 2005), and the “Teaching Tolerance Program” (Finkel, 2002), and “Promoting Tolerance” (2005). These programs try to help students’ think about civil liberties of unpopular groups. They invite students to take the perspective of the other and apply the definition of tolerance to everyday situations and to explain why certain practices can and cannot be tolerated. Studies have suggested that controversial issue discussions and an open and

democratic classroom climate are related to students' intergroup tolerance (see Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010). Young people must learn how to make a distinction between what should and what should not be tolerated in a responsible and informed manner. Political tolerance is probably a good starting point for teaching youth the importance of intergroup tolerance (Vogt, 1997). Political tolerance is anchored in the constitution of most societies and can be aligned with one's self-interest. The political system is meant to deal with conflicting interests, and it is relatively easy to show that in the long term, political tolerance is beneficial to everyone. Moreover, the idea of self-interest, together with recognizing the importance of the interests of others, only requires a relatively low level of moral thinking. Young people can develop a commitment to tolerance of diverse beliefs and practices by being invited to systematically examine the role of (political) dissent in a plural society. However, it is important for the effectiveness of these programs to recognize the asymmetry of tolerance which refers to the finding that tolerance is more demanding and less easy to maintain than intolerance.

The Asymmetry of Tolerance

Research has demonstrated that it is easier to convince tolerant people to give up their tolerance than to persuade intolerant people to become more tolerant (e.g., Gibson, 2006a; Gieling, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2012; Van Doorn, 2015). With intolerance, the negative judgment about a dissenting belief or practice is in agreement with rejecting those beliefs or practices: you reject what you object to. Being tolerant, on the other hand, implies putting up with actions and practices that you consider wrong: you accept what you object to and this is more difficult to the extent that one is directly affected by it. Such a scenario may elicit dissonance and uneasiness (Festinger, 1962), while creating obstacles for the achievement of intergroup toleration in an everyday context. Moreover, this may imply that tolerance is more fragile than intolerance (Gibson, 2006a). The difficulty is that with tolerance, competing values and principles are at stake, which require complex decision-making. In some preliminary work using the action-based model of dissonance (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999), we used electroencephalography (EEG) to examine the implications of practicing intergroup toleration. Specifically, non-Muslim participants were encouraged to either identify Muslim practices they disapproved of and then consider other reasons why they may nevertheless tolerate such practices (tolerance condition), or only identify practices they disapproved of (control condition). Data suggested that for politically liberal participants, practicing tolerance (relative to the control condition) led to more cognitive conflict, and in turn, more positive attitudes toward Muslims. However, politically conservative participants experienced less cognitive conflict, and in turn, reported more negative attitudes toward Muslims when asked to practice toleration relative to when they were not asked to tolerate Muslim practices (Yogeeswaran, Verkuyten, Jia, &

Nash, 2018). These diverging findings among liberals and conservatives suggest that encouraging intergroup toleration may in itself have varied consequences depending on people's own ideologies and motivations (Jost, 2017). An emphasis on tolerance might not only lead to greater acceptance, but might also backfire and have unanticipated consequences (Vogt, 1997).

The asymmetry of tolerance and the complex thinking involved in it suggests that it is a challenge to try to stimulate tolerance. Research has found that majority Dutch adolescents became less tolerant when considerations against Muslim minority practices were presented, whereas tolerance was not affected by considerations in favor of tolerating the practices (Gieling et al., 2012). Other research has found that the communication of a tolerant social norm was only effective among those whose initial attitudes toward the tolerated Muslim minority practices were more positive (Van Doorn, 2015). Thus, providing tolerant norm information only led to tolerant norm perceptions when the norm was in line with the initial attitudes. Similar to our EEG study, a possible explanation for these findings is that people with more negative attitudes use more rigid forms of thinking which hinder perspective taking and the willingness to change. Cognitive inflexibility, close-mindedness, and a desire for simplicity and certainty (e.g., need for closure) not only make it likely that individuals object toward dissenting beliefs and practices, but also that they are unwilling to accept or tolerate them and to be convinced by a tolerant norm (Sullivan & Transue, 1999; Vogt, 1997). This means that for interventions and policies, it is important to consider the interplay of individual differences and normative characteristics for understanding why, when, and for whom initiatives for stimulating tolerance do and do not work.

However, such studies do not examine the gradual adjustment process that tolerant norms can trigger (Chong, 1994). In time, changing societal norms can affect how people feel about the out-group practices and beliefs that they tolerate. Because of mere exposure and cumulative experiences, people can gradually become adjusted to ideas and practices they once found deeply offensive. They can get used to living around groups with different cultural beliefs, and become more inured to customs and practices that once bothered them (e.g., headscarves, Mosques, abortion, and gay marriage). This does not mean that they no longer have objections, but these might be less strongly felt and less infused with fears and anxieties and thereby makes people more accepting of things they once found offensive and wished to repress or change. Living with cultural diversity is also a gradual adjustment process whereby people adapt to new norms and standards. This takes time, but implies that increases in tolerance do not have to mean increases in self-restraint.

