



**Attitudes toward and Inferred Beliefs for Religious  
Ingroup/Outgroup Members:  
Muslim Children of Pakistani Heritage in the United Kingdom  
and Saudi Arabia**

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3 **Attitudes toward and Inferred Beliefs for Religious Ingroup/Outgroup Members:**  
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6 **Muslim Children of Pakistani Heritage in the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia**  
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9 The post-9/11 era has seen a surge in writings on “Muslim” issues in the West,  
10 but little is known about Muslim children’s perspectives. Attitudes toward, and  
11 beliefs about, the religious ingroup and outgroup were examined in the present  
12 study with Muslim children of Pakistani heritage in the United Kingdom (UK)  
13 and Saudi Arabia (SA). Children aged 5-6 years completed trait attribution  
14 tasks and liking scales and answered questions on God beliefs and religious  
15 practice about themselves, Muslims and non-Muslims. The children described  
16 ingroup members more positively, liked them more, and inferred that they held  
17 more religious beliefs than outgroup members. Cross-country differences were  
18 consistently found. The children in the UK, where ingroup liking was  
19 positively associated with outgroup liking, described outgroup members more  
20 positively and inferred that they had more religious beliefs compared with the  
21 children in SA, where ingroup attitudes were strongly and negatively  
22 associated with outgroup attitudes and both were associated with ingroup and  
23 outgroup inferred religious beliefs. Our findings are discussed in the light of  
24 existing research and theory, and the educational contexts and wellbeing  
25 implications are considered.  
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49 **Keywords:** Muslim children; Pakistani; ingroup/outgroup; attitudes; religious beliefs  
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## Introduction

Since 9/11, amid the lingering conflicts in, and continuing migration, from the Middle East and greater Asia, there has been a progressive rise in writings on so-called “Muslim” issues. However, despite Muslims being one of the fastest growing minorities in the West (Mitrut & Wolff, 2014), empirical work on their perceptions and experiences has been relatively scarce (Sheridan & North, 2009). Few researchers have studied children’s attitudes toward Muslims, or Muslim children’s toward non-Muslims (Takriti, Barrett, & Buchanan-Barrow, 2006). The present study investigated the ingroup/outgroup perceptions of Muslim children of Pakistani heritage across two contexts, the United Kingdom (UK) and Saudi Arabia (SA).

The debate of Muslim integration has gained traction due in part to the assumption of an inherent ‘conflict’ between Western and Muslim values (Hickey, 2013), even when young Muslims do not see such a conflict and value both being Muslim and their host identity, if the latter can be inclusive, affirming and achievable (Woodlock, 2011). Struggles with prejudice and discrimination have seemed commonplace, however (Ahmad & Szpara, 2003), and some Muslim children and parents may mediate challenges by making their religious identity more ‘invisible’ or by renegotiating religious practices (in the United States; Isik-Ercan, 2014).

Even in diverse schools in the UK, implicit discrimination takes a form that positions Muslims as “other” and constructs difference as problematic (Welply, 2018). Evidence shows that relations are becoming distant between Muslim families and teachers, who do not see the children as individuals, but representatives of an essentially different group (Pearce & Lewis, 2018). Elsewhere, some enroll in Muslim schools due to the sense of isolation experienced in secular schools so as to protect their identity in a safe environment (in Greece, Georgiadis, Koutsouri, & Zisimos, 2011; in Ireland, Sai, 2018). Meanwhile, settlement patterns mean that many schools in urban areas have become Muslim majorities (MCB, 2015). However, few

