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Inclusive or Exclusive? How Contact with Host Nationals May Change Immigrants' Boundary Perceptions and Foster Identity Compatibility

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ABSTRACT

While immigrants may value their ethnic identities, the symbolic boundaries in many European nations are drawn in an exclusive manner, presenting ethnic identification as incompatible with host national belonging. Combining boundary drawing and contact theory, this article examines whether – in a context of exclusive boundary drawing – contact can lead to more inclusive boundary perceptions and foster identity compatibility. The analysis employs survey and interview data from Denmark, which is taken as a case of exclusive boundary drawing. Demonstrating both positive effects and the limits of contact in such a context, the article offers a critical assessment of contact's potential and contributes to nuancing our understanding of macro and micro conditions of immigrant identity.

EXCLUSIVE EUROPE

Across many European societies, immigrant belonging is questioned. In particular, immigrants who identify strongly with their ethnoreligious backgrounds are treated with suspicion in terms of their attachment and commitment to the host community (Foner and Simon 2015; Verkuyten and Martinovic 2012; Hopkins 2011; Simon 2012). As Sliotman and Duyvendak (2015: 152) comment with reference to the situation in the Netherlands, “Belonging to and identification with a nation are regarded as zero-sum attributes and singular in nature ... which is why loyalties to other countries and cultures are regarded as a threat to emotional attachment to the [host nation].” This exclusive understanding of national identification is evidenced in a recent “retreat from multiculturalism” (Joppke 2004) and concomitant “culturalization of citizenship” (Tonkens and Duyvendak 2016) by which several European leaders have deemed it counter-productive to support the maintenance and development of minority cultures. The claim is that initiatives in this regard have only worked to create parallel societies, at the expense of immigrants adapting to the majority culture and adopting the mainstream identity. Therefore, while there is a political wish to promote immigrant attachment to receiving societies, preservation of ethnic identifications among immigrants is deemed undesirable.

On the immigrant side of this situation, one may take the apparent lack of hyphenated categories (in line with “Irish-American” or “Japanese-American”) in many European countries as proof that immigrants themselves perceive the two identifications to be incompatible and that they feel the need to choose between their ethnic minority identity and identification with the national majority group (Bertossi et al. 2013; Verkuyten and Martinovic 2012: 86). Indeed, Phinney et al. (2006) report negative associations between ethnic identification and host national identification among immigrants in European countries, such as France, Germany, and Norway.¹ However, in the settler nations of Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand, they find a positive relationship between

the two forms of identification. Taken together, these results suggest that ethnic and host national identifications are not in inevitable conflict but that the context sets limits on whether they can be combined.

Focusing on the apparent difficulties associated with combining ethnic and host national identifications among many of Europe's immigrants, this article marries two previously disengaged literatures on the obstacles and possibilities of social identification in intergroup settings: boundary-drawing theory from sociology and contact theory from social psychology. The former perspective underlines the power of wider cultural notions of group membership to constrain individual identity choices. The latter, in contrast, underlines the power of intergroup contact to break down stereotypes and experiences of identity incompatibility between groups. As such, they lead to very different predictions about the prospects for immigrants to develop dual identities in Europe, which has partly to do with the level of analysis – macro versus micro – of each perspective. Indeed, critics of contact theory argue that contact theory seems to forget that intergroup encounters are always mediated by broader systems of ideas, making the trust in contact to overcome prejudice overly “romanticized” (Valentine 2013).

Instead of treating the two perspectives as irreconcilable, however, this article goes deeper into the interaction of macro and micro conditions of identity by asking whether (and if so how) contact can overcome exclusive boundaries and, in turn, foster identity compatibility. The theoretical synthesis that this question entails is enabled by the introduction of the concept of boundary perceptions which I suggest is the medium through which both external boundary definitions and concrete contact experiences are translated into notions of identity. I show that by engaging both boundary drawing theory and contact theory in empirical analysis, we arrive at a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how immigrants come to see ethnic and host national identifications as compatible or conflicting.

To arrive at these insights, the empirical study of the article combines survey and interview data from Denmark. As is argued in further detail below, Denmark is treated as a case of exclusive boundary drawing against immigrants. Examining contact's potential force in such an environment, I argue, can help determine the scope of contact's potential and nuance our understanding of boundary processes vis-à-vis immigrant identity development. Combining survey and interview data, the study offers different kinds of evidence for evaluating the proposed theoretical model. In particular, while the analysis of survey data tests contact's effect on identity choices in this particular context, the qualitative analysis examines underlying mechanisms thought to account for the statistical results. In addition, the qualitative analysis gives insight into how contact is concretely experienced and how boundaries are perceived through the words of research participants themselves.