In this process of change, authorities are likely to play a critical role. The perception that the government and other authorities communicate a strong and unambiguous favorable position toward cultural diversity might gradually lead to higher intergroup tolerance, also among people who are inclined to oppose

diversity. A study in Singapore found that people endorsing right-wing authoritarian values had more positive attitudes toward multiculturalism when they perceived stronger governmental endorsement and support for cultural diversity: “when a strong authority explicitly and relentlessly endorses diversity and multiculturalism . . . such a perspective can be adopted even (and especially) by people who are intuitively most opposed to diversity” (Roets, Au, & Van Hiel, 2015, p. 1973). Policies that promulgate tolerance communicate a norm of acceptance and this norm might gradually change the way in which people react to dissenting beliefs and practices.

Reasons for Tolerance

Tolerance requires self-control because the objections that one has toward the practices or beliefs of another group are considered less important than the reasons to nonetheless accept those practices or beliefs. In other words, tolerance based on disapproval implies a trade-off between contrasting reasons for objection and for acceptance. There are reasons for tolerating a specific practice that trump the reasons for disapproving of it. And the reasons for disapproval are not rooted in general feelings of out-group dislike, contempt, or hatred: the objection is considered reasonable (e.g., not arbitrary) or not without value (Forst, 2013). It makes little sense to say that one must hate or dislike a cultural, religious, or racial group of people to be tolerant of it. This would mean that one has to be a bigot in order to have the possibility of being tolerant and that a racist person refraining from racial discrimination would excel in the virtue of tolerance. Furthermore, the more racist the person is, the more tolerant he or she would be (Forst, 2013; Horton, 1996). But the fight against racism is not a fight for tolerant racists, and racist views should not be turned into normatively acceptable judgments. Racism involves the idea that people of a particular group are not considered of equal value and worthy of equal respect. Tolerance, however, implies respecting people, but without respecting the beliefs and practices one is tolerating. In general, it is much more difficult to recognize the value of racist beliefs and racial hatred than of antiabortionists’ concern for the unborn life, secularists’ concerns about the imposition of religious laws, liberals’ concerns about arranged marriage, and conservatives’ concerns about governmental interventions to support minority groups (e.g., Reyna, Henry, Korfmacher, & Tucker, 2005). While one may disagree with the latter groups on their specific beliefs, it is easier to understand their perspective than a hate group’s belief in the superiority of their own race.

An important reason for intergroup toleration is the endorsement of civil equality and liberties such as freedom of thought and expression (Scanlon, 2003). However, there is often a clear difference in the way in which people judge abstract principles in comparison to concrete cases or situations (Dixon, Durrheim, & Thomae, 2017). It is one thing to agree with the ideal of freedom of speech,

but another to accept a government official who burns the Quran or an imam who dubs homosexuals as inferior people. Principle considerations are interpreted and applied to the vicissitudes of daily life. Few people deny the importance of freedom or equality, but the question is how these principles are interpreted and whether or not they are considered applicable in a given situation. The idea of equality may be limited to one's own group, and what is a matter of freedom for one person may be a matter of unnecessary offence for another. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that tolerance is not a global construct, but depends on information about whom, what, and when people are asked to tolerate dissenting beliefs and practices (e.g., Gibson & Gouws, 2003; Petersen, Slothuus, Stubager, & Togeby, 2011). For example, the intercorrelations of tolerance for different Muslim practices are relatively weak ($r \sim 0.25$: Van der Noll, 2014; Van Doorn, 2015; Verkuyten & Slooter, 2007). This indicates that toleration depends on the type of practice one is asked to tolerate and in particular the principles and concerns that are provoked by that practice.

In general, people who emphasize their own liberty are more supportive of the liberties of others and thereby more tolerant of cultural diversity (Helbling, 2010). For example, higher support for civil liberties was associated with lower support for a ban on Muslim headscarves and lower opposition to the building of Mosques, even after controlling for anti-Muslim attitudes (Helbling, 2010). Furthermore, endorsing universalistic values was found to be associated with lower opposition to headscarves, Islamic education, building of Mosques, and Islamic public holidays (Van der Noll, 2014). Similarly, in Belgium, stronger support for universalism was associated with less opposition toward the wearing of Islamic veil by Muslim women, independent of subtle prejudice (Saroglou, Lamkaddem, Van Pachterbeke, & Buxant, 2009).

Tolerance judgments are often made in consideration with perceived morality of a specific action. For example, people are more tolerant toward actions that are based on a different factual view of the world ("They think it is like that"), than on different moral beliefs ("They think that it is right and good") (e.g., Verkuyten & Slooter, 2007; Wainryb, Shaw, & Maianu, 1998). Skitka, Bauman, and Sargis (2005) proposed that objections toward particular practices can differ in the extent to which moral concerns are involved (see also Rozin, 1999). People tend to believe that matters of morality are objective, universally true, and thereby applicable regardless of group boundaries (Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2008). Things that are considered right are simply right, and what is wrong is plain wrong, independent of who is doing it (Turiel, 2002). If, for example, one has a strong moral conviction that gender inequality is wrong, one is likely to believe that gender inequality is wrong in all cultures and religions, making it very difficult to tolerate practices of gender inequality among cultural or religious out-groups.