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3 have directly examined Muslim children's religious group identity or attitudes, with some  
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5 key exceptions.  
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8 Takriti's team investigated children's religious attitudes in the UK and Egypt. In their  
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10 first study of Christian and Muslim 3-13 year-old Egyptians (Royle, Barrett, & Takriti, 1999),  
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12 where religion was salient both groups reported ingroup favoritism and outgroup denigration,  
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14 which were more apparent among Christian children. Yet their study of British 5-11 year-olds  
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16 of the same faiths (Takriti, Buchanan-Barrow, & Barrett, 2000) found that religion was more  
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18 important to Muslims, but outgroup positivity increased with age while the ingroup was  
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20 consistently described more positively by both groups. In their qualitative study of Christians  
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22 Hindus and Muslims, Takriti et al. (2006) observed little age variation in religious attitudes or  
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24 beliefs, which children intimated that they shared with ingroup others, if Muslims and Hindus  
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26 tended to focus on rituals and doctrine (e.g., praying, fasting, visiting places of worship).  
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32 More recent studies of religious beliefs and attitudes involving Muslim children have  
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34 been from elsewhere. In Belgium, van der Straten Waillet and Roskam (2012a) found that the  
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36 age at which children (6-11 years) became aware that religious groups differed in their beliefs  
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38 appeared earlier in minorities (i.e., Muslims) and heterogeneous schools (with both Christians  
39  
40 and Muslims). Yet outgroup discrimination was more common in homogeneous schools (van  
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42 der Straten Waillet & Roskam, 2012b). In India, Muslims and Hindus as young as 3 years of  
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44 age could distinguish between religious groups using visible attributes and by 6 years ingroup  
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46 preference and outgroup negativity based on religious practice was evident, but both identity  
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48 and prejudice emerged earlier in Muslims than in Hindus (Bano & Mishra, 2014).  
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53 Children's differentiation of religious groups and ingroup bias are broadly in line with  
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55 adults where Muslims and Christians appraise their own faith more favorably (Moritz, Lasfar,  
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57 Reininger, & Ohls, 2018). These bear out the key tenets of social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel,  
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59 1981), where intergroup attitudes arise out of a process of self-categorization, which gives the  
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3 individual a system of orientation that defines their position and status in society. This would  
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5 allow for different biases among people where beliefs associated with different groups differ.  
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7 SIT also postulates that the fundamental human motivation for positive self-esteem leads to,  
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9 when constructing representations of the ingroup and outgroups, comparisons that favor the  
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11 former, elevating self-esteem. Such processes are particularly potent when the group identity  
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13 is salient or important to an individual and where intergroup differences are accentuated.  
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17 An offshoot of SIT, self-categorization theory (SCT; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994)  
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19 posits that whether an individual self-categorizes at the group level depends on the context. If  
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21 a group is a minority, in particular one seen to be under threat from an outgroup(s), the social  
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23 identity will be more important and salient than it is otherwise. This could explain the greater  
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25 importance or earlier awareness of religious groups for children who form the minority (such  
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27 as Christians in Egypt and Muslims in the UK, Belgium and India).  
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32 The existing studies on religious group attitudes also suggest that outgroup prejudice  
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34 may vary based on outgroup exposure and contact as well as real or perceived discrimination.  
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36 Since the original contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), much work has confirmed the impact of  
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38 intergroup contact in reducing prejudice, more so if aided by optimal conditions such as equal  
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40 status, cooperation and institutional support, including in schools (Tropp & Prenovost, 2008).  
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42 Cross-group interactions have a unique role as pupils have equal status within school working  
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44 together. Still, groups vary in societal status, their existing attitudes and contact also vary, and  
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46 negative contact can happen (Aboud & Spears Brown, 2013). This may worsen any perceived  
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48 discrimination or psychological threat experienced by lower-status minorities such as Muslim  
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50 children, as reviewed earlier, that has been associated with more outgroup rejection (see Bano  
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52 & Mishra, 2014). Yet perceived outgroup threat is not the preserve of minorities; it is a key  
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54 facilitating condition for outgroup prejudice in majority children, according to social identity  
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56 development theory (SIDT; Nesdale, 2004). A recent SIT variant, it combines developmental  
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3 and social-structural factors, such as prevailing outgroup negativity in the social environment,  
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5 to explain how some children develop beyond ingroup preference toward outgroup prejudice.  
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8           SIDT has been widely implicated in research of majority children's ethnic attitudes in  
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10 the West (e.g., Nesdale, Durkin, Maass, & Griffiths, 2004, 2005). It is less clear on minorities  
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12 (Lam & Moodley, 2011) or other group perceptions, such as religious group attitudes, among  
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14 majorities, including Muslims in the Middle East. What little research is available, on older  
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16 children, has marked the prominence of Islam to inform moral and personal values (in SA;  
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18 Simmons & Simmons, 1994). In studies of religiosity, the strength of religious beliefs and the  
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20 degree of practice have been associated with subjective wellbeing, self-esteem and (fewer)  
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22 clinical symptoms for Muslim adolescents in the Middle East (Abdel-Khalek, 2009, 2010;  
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24 Abdel-Khalek & Eid, 2011), and in the UK (Meltzer, Dogra, Vostanis, & Ford, 2010). At the  
25  
26 same time, there has been some evidence of rising religious fundamentalism among young  
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28 people in the Middle East beyond 9/11, amidst the ensuing conflicts (Beller & Kröger, 2017).  
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30 These factors might lead to a backdrop of prevailing negative religious outgroup attitudes.  
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36           Apart from the existing patterns of Muslim children's religious group perceptions and  
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38 possible social determinants, this review underscores the diversity of Muslims, far from being  
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40 the oft-portrayed monolithic population. This study aims to examine the patterns of ingroup/  
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42 outgroup attitudes and beliefs of Pakistani Muslim children in their first two years of school  
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44 in the UK and SA. This kind of research is a worthwhile addition to the empirical literature  
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46 considering the paucity of studies on younger Muslims and the differing social environment,  
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48 which may also influence their connection to religion and religious beliefs (Sarroub, 2010).  
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53           In the UK, the most recent Census (ONS, 2011) identified Islam as the second largest  
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55 religion (over 2.5 million; 4.4%), after Christianity (over 32 million). Over 1 million lived in  
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57 London and where our sample was drawn, a third of the local population was Muslim and 10  
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59 per cent Pakistani, but the young community makeup meant that most schools had a Muslim  
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3 majority. SA does not conduct census on religion, but most estimates put the Sunni Muslim  
4 majority at 90 per cent (before a Shiite minority), and where Islam is the official religion the  
5 law requires that all citizens be Muslim (US DoS, 2004). The 5-million migrant workforce is  
6 exempted, but many, including Pakistanis (who form 24%; Unicef UN, 2013), are Muslims.  
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12 In both countries, Pakistanis form the second largest South Asian group (after Indians;  
13 ONS, 2011; Unicef, 2013), an ethnic minority amid the (white British or Arab) majority, but  
14 Pakistani migration to the UK, which is often permanent, predated that to SA, which is often  
15 more transient. Being Muslim as one of their group identities may be more salient to young  
16 Pakistanis as a religious minority in the UK, but as settled immigrants they may also be more  
17 integrated, an expected path toward acculturation that impacts how one thinks, feels and acts  
18 since early socialization (Hickey, 2013). As such they may also harbor less negative outgroup  
19 perceptions due to the longer exposure to mainstream (pluralistic) values and more intergroup  
20 contact compared to their SA counterparts, who form the religious majority in a theocracy.  
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33 In this study we used a systematic, quantitative method to obtain comparative data on  
34 children's representations of, affect toward, and inferred religious beliefs of, Muslims and  
35 non-Muslims across the two countries. Past exploratory research shows that, at younger ages  
36 (pre-7 years), children are relatively reticent about religious groups and beliefs (Takriti et al.,  
37 2006) while structured methods generate substantive data that may indicate age changes and  
38 group differences (Bano & Mishra, 2014; van der Straten Waillet & Roskam, 2012b).  
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47 Drawing on the existing research and theories, we hypothesized that Muslim children  
48 of Pakistani heritage would like Muslims more, describe them more positively and infer more  
49 religious beliefs about them than non-Muslims, but children in SA should give non-Muslims  
50 more negative descriptions, lower liking and less religious inference compared to those in the  
51 UK. We also examined the relations between ingroup/outgroup attitudes and religious beliefs  
52 for each country, but due to lack of prior research, this specific inquiry was exploratory.  
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## Method