The following two sections present the article's main argument, first, by explaining how the boundary approach may be used to understand the complications of dual identity in Europe and, second, by laying out how contact may change immigrant perceptions of the host national boundary in a more inclusive direction. The fourth section presents the Danish setting as a case of exclusive boundary drawing, and the fifth discusses the combination of survey and interview data. The subsequent analysis provides both a statistical test of the proposed theoretical model and a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews. The article concludes with a discussion of contact's potential in the face of exclusive boundary drawing.

PERCEIVED BOUNDARIES AND IDENTITY THREAT

Symbolic boundaries are intersubjectively shared categorisation schemes (Lamont 1992; Lamont and Molnár 2002) that give meaning to the social world by dividing it into groups of "us" and

“them” (Barth 1969). These boundaries exist at the macro-symbolic level and are reflected, for instance, in public and political discourse. At the same time, they are integral to how people think of themselves and others, making them present also at the micro level. In a boundary-drawing perspective, immigrants’ possibilities of identifying with the host national community depend on the national boundary being defined in inclusive terms (Alba 2005). An inclusive boundary makes it possible for previous outsiders to be seen and see themselves as part of the host national “us.” Exclusive boundaries, by contrast, limit the access to be part of the “us” because the national group is more narrowly defined.

As described above, while there are obviously cross-national variations, there is a trend across many contemporary European societies (e.g. France, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Denmark) toward a culturally essentialist reading of national membership (Tonkens and Duyvendak 2016). In these societies, immigrants are required to demonstrate their belonging and loyalty to the host nation, not only through expression of sentiments but also through action. This translates into requiring immigrants to shed the characteristics that are seen as incompatible with host national belonging, such as cultural traditions, religion, and dress.

For immigrants who are highly identified with their ethnic minority identity, this exclusive understanding of the host national boundary entails a devaluation of central identity elements and, thus, a threat to their conception of self (Branscombe et al. 1999). Such identity threats are hypothesised to produce resistance to the national majority identity (Glasford and Dovidio 2011: 1021; Dovidio, Gaertner and Saguy 2007) because the emotional costs of identifying with the host nation are too large for immigrants who strongly identify with their ethnic group (Berry 1997; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011: 212).

While this interpretation seems to give meaning to the negative association between ethnic identification and host national identification for immigrants in Europe, it does not account for how immigrants form their perceptions of the boundary in the first place, that is, how boundaries travel from the macro to the micro level. In particular, the use of or access to different channels of boundary information may lead to different ideas about the relative inclusivity of the boundary itself. While immigrants are likely to rely on the host country's broader public discourse to form their impression of the boundary, contact theory suggests that direct encounters with members of the national majority group can provide an alternative source of boundary information. In particular, immigrants who have extensive contact with members of the majority may begin to experience the host nation's boundary as less rigid because the contact situation makes room for (and may even require) imagining mutual belonging. In turn, this should soften resistance to identifying with the host nation.

THE POTENTIAL OF CONTACT

Since Allport's (1954) early formulations of "the contact hypothesis," decades of research have established that intergroup contact can reduce intergroup prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Dovidio et al. 2003; Pettigrew 1998). Most of this work has focused on majority/high-status group members' reduced prejudice toward minority/low-status groups through increased contact (Glasford and Dovidio 2011; González and Brown 2006). This focus is understandable, considering the strong normative concerns about racism, discrimination, and exclusion toward people in lower status or minority groups. Indeed, these were the central concerns for Allport's (1954) original work, situated, as it was, in the context of white Americans' anti-black prejudices (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004: 260; McLaren 2003: 912). However, the other side of the coin – how minority group

members may be affected by contact – is important to examine if we are to understand contact's scope and potential contribution to creating better intergroup relations and social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies. Looking to immigrant minorities, this study contributes to this literature by examining contact under less than optimal conditions, that is, in a context of rigid and exclusive boundary drawing.

Contact is proposed to work through both cognitive and affective mechanisms (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005a; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008).² Cognitive factors involve learning about the out-group, which can, in turn, help break down stereotypes and prejudice (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004: 260; Pettigrew 1998: 70-71). Through contact, immigrants may, for example, learn that they share more beliefs and values with host nationals than they initially thought, a first step in the process to identification. Affective factors include anxiety reduction, which can improve feelings about the out-group (Kenworthy et al. 2005; Pettigrew 1998: 71-72). Immigrants may expect to be treated badly or not be recognised, but through positive contact, such expectations could dissolve and open the door to more positive conceptions of the host national group. If contact can be sufficiently deep to produce intergroup comfort, liking, and respect, immigrants may experience their identity as less threatened. As a result, they should be less anxious about adopting features of the majority identity in their self-conception. Finally, research on contact's affective dimensions has shown that intergroup contact – in particular friendship – can involve self-expansion, whereby individuals extend their sense of self to include the out-group (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008) and conceive of ethnic and host national identifications as compatible rather than conflicting.