Researchers from different fields have shown that people are less accepting of divergent beliefs and practices that are viewed as moral issues, and that acceptance

for moral issues is less context sensitive than for nonmoral issues (e.g., Wright, Cullum, & Schwab, 2008; Ellemers, 2017; Skitka et al., 2005). Believing an issue to be moral tends to result in greater rejection, independent of the moral emotions that might be involved and relatively independent of the situational context (Wright, Cullum, & Schwab, 2008; see also Wainryb et al., 1998; Wainryb, Shaw, Laupa, & Smith, 2001). For example, in a two-nation study involving China and the United States, stronger moral conviction about contemporary societal issues was associated with lower political tolerance of those not sharing one's views, and also with lower intergroup tolerance in the United States, but not in China (Skitka et al., 2013). Furthermore, research in Lebanon, Morocco, and the United States showed that stronger perceived similarity in moral values of fairness and care was associated with higher out-group tolerance in all three countries (Obeid, Argo, & Ginges, 2017). And in experimental research, it was found that telling western majority group members that Muslims value gender equality and therefore share important values with them led to greater acceptance of Muslims (Moss, Blodorn, Van Camp, & O'Brien, 2017).

Similarly, Dutch adolescents who endorsed the value of cultural diversity tended to tolerate Muslim practices that raise personal and conventional considerations, but were less accepting of practices that were perceived as moral transgression (Gieling, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2010). More specifically, adolescents were most tolerant of acts that they themselves considered to belong to the personal domain (wearing a headscarf), followed by acts that they saw as belonging in the social-conventional domain (Islamic schools, refusal to shake hands), and the least tolerant of, for them, immoral acts (strong homophobic statement) (see also Wright, 2012).

Such findings suggest that tolerance toward different religious groups will depend on the type of considerations believed to underlie the practice. Specifically, it can be expected that majority members in western societies will be equally intolerant of any religious group (orthodox protestants, Muslims, Jews) involved in a practice that strongly raises moral concerns, but will be more intolerant of Muslims for practices that are less moralized. We examined this expectation in relation to three controversial practices (founding of religious schools, exclusion of women, and strong homophobic statement) in an online experiment involving a large national sample of majority Dutch participants (Hirsch, Verkuyten, & Yogeeswaran, 2018). We found that tolerance was lowest for the most moralized practice (homophobic statement), followed by the exclusion of women, and then the founding of religious schools, as the least moralized practice. Such findings have important policy implications by highlighting the ways in which moralizing specific cultural practices can polarize societal discourse about the issue and reduce intergroup toleration. For instance, in several western European countries there has been commotion, fuelled by politicians and opinion makers, about Muslims not wanting to shake hands with someone of the opposite sex. For many

majority members, the act of not shaking hands is a matter of moral principle, as it symbolizes the equality of men and women. For minorities, it might be one of many ways to acknowledge another person as a fellow human being. This can also be done with a slight bow, a nod of the head, or placing your hand over your heart. By making it a matter of moral principle, the discussion is polarized, and consequently it becomes more difficult to find a solution.

Our research further demonstrated that participants were less tolerant of Muslims compared to orthodox Protestants, but not for the most moralized practice in which participants were equally intolerant of both Muslims and Orthodox Protestants. Our data indicated that opposition toward specific practices is not just a question of dislike of Muslims, but can also involve more generic disapproval of moralized practices. This means that the interplay between specific dissenting practices (acts) and those performing them (actors) can provide a further understanding of tolerance. People can object to a particular practice of a group because they dislike the group (discriminatory rejection) or because of a general objection toward the practice itself (generic rejection; Hurwitz & Mondak, 2002). For example, one can resist the idea of Muslim minorities establishing an Islamic political party—as happens in some west European countries—because one feels negatively about Muslims, or because one thinks that religion has no place in national politics. Research suggests that part of the rejection of specific practices is generic and that the antecedents and underlying processes of generic and discriminatory rejection differ (Hurwitz & Mondak, 2002). The implication is that interventions and policies that try to promote toleration should recognize the possibility that people can have generic objections to particular practices rather than prejudiced feelings toward a specific group. The constructs of prejudice and racism provide important and powerful frameworks for analyzing the negative things that people do, say, and feel, but individuals can have subjectively good reasons to not tolerate certain beliefs and practices, independently of the group. A focus on prejudice and racism does not necessarily lead to a deeper understanding of people's more general concerns, considerations, and dilemmas in living with cultural diversity and the difficulty of intergroup tolerance in particular (Scanlon, 2003).

The Boundaries of Tolerance

Countries adopting multicultural policies (e.g., Sweden, Canada, Great Britain, and Mauritius) encourage and celebrate cultural diversity. Yet, they do not accept every aspect of minority cultures and religions, but tend to apply the liberal minimum and the harm and rights principle to decide whether something should be accepted or not (Tawat, 2014). For example, in 2015 the Canadian government introduced the “Zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act” intended to prevent polygamy, forced marriage, and honor killings. Sweden was one of the first European countries to pass a Bill against female genital

mutilation and to criminalize honor crimes. And in 2003, the “Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity” report that guides Australian policy, made clear that freedom of cultural values depends on the “abiding by mutual civic obligations” which includes gender equality and freedom of speech.