### *Participants*

The participants were an opportunity sample of 101 pupils aged 5-6 years recruited from two locations, a school in London and another in a major city<sup>1</sup> in SA, in both of which the second author and experimenter had worked. The former was a large (over 800 4-11 year-olds) state primary in a suburban center of lower-middle to middle-class families nearly three quarters of who were non-white ethnic minorities (majority South Asians of Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds and East Africans). The latter was the Junior Section (co-education; over 1000 3-9 year-olds) of an international school's English branch consisting of, mostly, offspring of foreign workers the majority of whom from Pakistan. The school in London did not offer an Islamic education, but catered to key religious practices of the majority Muslim student-body (e.g., time for prayers, halal foods, support for older pupils fasting, Eid) and British traditions (e.g., Christmas, Easter), and just under half of the staff (including leadership) were Muslims. The SA school provided an academic curriculum<sup>2</sup> parallel to the UK, but Islamic values were part of its ethos, and religious studies (Qur'an) an assessed subject<sup>3</sup>, while the school calendar marked all of Islamic, Pakistani and SA festivities (e.g., Hajj, independence days).

Ethnic Pakistani children with Sunni Islam as the family religion and parental consent were invited to participate. Around three-quarters ( $N=42$ ) of the London sample ( $N=55$ ; 29F, 26M;  $M_{\text{age}}=5.44$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}}=.50$ ), drawn from six classes in the first two year groups, were born in the UK. Under a quarter ( $N=11$ ) of the SA sample ( $N=46$ ; 19F, 27M;  $M_{\text{age}}=5.52$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}}=.51$ ), drawn from four classes in the first two years, were born in SA. Most children in both schools started school with Punjabi or Urdu as their mother tongue and learnt English in school.

### *Measures and Materials*

The same set of measures was used in both locations as described below.



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3 *Ingroup/outgroup Attitudes.* To assess children's representations of, and liking for, Muslims  
4 and non-Muslims, tasks designed originally for measuring children's national group attitudes  
5 (Barrett, 2007) were adapted. These comprised explicit measures of evaluative stereotypes  
6 and affect that have been reliably adapted for use with a wide range of national, ethnic and  
7 religious groups (see Barrett, 2007; Lam, 2013; Takriti et al., 2000).

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15 The current tasks took the form of a trait attribution set and a liking scale. The former  
16 included a set of word cards, labelled with a simple, age-appropriate, positive or negative trait  
17 (e.g., good, bad, nice, naughty) or group membership term (boy and girl, Pakistani, British or  
18 Saudi, Muslim). The same set was used to test self-descriptions and descriptions for Muslims  
19 and non-Muslims. Liking was measured by a pictorial (facial expressions) five-point scale  
20 labelled with "don't like at all" (1) to "like a lot" (5), for Muslims and non-Muslims.

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29 *Religious Beliefs.* To gauge children's religion-based concepts about God, Islam and Muslims  
30 and non-Muslims, a set of closed questions and word cards were derived drawing on findings  
31 from previous works (Royle et al., 1999; Takriti et al., 2006). Three questions referred to own  
32 beliefs and perceptions of personal relationship with God (*Do you think Allah is real, Do you*  
33 *think Allah loves you and Is Allah happy with you*). The same questioning was derived, using  
34 parallel wording, for Muslims and non-Muslims (e.g., *Do people who are Muslims...*).

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44 A set of five questions were created to assess children's inferences about Muslims and  
45 non-Muslims' practice based on the Five Pillars of Islam, the basic duties of devout Muslims  
46 (see Hickey, 2013). All questions began with "Do people who are Muslims/not Muslims" and  
47 continued with "believe in Allah", "pray", "go to Hajj" (added with "a trip like", alluding to  
48 possible pilgrimages for non-Muslims), "fast" or "give to charity" (verified as "poor people"  
49 if inquired). These keywords for the pillars were also labelled on word cards.

## 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 **Procedure**

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3 Participants were seen individually in a quiet room at school with a briefing about the study  
4 being to “see what children think about Islam and people who are Muslims or not Muslims”.  
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6 The procedure began with the opening questions “*Are you a Muslim*” (and all responses were  
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8 affirmative), “*Do you believe in Allah*”, “*Does everyone believe in Allah*” and “*Is everyone a*  
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10 *Muslim*”. These were followed by the trait attribution tasks. The experimenter said that word  
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12 cards would be read and laid out, and if they thought a word described them, they should take  
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14 it aside. The gender labels were always presented first (with “boys” and “girls” randomized)  
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16 followed by the traits (randomized), and ethnic, national and religious labels. All participants  
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18 were invited to think of an extra trait, which the experimenter wrote on a new card. Then they  
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20 were asked to pick the card that “best” described them. After self-description, they were told  
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22 that the same cards would be used again, but they should think whether the words described  
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24 “people who are/are not Muslims” (with the order of the two counterbalanced).  
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32 On religious beliefs, the experimenter said that she would like to know what children  
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34 believed about Islam and “people who are Muslims and not Muslims”. Own belief questions  
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36 were always asked first in a planned dialogue in the same order, from “*Do you think Allah is*  
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38 *real*” to “*Is Allah happy with you*”. These questions, given in the same order, next referred to  
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40 Muslims/non-Muslims (with the two counterbalanced). Participants were probed for a yes/no  
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42 answer, or to say so if they were “not sure” (which was not indicated by any participant). The  
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44 “five pillars” cards followed (with Muslims/non-Muslims also counterbalanced) in the same  
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46 order from “believe in Allah” to “give to charity”. Participants were directed to use the same  
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48 method as the trait attribution tasks to indicate the applicability of each item.  
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53 The last task was liking for Muslims and non-Muslims (with the two counterbalanced)  
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55 where participants were shown the pictorial scale and asked to point at the “face” that showed  
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57 how much they liked each group. The full procedure took up to 25 minutes to complete after  
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59 which participants were thanked and invited for comments and questions.  
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## Results