Figure 1 presents the synthesised model offered in this article, combining the insights of boundary drawing and contact theory. It proposes that the extent to which immigrants are capable of identifying with both their ethnic group and the host nation depends on their perceptions of the symbolic boundary of the host national group. Given a context of exclusive boundary drawing, host

national identification will be experienced as a threat to the value of ethnic identity, producing identity conflict. However, if immigrants are engaged in contact with members of the national majority group, perceptions of the boundary are hypothesised to be more inclusive, removing the experience of identity threat and enabling minority ethnic identifiers to identify with host nationals.

Figure 1. Contact as a factor shaping boundary perceptions and fostering identity compatibility

While this is a promising account of contact's potential, it is also clear from the above review that if contact is to overcome exclusive boundaries through increased knowledge, reduced anxiety and, self-expansion, it must be more than superficial. Indeed, Allport himself underscored that superficial contact, which does not involve meaningful communication, is unlikely to change attitudes, beliefs, and feelings (1954: 272). Because of their greater vulnerability to identity devaluation, immigrant minorities may be more hesitant to update their boundary perceptions from contact, a suspicion given weight by the fact that contact has been shown to have weaker effects

among minority members in experimental setups (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005b; Hayes et al. 2007). The expectation therefore is that contact may have the potential of enabling immigrants who are highly identified with their ethnic group to develop identification with the host nation but only under conditions of extensive and more-than-superficial contact.

THE EMPIRICAL SETTING: DENMARK

The data for this study stem from a Danish survey of first- and second-generation immigrants and 20 in-depth interviews with second-generation immigrants, also conducted in Denmark. Denmark is a small nation, with a total population of around 5.7 million. Approximately 8.5 percent are immigrants, with another 3 percent constituting the second generation (Statistics Denmark 2015). Especially since the early 2000s, there has been a strong political focus (from governments of different political colour) on limiting the number of immigrants, with reference to both economic and social cohesion arguments. In particular, immigrants of non-Western backgrounds have been picked out as constituting a central challenge to core Danish values (Mouritsen and Olsen 2013; Jensen et al. 2010). This category of immigrants is often associated with problems of maladjustment, crime, and parallel societies in which they are claimed to have established their own rules that are not in line with how Danish society works (Simonsen 2016). The political party most strongly associated with immigrant-sceptical rhetoric is the right-wing nationalist Danish People's Party, which has received a stable electoral support of 12-13 percent of the vote in national elections throughout the 2000s (acting as a support party for the liberal-conservative governments through the decade) and rose to 21.1 percent of the vote in the 2015 national election. Many analysts understand this party's strong presence in Danish politics to have contributed to legitimising a sharp political discourse on immigrants, where notions of multiculturalism and the

preservation of ethnoreligious identities are seen as challenges to the goal of integration (Jensen et al. 2010).

Although the particular way in which the boundary toward immigrants is drawn in Denmark is intimately bound up with Danish understandings of national identity (cf. Wimmer 2013), Denmark can be seen as a case of exclusive boundary drawing, where immigrants' possibilities of imagining themselves both as "ethnic" and "Danish" are challenged by the political discourse described above. At the same time, survey data show that Danes from the ethnic majority are somewhat split in their perceptions of immigrants, with around 50 percent expressing support for immigrant assimilation (rather than maintaining cultural differences), linking migration to societal tensions, and seeing immigrants as welfare exploiters (Sniderman et al. 2014: 14). This suggests that both positive and negative contact situations are possible.

THE DATA

This article makes use of two data sources: survey data and in-depth interviews. Combining the two data sources allows me to shed light on different elements of the model depicted in Figure 1. While survey data enable a test of the overall hypothesis that contact can moderate the otherwise-negative relationship between ethnic and host national identifications, interviews enable examination of the meanings of these identifications and the proposed process.

It should be noted that interview participants were not drawn from the same study as survey respondents. Therefore, the insights gained from analysis of the interview material can only be suggestive and do not provide conclusive evidence that the proposed underlying mechanisms account for the survey results. There is, however, a clear advantage to using two data sources not being embedded: If analyses on both sets of data point in the same direction, there is reason to

believe that the results are generalizable to immigrants in other contexts of exclusive boundary drawing.

I begin with statistical analysis of data from the survey, “The values of ethnic groups,” conducted in 2006 (project headed by Peter Gundelach, data retrieved from Dansk Data Arkiv). From a list of the origin countries of Denmark’s largest immigrant groups, six groups that vary on religious, cultural, and geographical backgrounds were selected to participate in the survey (Gundelach and Nørregård-Nielsen 2007: 16): immigrants from Turkey, Pakistan, the former Yugoslavia, Iran, Iraq and Vietnam.³ The survey was a combination of web-based self-completion (13.4 percent of respondents) and telephone interviews (86.6 percent of respondents). Potential respondents were identified via Denmark’s central person registry, which includes personal information on all persons with a Danish address. Response rates varied between 41 (respondents with Pakistani background) and 61 (respondents with Iranian background) percent. While these response rates are lower than for most nationally representative samples, they are high for an immigrant survey (Reichel and Morales 2017). The questionnaire was rigorously tested with immigrant respondents from the different ethnic groups and translated into the relevant languages, giving respondents the option of being interviewed in their native tongue. The total number of respondents in the final analysis is 3,404.