If we are to avoid tolerating everything, there must be beliefs and practices that we all regard as intolerably wrong, making intolerance (“zero-tolerance”) a positive rather than a negative response. Having limits to tolerance is important, as tolerance is not virtuous in itself. If one tolerates oppression and mistreatment of others, the tolerance is not virtuous. Tolerance is neutral and requires other values and principles to be virtuous, and the same is true for intolerance (Forst, 2013). This raises the question of what morally right reasons people can have for intolerance. One important set of considerations is based on the harm and rights principle. From a human rights perspective, accepting honor killings, female genital mutilation, domestic violence, and child or forced marriage would involve a blameworthy offense and not tolerance. In these cases, toleration would infringe on the harm and rights principle, thus it is likely that tolerance will be harder to achieve if out-group practices are perceived as causing harm to others (e.g., actions of hate groups) or as mistreating or threatening the freedom and equal rights of others (e.g., against women and gay rights). This is especially likely when these principles and rights are considered to reflect central in-group values. Self-defining core values tend to be seen as nonnegotiable (Fiske & Tetlock, 1997) providing a justifiable reason for rejecting those beliefs and practices that are grounded in different world-views (Skitka et al., 2005). Accommodations and changes that are perceived as undermining or destroying the core of one’s group identity are almost impossible to accept: “religious groups and political movements would lose their point if they had to include just anyone” (Scanlon, 2003, p. 194; see also Kelman, 2001). And liberal principles of gender equality and individual freedoms rooted in basic human rights are considered to form the nonnegotiable core of most Western democratic societies and thereby a justified basis for being intolerant of illiberal beliefs and practices (e.g., sexism, homophobia, not allowing apostasy, censorship of religious blasphemy) that subvert this core (Schildkraut, 2007).

The importance attached to values of gender equality and individual autonomy can explain why in Europe there is relatively strong disapproval of some Muslim practices not only among those who are prejudiced toward Muslims (Moss et al., 2017), but also among those who are more open-minded and typically self-identified as liberals (Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). An example is the continuing debate in several European countries on the Muslim headscarf which is not only controversial among conservatives, but also among liberals (Fasel, Green, & Sarrasin, 2013; Helbling, 2014). Liberalism often includes the belief that religion should not play a role in government, education, or other public parts of society (secularism). In two German studies, a distinction was made between Islamoprejudice and secular critique of Islam (Imhoff & Recker, 2012). Islamoprejudice was

found to be associated with explicit and implicit prejudice, right-wing authoritarianism, and social dominance orientation. However, secular critique was unrelated to any forms of prejudice, but negatively related to religiosity and authoritarianism. This indicates that disapproval of certain beliefs and practices because of liberal concerns about (perceived) repressive aspects of Islam should not be confused with prejudice toward Muslims. Secular critique involves a general opposition to religious interference in worldly affairs and public institutions (see also Aarøe, 2012).

In another German study, it was found that religious aversion and a desire for the separation of church and state plays a role in opposition to Islamic (and also Christian) education, beyond anti-Muslim attitudes (Van der Noll & Saroglou, 2015). Furthermore, a large study in Quebec, Canada examined whether support for the banning of religious symbols in the public sphere was driven by hidden anti-Muslim sentiments or rather by principled secularism (Breton & Eady, 2015). The results showed that while those who hold prejudicial views supported a ban on religious symbols, a majority of people supporting a ban did so out of principled secularism. Similarly, among national samples in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, a substantial portion of people with a positive attitude toward Muslims supported a ban on headscarves (Van der Noll, 2010). Analyzing data from six European countries, Helbling (2014) found that Europeans with secular liberal values were positive toward Muslims as a group, but felt torn regarding the legislation of religious practices such as the wearing of the headscarf. Helbling (2014) concluded that “people in western Europe make a distinction between Muslims as a group and the Muslim headscarf” (p. 10). Furthermore, he found that there was little variation in attitudes toward Muslims across countries, whereas there was much variation in opposition to the headscarf. The opposition was stronger in countries with a stronger separation between church and state. Taken together, these findings suggest that nation states will inevitably need to establish boundaries for what types of practices to tolerate and those they must prevent through public policy. There is likely no single correct answer to where the boundaries should be drawn, so the policy emphasis should be on creating the space where people can openly discuss competing perspectives without making groups in the larger society feel scapegoated or treated unequally. The reviewed literature suggests that a complex range of factors may be at play for why people may not tolerate specific out-group practices and living with diversity will require careful consideration of reasons to tolerate specific practices alongside reasons to prevent these.

Intergroup Differentiation

Toleration involves the relation between those who tolerate and those who are tolerated. This means that the relevant intergroup context needs to be taken into

account to understand the discourse of tolerance and how toleration is experienced and practiced. Tolerance is considered a key component of liberal democracy and therefore an important dimension of intergroup relations. It can be used to stimulate out-group acceptance, but also to draw moral group boundaries and justify out-group rejection. Tolerance discourse is malleable and can serve opposing goals and agendas. Political activists in the name of diversity can reject the right of free speech of conservatives, and the ethnically tolerant can engage in discrimination and political intolerance against people with contrasting values and beliefs (Bizumic, Kenny, Iyer, Tanuwira, & Huxley, 2017; Carson, 2012).