The present sample completed the procedure without omitting questions, and all data, with the exception of liking, consisted of “yes/no” responses (which were coded 1/0 for item-level analyses). Preliminary analyses checked for gender differences and did not locate significant effects except for two self-descriptors, “bad” ( $M$  32%,  $F$  13%;  $\chi^2=5.49$ ,  $p=.03$ ) and “naughty” ( $M$  49%,  $F$  27%;  $\chi^2=5.13$ ,  $p=.02$ ), which were used by more boys, and the gender labels as all participants chose their respective group’s label with few (2M, 1F) taking also the other label. Subsequent analyses focused on cross-country (the UK/SA) comparisons in ingroup/outgroup attitudes and inferred religious beliefs.

### *Ingroup/Outgroup Descriptions and Liking*

Table 1 shows the traits and group membership labels that participants in the UK and SA chose to describe themselves and Muslim/non-Muslims. In both countries, more positive than negative traits were used for self- and Muslim-descriptions, but for non-Muslims, more positive than negative traits were used in the UK while the opposite applied in SA. More UK participants used each positive trait and fewer of them used each negative trait to describe the outgroup, compared with SA participants. More UK participants also described non-Muslims using the national label (“British”) compared with SA participants (“Saudi”), who described Muslims using the ethnic term (“Pakistani”) more compared with UK participants (Table 1).

For the “best” self-descriptor, a majority (UK 41%, SA 50%) selected a positive trait, followed by “Muslim” (UK 33%, SA 17%), the gender label (UK 26%, 15%) and “Pakistani” (UK 0%, SA 17%),  $\chi^2_{(3)}=13.65$ ,  $p=.003$ . Post hoc tests showed cross-country differences for Muslim ( $\chi^2_{(1)}=3.28$ ,  $p<.03$ , marginally) and Pakistani ( $\chi^2_{(1)}=10.21$ ,  $p=.001$ ).

The positive traits were summed, and the same for negative traits, for each participant to produce two trait scores (scale 0-4), for the self, Muslims and non-Muslims. Cross-country

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3 differences were found in both scores for non-Muslims; the UK scored the outgroup higher  
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5 on positive traits and lower on negative traits compared to SA (see Table 1).  
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8 An overall trait attribution score was computed, for each participant, by deducting the  
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10 positive trait score by the negative trait score which produced a range from -4 to 4, where the  
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12 higher the score the more favorable attribution overall for self, Muslims or non-Muslims, and  
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14 a negative score meant net group denigration (i.e., to non-Muslims in SA). A 2 (in/outgroup)  
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16  $\times$  2 (country) mixed ANOVA, with overall attribution score as the dependent variable, found  
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18 the main effects of in/outgroup,  $F(1,99)=153.79$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.61$ , and country,  $F(1,99)=48.25$ ,  
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20  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.33$ , qualified by their interaction,  $F(1,99)=45.35$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.31$ . Follow-up tests  
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22 showed that both countries scored Muslims higher than non-Muslims, but the UK scored non-  
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24 Muslims, but not Muslims, higher compared to SA (see Table 1).  
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29 Comparisons between the self, Muslims and non-Muslims *within* each country found  
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31 that the three positive trait scores did not differ in the UK, but in SA ( $F(2,90)=92.42$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  
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33  $\eta^2=.67$ ); the self and Muslims were scored higher than non-Muslims (in Table 1). Significant  
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35 variations in negative trait scores were found in both countries (UK,  $F(2,108)=17.40$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  
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37  $\eta^2=.24$ ; SA,  $F(2,90)=79.36$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.64$ ), where participants scored non-Muslims higher  
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39 than the self, which scored higher than Muslims (in Table 1). The overall trait attribution of  
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41 the three targets also differed in both countries (UK,  $F(2,108)=12.92$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.19$ ; SA,  
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43  $F(2,90)=99.01$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.69$ ), as Muslims were scored more favorably than the self, which  
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45 was scored more favorably than non-Muslims (see Table 1).  
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50 Participants in both countries also gave higher liking scores (scale 1-5) to Muslims  
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52 (UK,  $M=4.75$ ,  $SD=.52$ ; SA,  $M=4.48$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ) than to non-Muslims (UK,  $M=2.25$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ;  
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54 SA,  $M=1.98$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ). A 2 (in/outgroup)  $\times$  2 (country) ANOVA found the main effects of  
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56 in/outgroup ( $F(1,99)=311.98$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.70$ ) and country ( $F(1,99)=5.18$ ,  $p<.03$ ,  $\eta^2=.06$ ), but  
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58 without a significant interaction ( $F(1,99)=.10$ ,  $p>.05$ , NS).  
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### ***Ingroup/Outgroup God Beliefs and Religious Practice***

Table 2 shows that, to the opening items “*Does everyone believe in Allah*” and “*Is everyone a Muslim*”, more SA versus UK participants responded affirmatively. At the same time, the two countries have comparable patterns for the God belief items on the self and Muslims, while more UK versus SA participants inferred that non-Muslims believed Allah to be “real” and to “love” and be “happy” with non-Muslims. Still, more affirmative answers were given about the self and Muslims than non-Muslims *within* each country (see Table 2).