Out-Group Acceptance

There are a few studies that have used social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) for investigating whether higher in-group identification is associated with weaker out-group tolerance (e.g., Gibson, 2006b; Gibson & Gouws, 2000). This is despite the fact that the social identity perspective does not propose an inherent relation between in-group identification and out-group rejection, but rather argues for the importance of how the in-group identity is understood (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). For example, defining the national in-group in terms of civic ideals and political participation (i.e., civic national identity) is associated with stronger acceptance of immigrants and ethnic minorities compared to defining the national in-group in terms of specific ancestry and ethnic heritage (i.e., ethnic national identity; see Yogeewaran & Dasgupta, 2014, for a review). Using survey data from all European Union member states and multilevel analysis, Weldon (2006) found that higher national identification was strongly related to lower political and intergroup tolerance toward ethnic minority groups in nation states that used ethnic criteria for citizenship policies. The degree to which the dominant ethnic tradition or culture is institutionalized in the laws and policies of a nation-state was found to affect tolerance of ethnic minorities. Those with higher levels of national identification were less tolerant in a national context of more exclusive ethnic, rather than inclusive civic, institutions. This indicates that the political, legal, and social context in which people are required to make tolerance judgments matters.

National identity can also be defined in terms of (a history of) toleration. As former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Jan Peter Balkenende, said after the release of the Dutch anti-Islam movie "Fitna," "the Netherlands is characterized by a tradition of religious tolerance, respect and responsibility. The needless offending of certain convictions and communities has no place here. . . . The Dutch government will honor this tradition and issues an appeal to everyone to do the same" (Dutch Ministry of General Affairs, 2008). Balkenende invoked a historical representation of Dutch identity as one of toleration and respect, to argue for acceptance of cultural and religious diversity in the present. The social identity

perspective proposes that when we think and behave in terms of a given identity, we act on the basis of the norms, values, and beliefs associated with that identity (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). It is the identity content that gives direction to what we think and do. For example, with a content analysis of historical documents, Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, and Levina (2006) demonstrated that the mobilization of Bulgarians against the deportation of Jews in World War II was related to a national self-understanding in terms of our “traditions of religious tolerance and humanity.” Similarly, in three studies (survey and experimental) using different samples of Dutch majority group members, Smeekes, Verkuyten, and Poppe (2012) demonstrated that representations of historical religious tolerance was associated with higher tolerance of expressive rights (e.g., headscarf, building of Mosques) of Muslim minorities. This was especially found among majority Dutch who considered their national identity important, which is in line with the social identity perspective that argues that higher identifiers are more likely to act in accordance with salient group norms than lower identifiers. Furthermore, additional research showed that an identity content of religious tolerance made highly identified Dutch majority group members perceive less identity continuity threat (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015) and less value incompatibility between the majority Dutch population and Muslim minorities (Smeekes et al., 2012). Both of these, in turn, were associated with more tolerance of Muslim expressive rights. These findings are important because they indicate that national identification does not inevitably lead to intolerance toward minorities, but can actually go together with greater acceptance, depending on the salience of self-defining national norms and values. The policy implication is that there is not necessarily a trade-off between an emphasis on a shared national identity and toleration of Muslim minority beliefs and practices. Toleration does not have to undermine national solidarity but can be construed as a continuation of “who we are and what we stand for.” Indeed, emphasizing a national identity around tolerance and diversity can be an effective way to generate unity in a way that increases acceptance of difference, as seen in Canada and Mauritius (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2015).

Out-Group Rejection

A (historical) national self-understanding in terms of tolerance can stimulate the acceptance of minority group beliefs and practices. However, the content of national identity can also be used to argue against specific beliefs and practices. A large-scale study in Germany revealed that about three in four Germans tolerated the wearing of a headscarf by Muslim women, and 72% supported the right of Muslims to build Mosques in Germany. However, less than 7% agreed that important Islamic holidays should become national holidays in Germany (Van der Noll, 2014). A national holiday would make Islam part of the imagined national community, which for many Germans is one bridge too far. Or, as the chairman

of the German Christian Democratic Union said in an interview in 2012, “Islam is not part of our German tradition and identity and therefore does not belong to Germany.”

Intergroup concerns can affect toleration and the notion of tolerance itself can be used to draw a moral boundary between “us, the tolerant,” and thereby morally superior, and “them, the intolerant,” and morally inferior (Van der Veer, 2006). A discourse of tolerance is not only useful to argue for the acceptance of minority group practices and beliefs, but also for construing an in-group favoring moral distinction between “us” and “them.” As frequently argued in debates about immigration and diversity, western societies would coalesce around core values of equality, freedom, and tolerance (e.g., Kundnani, 2007; Vasta, 2007). This argument is typically made in comparison to the alleged intolerance of some immigrant groups, and Muslims in particular. The social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) assumes that different characteristics can provide the basis for positive intergroup differentiation. Because most groups value more than one thing, there is a wide range of dimensions along which to positively differentiate the in-group from an out-group. Yet, whereas groups can accept that they are perhaps less competent or sociable, they tend to consider their in-group more virtuous than other groups (see Ellemers, 2017). Morality of the in-group appears to be the most important determinant of positive in-group differentiation and stimulates in-group identification.

These findings indicate that the notion of tolerance can not only be used to argue for acceptance of the beliefs and practices of immigrants and minorities, but also for making a moral intergroup distinction whereby “they” are defined as failing to meet “our” moral standard of tolerance. And internationally, the “identification of liberal democracies with tolerance and of non-liberal regimes with fundamentalism discursively articulates the global moral superiority of the West and legitimizes Western violence toward the non-West” (Brown, 2006, p. 37).

This intergroup implication of tolerance relates to the classical “paradox of tolerance” which implies that one cannot tolerate those who are intolerant. Walzer (1997) notes that some immigrant minorities are tolerated, but cannot practice intolerance in the society of settlement even though their fellow believers in other countries may be “brutally intolerant” (p. 81). Being tolerant toward forces that fail to reciprocate undermines the benefits of civil liberties and equality and therefore cannot be tolerated: “if a society is tolerant without limit, their ability to be tolerant will eventually be seized or destroyed by the intolerant. Thus in order to maintain a tolerant society, the society must be intolerant of intolerance” (Popper, 1945, p. 226).

However, the fact that the slogan “no toleration for the intolerant” is used by far-right populist politicians to argue against Muslims (e.g., Verkuyten, 2013) indicates that the proposition is not unproblematic. Populist politicians

emphasize the self-defining meaning of in-group tolerance in order to criticize Muslim minorities for their intolerance and unwillingness to adapt (Bowskill, Lyons, & Coyle, 2007; Verkuyten, 2013). It is also argued by these politicians that “we have been tolerant enough” and that “our tolerance has led to segregated and isolated communities and thereby that we threaten to self-destroy our liberal society” (see Blommaert & Verschueren, 1994; Kundnani, 2007). In portraying immigrants and minority groups as transgressing our (traditional) tolerant way of life, minority groups are positioned as undermining the continuity of our identity and as being incompatible with the essence of who we are.

The discourse of ‘not tolerating the intolerant’ indicates that the notion of tolerance can be used in various ways: it can serve the opposing goals of acceptance and of rejection of cultural diversity. This means that policy makers would be well advised to pay close attention to how a discourse of toleration is interpreted, presented, and used. The toleration discourse is malleable similar to diversity ideologies such as multiculturalism (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2018), colorblindness (Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, 2009), and *laïcité* in France. The concept of *laïcité* refers to a type of secularism in which the value of neutrality for achieving equality and inclusion is central. Although the principle is most strongly supported by the political left, the majority of the French population considers *laïcité* a fundamental value of the French republic. However, in the last decades the notion of *laïcité* has been reworked and a “new *laïcité*” has emerged that is less egalitarian and more exclusionary, often advocated by the far right. This interpretation of *laïcité* does not focus on egalitarian goals, but centers on banning religious symbols from public places. In their research, Roebroek and Guimond (2017) demonstrate that these two conceptions of *laïcité* have different implications for tolerance of cultural and religious diversity. Similar to *laïcité*, toleration is flexible and can be strategically used to promote higher minority acceptance or justify rejection. Such work highlights the importance of paying close attention to how the discourse about tolerance is used in public debate and policy as its implications are likely to be far from uniform. Rather than stimulating mutual acceptance, an emphasis on toleration can serve to justify negative stereotypes and social exclusion of “intolerant” minority groups.

Tolerance and Depoliticization

Intergroup tolerance has been described as a practice that tends to reduce structural disadvantages and political conflict to merely friction between cultural groups that can be solved by an “improvement in manners” (Brown, 2006, p. 16). Tolerance would be a strand of depoliticization because it would hide power and can be an impoverished substitute for full and equal rights. This argument is reminiscent of Marcuse’s (1965) analysis of repressive tolerance as a subtle social mechanism contributing to domination: “what is proclaimed and practiced

as tolerance today, is in many of its most effective manifestations serving the cause of oppression” (p. 81). In social psychology, the process of (de)politicization is typically examined in terms of the endorsement of, and participation in, actions that aim to improve the rights, power and influence of disadvantaged minority groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Successful social change requires collective action by minority members and also that the advantaged group recognize injustices and unfairness (Subašić, Reynolds, & Turner, 2008). The discourse of tolerance can undermine both of these aspects.

First, tolerance discourse can have a hampering effect on collective action of minority group members by reducing their perceived sense of control and feelings of (collective) efficacy. As tolerance implies that one has to rely on the self-restraint or “good grace” of the majority, tolerance can be experienced as an act of generosity whereby the object of tolerance should be thankful for being allowed to express their identity and are placed in a dependent and vulnerable position: “To tolerate someone else is an act of power; to be tolerated is an acceptance of weakness” (Walzer, 1997, p. 52). By feeling that one’s standing and membership within the larger society is precarious and dependent on the good grace of those around, the tolerated can feel a decreased sense of control over their own lives. Such a lack of perceived control undermines a sense of group efficacy and may reduce the willingness of the tolerated to act collectively against social injustice and inequality (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Furthermore, toleration discourse might also stimulate the belief in an individual mobility structure where societal failure stems from individual shortcomings rather than group-based disadvantage that should be addressed as a collective issue. Thus, politics of intergroup toleration might lead minority members to attend less to group-based disparities and to be less likely to engage in collective action that challenges these disparities.