The responses were summed for each participant to produce a God belief score (scale 0-3), for the self, Muslims and non-Muslims. A 2 (in/outgroup)  $\times$  2 (country) ANOVA found the main effects of in/outgroup ( $F(1,99)=128.14, p<.001, \eta^2=.56$ ) and country ( $F(1,99)= 8.70, p=.004, \eta^2=.08$ ), qualified by their interaction ( $F(1,99)=14.72, p<.001, \eta^2=.13$ ). Follow-ups also confirmed the cross-country differences for non-Muslims and not Muslims (see Table 2). Comparisons of the self, Muslims and non-Muslims, *within* each country, found significant variations in both (UK  $F(2,108)=25.79, p<.001, \eta^2=.32$ ; SA  $F(2,90)=115.94, p<.001, \eta^2=.72$ , where the self and Muslims were scored higher than non-Muslims (see Table 2).

Similar to God beliefs, the two countries gave comparable responses to the questions on religious practice about Muslims, but more UK, versus SA, participants inferred that non-Muslims performed the equivalent of the Five Pillars. Still, in both countries more affirmative responses were inferred for Muslims than non-Muslims. The responses were further summed, for each participant, to produce a religious practice score (scale 0-5), for each of Muslims and non-Muslims. A 2 (in/outgroup)  $\times$  2 (country) mixed ANOVA, with religious practice as the dependent variable, found the main effects of in/outgroup ( $F(1,99)=371.09, p<.001, \eta^2=.79$ ) and country ( $F(1,99)= 19.66, p<.001, \eta^2=.17$ ), qualified by their interaction ( $F(1,99)=8.90, p=.001, \eta^2=.08$ ). Follow-up tests showed that cross-country differences were only found for non-Muslims, but in both countries Muslims scored higher than non-Muslims (see Table 2).

### *Ingroup/Outgroup Religious Beliefs and Attitudes*

To explore inferred ingroup/outgroup religious beliefs as correlates for the group attitudes, Separate Pearson's correlations (two-tailed) were conducted for each country. The correlates included God beliefs pertaining to the self, Muslims and non-Muslims and religious practice of Muslims and non-Muslims. Table 3 shows different patterns of correlations between these constructs and ingroup/outgroup trait attribution and liking between the two countries.

There are limited significant associations in the UK subsample between the correlates and attitude measures. Trait attribution for the self was positively and moderately correlated with that for the ingroup which was in turn correlated positively, but weakly, with its liking. Outgroup God beliefs was correlated positively, and moderately, with its trait attribution, and outgroup liking was positively, if weakly, correlated with ingroup liking.

Most of the significant associations in the SA subsample involved outgroup attitudes. Its trait attribution was correlated positively, and strongly, with its God beliefs and religious practice, and negatively with ingroup God beliefs and trait attribution to the self. Outgroup liking was positively correlated with all of its trait attribution (strongly) and religious beliefs (moderately). It was also correlated negatively, and moderately, with ingroup God beliefs, and strongly with ingroup liking. Ingroup trait attribution was correlated positively with its religious practice and negatively with outgroup God beliefs (both weak). Ingroup liking was negatively, and strongly, correlated with outgroup trait attribution and religious practice.

There were also several between-correlates associations. In both countries, positive correlations between God beliefs and religious practice of the ingroup (UK,  $r=.48$ ; SA,  $r=.50$ ;  $ps<.001$ ) and between the outgroup's (UK,  $r=.36$ ,  $p<.01$ ; SA,  $r=.62$ ,  $p<.001$ ) were found. For SA only, outgroup God beliefs were correlated negatively with own ( $r=-.30$ ) and ingroup ( $r=-.33$ ) God beliefs, which were in turn correlated positively with each other ( $r=.34$ ;  $ps<.05$ ).

## Discussion

This study was conducted to examine the religious ingroup/outgroup perceptions of Pakistani Muslim children across the two contexts, the UK and SA. We predicted the sample's attitudes toward the outgroup to be more positive than those toward the outgroup, but that children in the UK would have more positive outgroup attitudes compared to those in SA. The same was predicted of their inferences for ingroup/outgroup religious beliefs. The predictions have been supported while each country also showed a distinct pattern of attitudes-beliefs relationships.

The trait attribution and liking results revealed that the children in both countries had more favorable descriptions of, and affect for, the ingroup, Muslims, than the outgroup, non-Muslims. These findings correspond with previous findings on children's religious attitudes (Bano & Mishra, 2014; Royle et al., 1999; Takriti et al., 2001, 2006) and the key tenet of SIT that intergroup comparisons tend to favor the ingroup, particularly when the social identity is salient. In this case, the testing procedure articulating "Muslims" likely rendered the religious identity salient. The children's trait attributions for themselves also closely aligned with those for the ingroup, if slightly more positive for the latter. This also corresponds with SIT, where social identity is a key part of the self-concept and individuals strive to maintain a positive identity to foster their self-esteem (see van der Straten Waillet & Roskam, 2012b).

The trait attribution results also confirmed clear cross-country differences in outgroup attitudes. Children in the UK described non-Muslims with more positive and fewer negative traits compared with those in SA. In fact the positive trait attributions that the former gave the self, ingroup and outgroup did not differ while their overall outgroup attribution was positive. However, those in SA assigned the outgroup lower positive, and higher negative, attributions than the self and ingroup, and their overall outgroup attribution was negative. Also of note is the lack of cross-country differences in outgroup *liking*, if this might be in part due to how it

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3 was measured, without “disliking”. Still, the results highlight the idea that, while attitudes are  
4 multidimensional, including at least evaluative (encompassing trait attributions) and affective  
5 (liking) components, ingroup and outgroup attitudes are likely separate processes; evaluating  
6 the ingroup *in favor of* the outgroup does not necessitate outgroup derogation, in line with the  
7 tenets of SIDT. The theory posits that for children to go beyond “mere” ingroup preference to  
8 “adopt” outgroup prejudice, certain social-structural facilitations, such as perceived outgroup  
9 threat, tension or conflict between group members, and prevailing outgroup prejudice in the  
10 social environment, may be at work. Outgroup prejudice is evident among the children in SA,  
11 where Pakistani Muslims formed an overwhelming majority in the school. This is in line with  
12 research that found that outgroup discrimination was more common in homogeneous schools  
13 (van der Straten Waillet & Roskam, 2012b). We also reviewed that the prominence of Islam,  
14 with post-9/11 conflicts, in the Middle East might foster prevalent outgroup negativity, but it  
15 is unclear if this can be borne out by younger children’s intergroup biases. Findings about the  
16 sample’s identities and inferred religious ingroup/outgroup beliefs may give some indication.

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Interestingly, even though in both countries all participants affirmed that they were a  
“Muslim”, which the majority chose as a self-descriptor, the “best” descriptor result suggests  
that this identity was more important to those in the UK. This result is in line with those in  
other contexts where Muslims form a minority and are more conscious of their own and other  
group identities (Bano & Mishra, 2014). This bears out the SCT tenet that a social identity is  
particularly important to members of a minority if it is seen as being under threat. Muslims  
being the religious minority in the UK, often portrayed in a negative light in public discourses  
(such as their reportedly slower integration; see Mitrut & Wolff, 2014) or seen as “different”  
in education (Pearce & Lewise, 2018; Welply, 2018), might render the identity more salient.

In contrast, to those in SA ethnic identity appeared more important, being a best self-  
descriptor, which none in the UK selected, and as a descriptor of Muslims, despite Pakistanis