Second, the recognition and the willingness of majority members to join in collective action against minority disadvantages is important for changing intergroup relations (Subašić et al., 2008). However, tolerance of minority group beliefs and practices might lead to inaction of majority members because of the conviction that fair and equal treatment is already secured by being a tolerant society. Furthermore, majority members might not tolerate acts that aim to mobilize minority members to express their identity. For example, Muslim minorities expressing their views in order to try to persuade co-believers to engage in specific practices can be perceived by majority group members as a threat to the (tolerant) status quo. Gieling and colleagues (2010) examined Dutch adolescents’ perceptions of four concrete cases of specific practices that were hotly debated in Dutch society: the wearing of a headscarf by Muslim women, the refusal to shake hands with males by a female Muslim teacher, the founding of separate Islamic schools, and the public expression of the view that homosexuals are inferior people by an imam. The focus was not only on the adolescents’ tolerance of these practices, but also on their acceptance of people trying to mobilize other Muslims. Participants

were asked whether Muslims should be allowed to try to convince others to do the same thing. This social mobilization of Muslims is typically seen as threatening to Dutch identity and society, and therefore adolescent participants were expected to be less tolerant of Muslims campaigning for cobelievers' support than of the actual practice itself. The findings clearly showed this to be the case (see also Van Doorn, 2015). Campaigning for support and persuading others implies mobilizing Muslims, for example, to start wearing a headscarf, to stop shaking hands with people of the opposite sex, and to found more Islamic schools. Trying to persuade other Muslims to act similarly is seen as a political act that contributes to the "Islamization of Dutch society" as moving away from tolerance and therefore leads to lower acceptance compared to the act itself (see also Gieling, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2014; Verkuyten & Slooter, 2007).

These findings indicate that practicing toleration can be threatening for majority group members. Feelings of threat are among the most important drivers of exclusionary and discriminatory reactions, including intolerance (Gibson, 2006a). The policy implication is that it is important to consider what causes feelings of threat and the different types of threat that can be involved (e.g., Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Cottrell & Neuburg, 2005). This is critical for developing tools to manage and change feelings of threat among the majority and thereby make toleration more likely. Policy makers and authorities should not dismiss people's specific concerns and fears as prejudicial, and could, for example, reassure people about issues that are (non) negotiable, and emphasize that legal boundaries defining individual human rights in the national context are guaranteed.

Tolerance and Minority Outcomes

Toleration is in between full acceptance and unrestrained opposition (Scanlon, 2003). It allows minorities to (conditionally) express their cultural and religious identities, provides access to resources and rights, and protects them from violence. Toleration acts as a barrier to discrimination and implies that minority members are permitted and allowed to express and enact their group identity. Thus, in contrast to discrimination, toleration can be expected to have positive psychological implications for those being tolerated, especially under a respect understanding of tolerance.

Yet, being tolerated can have negative psychological meanings when compared to recognition and full acceptance. Permission toleration is only likely to satisfy minority members when they themselves accept that what they believe and do is in some respect objectionable. If not, negative social psychological implications are likely because toleration can be seen as a discourse of power and domination. As the Turkish-Dutch novelist and opinion maker Akyol said in a popular TV show ("*De Wereld Draait Door*," December 6, 2017), "We were being

tolerated [. . .] which is of course a terrible word. If you are being tolerated it is being said ‘you are different, but we will put up with you’.” Toleration can be an insult and has the capacity to wound. Some scholars have argued that it is a poor substitute for the recognition and affirmation that minority members need, thus making it necessary to go beyond mere tolerance (Parekh, 2000).

While there is a sizeable literature on the “target’s perspective” that is concerned with psychological implications of belonging to a devalued and discriminated minority group and hiding a stigmatized identity (e.g., Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009), very little is known about the social psychological implications of being the object of toleration. For example, we do not know of the psychological consequences of being tolerated for important outcomes such as the target’s self-esteem, sense of belonging, and psychological well-being. However, there are various possible implications that we can briefly mention.

Permission toleration implies objection toward one’s beliefs, and practices and can be experienced as noninterference based on a dismissive attitude: the majority grudgingly agrees to turn a blind eye or puts up with minorities. In doing so, the larger society’s disapproval of minority identities and practices is implicitly affirmed. What is being tolerated transgresses or deviates from what is considered appropriate and normative and the implied deviance and inferiority thereby threatens a valued group membership among the tolerated. Such an identity threat may negatively impact (collective) self-esteem and well-being among the tolerated (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999).

Furthermore, tolerance can be based on a relatively strict distinction between what can be expressed and practiced in the public versus the private sphere (Forst, 2013). In that case, beliefs and practices related to minority group identities (e.g., shaking hands with the opposite sex, wearing of a headscarf) are confined to the private domain and the general citizenship values and principles of the majority group apply to the public sphere. A policy of toleration can thus imply the privatization of immigrants’ cultures (Tawat, 2014). For example, Denmark’s assimilation policy constitutes toleration with the privatization of dissenting cultural practices. While minorities are not coerced into adopting the majority culture, they are expected to keep their culture as much as possible in the private sphere (Tawat, 2014). A problem with this approach is that it considers cultural and religious identities as only private affairs that do not require public enactment. Yet, a rigid distinction between the private and public realm can be quite difficult when identity-defining beliefs and practices are involved, such as with religion. Such a distinction would mean that a true believer can only be a Muslim, Christian, or Jew at home or in his/her own religious community. Public expressions of one’s cultural identity may therefore elicit negative reactions from the majority (Yogeeswaran, Dasgupta, Adelman, Eccleston, & Parker, 2011). Therefore, it is likely that tolerance without the freedom to publicly express one’s identity may be harmful to the well-being and self-respect of those who are tolerated.