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3 being an ethnic minority within the school context in the UK and the clear majority in SA.  
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5 The specific social environment (cf., SIDT) in school might be a factor as Pakistani festivities  
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7 were celebrated from which pupils might derive a strong ethnic identity. The school or wider  
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9 environment in the UK also means more contact with non-Pakistani Muslims or may foster a  
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11 more diverse concept of “Muslims”, but further research is needed to ascertain this account.  
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15 More participants in the UK chose “British” than those in SA “Saudi” as a descriptor  
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17 for non-Muslims, if the latter’s figure was still near half the sample. Although greater contact  
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19 with the outgroup in the UK might be a reason, this must be treated with caution; children at  
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21 these ages tend to have vague notions of nationality, which is also rather unimportant to their  
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23 self-concepts (see Barrett, 2007), and this is also reflected in the self-descriptor results.  
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27 The ingroup/outgroup religious belief results may shed further light on the children’s  
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29 religious attitudes. The cross-country differences in response to the initial questions, whether  
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31 “everyone” believed in God or was a Muslim, corroborate the children’s differential ingroup/  
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33 outgroup representations, reflecting their social contexts. The responses indicate that Muslims  
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35 were seen as a minority by those in the UK, but a majority by those in SA, and some in both  
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37 countries inferred that people besides Muslims believed in God. The God belief and religious  
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39 practice results show that children in both countries inferred that Muslims had closer relations  
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41 with God, similar to ones they had themselves, and performed more religious duties than non-  
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43 Muslims, in line with exploratory research of children’s religious group beliefs (Takriti et al.,  
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45 2006). Meanwhile, the children in the UK, versus those in SA, inferred that the outgroup had  
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47 better God relations and performed more duties, similar to the trait attribution pattern.  
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51 As the children’s majority/minority representations of Muslims were fairly accurate of  
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53 their country’s context, the cross-country differences in outgroup religious beliefs may reflect  
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55 their opportunity for contact with, and access to information on, non-Muslims. Unlike in past  
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57 research, which defined outgroups as those belonging to other faiths (e.g., Christians, Hindus;  
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3 Bano & Mishra, 2014; Royle et al., 1999; Takriti et al., 2001 2006; van der Straten Wallet &  
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5 Roskam, 2012a), this study operationalized the outgroup as all those who were *not* Muslims.  
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7 This might invoke different ideas to the children across the countries, perhaps more inclusive  
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9 of non-believers as well as those of other faiths in the UK with whom children had contact,  
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11 but more work is clearly needed to verify children's representations of religious groups.  
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15 As outgroup religious beliefs and trait attribution shared the same cross-country trend,  
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17 associations between these constructs may shed further light on the children's group attitudes.  
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19 The clearest contrast is the ingroup-outgroup affect association, which was positive (if weak)  
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21 for those in the UK—the opposite of a conflict between ingroup and majority group influence  
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23 and might signal acculturation (Barrett, 2007)—but strongly negative for those in SA. In fact,  
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25 outgroup liking and trait attributions were also negatively correlated with ingroup God beliefs  
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27 and the same for ingroup attitudes and outgroup religious beliefs. Such patterns, absent  
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29 among the children in the UK, imply that those in SA engaged in certain “juxtapositioning”  
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31 between the ingroup and outgroup; indeed their own and ingroup God beliefs also contrasted  
32  
33 those of the outgroup. The results also suggest the relevance of religious beliefs in their group  
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35 attitudes, in line with past research on the prominence of religion in SA adolescents' values  
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37 (Simmonds & Simmonds, 1994). For those in the UK, outgroup God beliefs were associated  
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39 with outgroup trait attributions, implying that positive evaluations of outgroup members were  
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41 related to their perceived relations with God, while ingroup trait attributions were associated  
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43 only with own trait attributions and ingroup liking. More positive affect for ingroup members  
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45 as linked to favorable evaluations, which in turn align with self-evaluations, is in line with the  
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47 basic tenets of SIT, if great caution is needed for interpreting such correlational findings.  
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54 There are shortcomings in this study that should also be considered. One is the issue  
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56 of generalizability from a small opportunity sample. Although children of the same faith and  
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58 ethnicity were studied, where broader cross-cultural variations between the countries could  
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3 explain some results, others might be related to differences in their schools or families. While  
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5 the participants formed the religious majority in both settings with Muslim leaders, the one in  
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7 SA was larger and more homogeneous, consisting of pupils from families of generally higher  
8  
9 social classes that had migrated to the country for job opportunities. Although recent research  
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11 (Graham, Saudelli, & Sheppard-LeMoine, 2019) notes that Muslim children in international  
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13 schools with curricula based on western education share more traits with Third Culture Kids  
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15 (distinct from those of parents' or host country), in the current setting conflict with traditional  
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17 family culture was unlikely due to Islamic values being part of the school ethos. The Muslim  
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19 school majority in the UK was far more diverse in ethnicity and socioeconomics, comprising  
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21 many second generations within an essentially secular setting, which catered to the majority,  
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23 but upheld inclusive pluralistic principles. Such variations may impact children's perceptions,  
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25 directly if they adopt the values of the social environment (cf. SIDT), or through the contact  
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27 situations (or the lack of) their setting affords them (Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). These may be  
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29 illuminated by more research on the representations children hold about religious groups. In  
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31 this study, we merely examined those based on traits and social identities and, as discussed,  
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33 the "outgroup" included all those who were non-Muslims, while research (Takriti et al., 2006;  
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35 van der Straten Waillet & Roskam, 2012a) has shown that children have different ideas about  
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37 different religious groups versus non-believers. The religious beliefs here pertained to group  
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39 members' personal relations with God and practices derived from the Five Pillars. Although  
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41 these are essential duties for devout Muslims to which many Muslim children relate (Hickey,  
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43 2013), the doctrines of some other faiths have no equivalence or have other focuses (Takriti  
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45 et al., 2006). Future work can include more in-depth inquiries that examine the contents of  
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47 children's representations as well as knowledge of other religious doctrines and rituals.  
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56 The findings from this research have practical implications. Learning about children's  
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58 religious group perceptions equip educators with insights for creating school experiences that  
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3 are responsive to their needs and for tackling beliefs and biases that may impact their identity  
4 construction, interpersonal interactions, self-esteem and psychological functioning (Abdel-  
5 Khalek & Eid, 2011; Ahmad & Szpara, 2003). Research has pointed to the role of religion in  
6 adolescent wellbeing in both SA (Abdel-Khalek, 2009) and the UK (Meltzer et al., 2010). For  
7 the latter in particular, those who have weakly held beliefs or who regard religious practice as  
8 unimportant have a greater likelihood of psychopathology. Meanwhile, other research warns  
9 how early consolidation of religious identity as a “buffer” for anticipated psychological threat  
10 can be associated with outgroup prejudice and discrimination (Bano & Mishra, 2014), though  
11 outgroup denigration was more apparent in the SA sample from this study.  
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24 It was suggested, decades ago (Le Vine & Campbell, 1972), that confidence in one’s  
25 own identity could provide a basis for respect for others, but if this confidence should lead to  
26 “own group glorification” outcomes could be subtle forms of prejudice. Recent interventions  
27 using “corrective” information has been effective in reducing stereotyping of, and lessening  
28 prejudice against, outgroup religions and members for Christian and Muslim adults (Moritz et  
29 al., 2018). The current findings inform about Muslim children’s attitudes toward, and inferred  
30 religious beliefs about, their ingroup and outgroup members that show both similarities and  
31 differences between two contexts. To foster positive identity and self-esteem while promoting  
32 intergroup tolerance, providing accurate and contextually relevant information on religious  
33 groups and beliefs can help to reduce interfaith bias and religious tension.  
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48 In conclusion, young Pakistani Muslim children in both the UK and SA profess more  
49 favorable attitudes toward the ingroup over the outgroup and infer stronger religious beliefs  
50 about the ingroup than the outgroup. However, although religious identity is more salient to  
51 those in the UK as a minority, their outgroup attitudes are more favorable compared to those  
52 in SA. This can be in part explained by children’s ideas about the outgroup’s religious beliefs  
53 influenced by contact with its members and the educational and wider social environments.  
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## Endnotes

1. The location remained undisclosed to protect the anonymity of the school where there were only several of those schools with such characteristics in SA.
2. The school delivered an English-medium syllabus that paralleled that of the UK in terms of grades, term, and assessment toward qualifications from the English National Curriculum.
3. The school stated that, though some families were not “practicing” Muslims, they accepted or welcomed Islamic values as part of the school ethos and religious studies of the Qur’an.

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Table 1. Descriptions of the self, Muslims and non-Muslims by country.