Furthermore, permission tolerance can define minorities as second-class citizens and legitimize the power of those who extend the tolerance. This means that toleration can be perceived by minority members as an (implicit) form of unequal treatment whereby society itself is not considered just and worthwhile and the practices and policies of toleration are seen as confirming the lack of social recognition and respect (Honneth, 1995). Such a perspective may imply that the tolerated individual or group experiences a decreased sense of belonging within society as their practices are not valued, but merely tolerated.

Similar to benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001), this might even mean that being tolerated is in some ways worse than not being tolerated because of the tendency to accept the situation and assimilate one's thinking and actions to match stereotypical expectations. Furthermore, the moral disapproval implied in permission toleration is more implicit which makes it particularly difficult to convince others of the negative implications of toleration. While people in many places across the world recognize that it is wrong to discriminate (and it is illegal to do so in many countries), it is much more challenging to demonstrate the harm of being tolerated. The social accusations and possible costs of discussing tolerance are likely to be different than those of discussing discrimination (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Complaints about mere tolerance might be seen as unreasonable, unjustified, and demanding, similar to the discrediting of those who face and contest implicit biases. Minority members may, therefore, refrain from expressing their viewpoints on the topic of being tolerated to people in the majority or those belonging to privileged groups, which may lead to greater social distancing. More research is needed to empirically examine the consequences of tolerance for minority groups in order to better understand its implications for public policy. Yet, it is clear that policy makers should be sensitive to the unintended negative consequences that an emphasis on toleration can have for those who are tolerated. Being tolerated without feeling acknowledged and respected as an equal citizen may be harmful.

Conclusions

In this article, we have discussed the importance of tolerance for the management of diversity within culturally and religious plural societies. It is understandable that tolerance is widely promoted and embraced across a wide range of countries and settings for trying to establish mutual acceptance and peaceful coexistence. However, we have argued that for policies and interventions, it is important to consider the difficulty of tolerance (Scanlon, 2003) and to consider its possible drawbacks (Brown, 2006). However, this difficulty and the potential drawbacks do not mean that an emphasis on tolerance and toleration is not important and not useful. Intergroup tolerance may not be a silver bullet, nor the sovereign formula or panacea for the complex questions surrounding cultural diversity. But it is a

minimal condition for living together despite meaningful differences. It forms a barrier against discrimination, hostility, conflict, and a critical condition for citizenship and democracy. Tolerance is about the weighing of reasons to object to certain out-group beliefs and practices with reasons to nevertheless accept them. It requires a standard, based on our beliefs and values, of what we think is best, together with establishing an allowable variation from that standard, including when something should no longer be tolerated. It is difficult to know what to tolerate without establishing standards and allowable variations of it. In the absence of such specifications, one might find it easier to simply reject things that they disapprove of or rather try to take the seemingly moral high ground by just accepting almost everything.

To encourage intergroup tolerance, successful policies need to set norms and stimulate the willingness and ability to disagree and put up with group differences. Based on the theoretical and empirical literature discussed, we would like to highlight several issues that should be considered in policy development and implementation:

- The focus should be on concrete cases or situations rather than abstract principles. It is one thing to agree, for example, with the ideal of freedom and equality, and something quite different to agree with the actual enactment of those ideals with regards to specific dissenting out-group practices.
- Presenting and discussing dissenting beliefs and practices in moral terms make toleration more difficult.
- Tolerance is not a global construct but depends on whom, what, and when people are asked to tolerate dissenting beliefs and practices, and principled reasons rather than prejudicial attitudes can underlie nonacceptance.
- Perspective taking and intercultural interactions should be stimulated because they can promote a better understanding of the specific reasons behind dissenting practices and beliefs.
- It should be recognized that tolerance is much more vulnerable than intolerance: it is easier to convince tolerant people to give up their tolerant attitudes than to persuade intolerant people to become more tolerant.
- The possible dark sides of toleration discourses and policies should be recognized: the negative implications that these can have for intergroup relations in society and the psychological well-being of those that are tolerated.
- Authorities, politicians, and policy makers play an important role in setting toleration norms and building inclusive institutions and egalitarian citizenship regimes.

Promoting intergroup tolerance in political discourse, promulgating tolerance in policies, and teaching tolerance at schools is not easy and can also have

negative consequences. Successful policies have to take many factors into account (e.g., legal, political, historical, and educational context) and must have (control) mechanisms in place ensuring that the policy does not remain confined to abstract principles, but is actually implemented. Tolerance should not be a substitute for justice and substantive equality and policy makers should emphasize that not everything can and should be tolerated, especially not intolerance. Tolerance is not the same as relativism and should not be an excuse for letting things slide by. There are basic values and principles that are the foundations of a society. One's own freedom should not be at the expense of someone else's, and the right to religious freedom goes together with a duty to recognize and respect the beliefs of others. Furthermore, other values such as gender equality, freedom of expression, free choice of a partner, and the right to apostasy cannot be violated without consequences. For the public debate, this implies that people should be able to critically question each other and set standards together. Policy makers should communicate explicitly that any discussions about (un)acceptable practices can only take place within legal boundaries defining human rights and individual freedoms embedded in constitutional laws.

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