	United Kingdom (N=55)			Saudi Arabia (N=46)			Sig. $\chi^2 / t$
	Self Muslims	non-Muslims		Self Muslims	non-Muslims		
Clean (%)	86	91	<b>89</b>	100	98	<b>22</b>	46.78***
Good (%)	96	100	<b>86</b>	96	94	<b>30</b>	31.70***
Clever (%)	71	76	<b>67</b>	74	89	<b>37</b>	9.25**
Nice (%)	84	89	<b>63</b>	83	98	<b>20</b>	19.79***
Dirty (%)	10	6	<b>35</b>	11	2	<b>76</b>	17.38***
Bad (%)	<b>25</b>	4	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>	7	<b>78</b>	9.52**, 20.87***
Stupid (%)	11	15	<b>29</b>	20	15	<b>78</b>	24.25***
Naughty (%)	33	4	<b>46</b>	46	2	<b>80</b>	12.93***
Pakistani (%)	76	<b>71</b>	38	72	<b>89</b>	33	5.05*
British/Saudi (%)	36	62	<b>73</b>	20	59	<b>45</b>	7.67**
Muslim (%)	75	93	7	85	94	17	
Mean positive trait, scale 0–4 <sup>†</sup>	3.36 (.78)	3.56 (.69)	<b>3.05</b> (1.24)	3.50 <sup>a</sup> (.66)	3.78 <sup>a</sup> (.51)	<b>1.07<sup>b</sup></b> (1.53)	7.23***
Mean negative trait, scale 0–4 <sup>†</sup>	.78 <sup>b</sup> (1.05)	.27 <sup>c</sup> (.53)	<b>1.42<sup>a</sup></b> (1.46)	.85 <sup>b</sup> (1.03)	.27 <sup>c</sup> (.62)	<b>3.13<sup>a</sup></b> (1.41)	5.96***
Mean overall attribution, -4–4 <sup>†</sup>	2.58 <sup>b</sup> (1.65)	3.29 <sup>a</sup> (.92)	<b>1.64<sup>c</sup></b> (2.26)	2.65 <sup>b</sup> (1.35)	3.52 <sup>a</sup> (.98)	<b>-2.07<sup>c</sup></b> (2.86)	7.27***

Significant cross-country differences in bold: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$  (1-tailed).

Significant within-country differences:  $a > b > c$  ( $ps < .01$ , Bonferroni adjusted).

<sup>†</sup>Standard deviations in brackets.

Table 2. Own and ingroup/outgroup God beliefs and religious practices by country.

	UK	SA	Sig. $\chi^2/ t$
<u>Own God beliefs</u>			
Do you believe in Allah (%)	92	91	
Does everyone believe in Allah (%)	<b>51</b>	<b>89</b>	16.91***
Is everybody a Muslim (%)	<b>27</b>	<b>74</b>	25.45***
Do you think Allah is real (%)	93	89	
Do you think Allah loves you (%)	93	100	
Is Allah happy with you (%)	67	78	
<u>God beliefs: Muslims/non-Muslims</u>			
Do people who are Muslims think Allah is real (%)	86	94	
Does Allah love people who are Muslims (%)	96	91	
Is Allah happy with people who are Muslims (%)	64	70	
Do people who are not Muslims think Allah is real (%)	<b>75</b>	<b>39</b>	12.93***
Does Allah love people who are not Muslims (%)	<b>49</b>	<b>26</b>	5.59*
Is Allah happy with people who are not Muslims (%)	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>	8.49**
Own God belief mean score, scale 0-3 <sup>†</sup>	2.52 <sup>a</sup> (.57)	2.67 <sup>a</sup> (.56)	
Muslim God belief mean score, scale 0-3 <sup>†</sup>	2.45 <sup>a</sup> (.79)	2.54 <sup>a</sup> (.72)	
Non-Muslim God belief mean score, scale 0-3 <sup>†</sup>	<b>1.56<sup>b</sup></b> (1.07)	<b>.74<sup>b</sup></b> (.80)	4.43***
<u>Five Pillars/ religious practice: Muslims/non-Muslims</u>			
Do Muslims believe in Allah (%)	93	87	
Do Muslims pray (%)	100	98	
Do Muslims go to Hajj (%)	87	98	
Do Muslims fast (%)	87	81	
Do Muslims give to charity (%)	93	83	
Do people who are not Muslims believe in Allah (%)	<b>36</b>	<b>7</b>	12.68***
Do people who are not Muslims pray (%)	<b>40</b>	<b>9</b>	12.84***
Do people who are not Muslims go to Hajj (a trip like; %)	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	3.08*
Do people who are not Muslims fast (%)	<b>33</b>	<b>11</b>	6.81**
Do people who are not Muslims give to charity (%)	<b>44</b>	<b>15</b>	9.51**
Muslim religious practice mean score, scale 0-5 <sup>†</sup>	4.60 <sup>a</sup> (.49)	4.37 <sup>a</sup> (.90)	
Non-Muslim religious practice mean score, scale 0-5 <sup>†</sup>	<b>1.80<sup>b</sup></b> (1.84)	<b>.54<sup>b</sup></b> (1.09)	4.25***

Whole figures refer to percentages of 'yes' responses.

<sup>†</sup>Standard deviations in brackets.

Significant cross-country differences in bold: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$  (1-tailed).

Significant within-country differences:  $a > b$  ( $ps < .01$ , Bonferroni adjusted).

Table 3. Correlations between ingroup/outgroup attitudes and religious beliefs by country.

	UK				SA			
	Muslims		non-Muslims		Muslims		non-Muslims	
	Trait	Liking	Trait	Liking	Trait	Liking	Trait	Liking
<u>Self</u>								
Trait attributions	<b>.47***</b>	.22	-.07	-.00	.09	.16	<b>-.30*</b>	-.12
God beliefs	.05	.09	.12	-.09	.11	.07	.07	-.01
<u>Muslims</u>								
Trait attributions	-----	<b>.32*</b>	-.27	.05	-----	.10	-.19	-.01
God beliefs	.16	.07	.20	-.25	.28	.28	<b>-.42**</b>	<b>-.47**</b>
Religious practice	.10	.12	-.15	-.05	<b>.30*</b>	.19	-.15	-.19
<u>Non-Muslims</u>								
Trait attributions	-----	-.27	-----	.05	-----	<b>-.72***</b>	-----	<b>.68***</b>
God beliefs	.02	-.07	<b>.42**</b>	.15	<b>-.33*</b>	<b>-.30*</b>	<b>.58*</b>	<b>.37*</b>
Religious practice	.18	-.13	.21	.05	-.02	<b>-.71***</b>	<b>.77***</b>	<b>.54***</b>
Liking	-----	-----	-----	<b>.29*</b>	-----	-----	-----	<b>-.74***</b>

Significant correlations in bold: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  (2-tailed).