Measures

Identifications: Both host national identification and ethnic identification were assessed in terms of the degree to which the respondent has a sense of attachment to the relevant group. For host national identification, respondents were asked: “People who live in Denmark feel different degrees of attachment to Denmark. How do you feel?,” with four response categories: “very strong

attachment,” “rather strong attachment,” “less strong attachment,” and “no attachment whatsoever.” For ethnic identification, the question was, “People who have moved to Denmark feel different degrees of attachment to their country of origin. How do you feel?,” with the same four response categories. Operationalising ethnic identification in terms of attachment to the country of origin may be less obvious as explicit reference to the ethnic *group* is missing. However, for immigrant minorities, ethnic belonging often comes down to “home country” attachment, as is also reflected in the interviews discussed later. In addition, the parallel between the two questions (exchanging “Denmark” with “origin country”) in the questionnaire is advantageous in that similar considerations are likely to be triggered for each of the two loci of belonging. Note in this respect that the two questions were placed with other questions between to minimise the risk that the reply to one affected how respondents replied to the other.

While the variables are ordinal in their original format, I treat them here as continuous (scaled 0-1) to ease interpretation. I do so because the response categories apply a logic of degrees, which is in line with a theoretical understanding of identification as something that does not “jump” from one level to the other but, rather, is experienced on a continuum (where the strength of identification varies) (Cheek 1989). In addition, analyses treating the measures as ordinal rather than continuous provide similar results. Note that a positive association between the two identities may arise from two scenarios: either the respondent identified strongly with both, or (s)he did not identify with either. As I am only interested in the first scenario, I removed from the analysis 12 respondents who did not identify with either group.

Contact: Respondents were asked, “How many of the people that you talk to on a regular basis are Danes?,” with response categories “all,” “most,” “around half,” “a few,” and “none.” I treat this variable as a continuous measure (scaled 0-1), ranging from no regular contact with Danes to only having contact with Danes. With the formulation “people you talk to on a regular basis,”

respondents were asked to think of their everyday contacts, with both people they know very well (e.g. friends and family) and people with whom they share less intimate communications (e.g. neighbours, bus drivers, teachers, co-workers, etc.). The measure, therefore, includes both voluntary and more involuntary contact and captures the study's ambition to look at people's everyday (rather than more occasional) contact situations. In addition, the focus on verbalised interactions ("talk to") is well-suited to test the idea that meaningful communication is what matters if contact is to break down perceptions of exclusive group boundaries. However, the question does not capture the depth of that communication.

Note, too, that the question takes "Danes" as a self-evident category without specifying any criteria by which to determine who qualifies as a Dane. However, it is clear from the way the survey is built that respondents are *supposed* to think of individuals with Danish ancestry.⁴ While there is no guarantee that all respondents think of Danes this way,⁵ it is clear that in answering the question, they will have in mind contact situations where group membership is salient. This is important since salience of group membership is argued as a requirement for positive contact effects to extend (generalise) beyond the immediate contact situation (Dovidio et al. 2003: 13; Hewstone and Brown 1986).

Controls: Age and gender are included as standard controls, together with the respondent's/parents' home country (distinguishing first- and second-generation immigrants). In addition, as immigrants' identifications and contact opportunities are likely affected by their relative incorporation in society, respondents' work status is included. A self-reported measure of which language is most used in the home (Danish, home country's language, or both) is also included as language use is seen as an important identity marker (Cháves et. al. 2012: 208; Schneider et al. 2012: 322-323) and language proficiency (or lack thereof) may enable or hinder meaningful communication with Danes. Religion

and strength of religious belief are included as aspects of respondents' identities that may play into identification with both the ethnic group and the Danish nation.

Finally, an index of personally experienced discrimination is included, as discrimination may influence immigrants' identification with the host nation (Branscombe et al. 1999; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2009) and lead to greater reluctance to be in contact with majority-group members. The index contains four items on discrimination experiences in different areas of public life: from the police, in public transportation, on the street, and in the bank. Each item has four response categories: "never," "seldom," "often," and "very often." Factor analysis shows that the four items are highly correlated, warranting the constructing of an index (ranging from 0-1 with higher scores indicating more discrimination experiences).

CONTACT AS A MODERATOR

The results from the statistical analysis are presented in Table 1 (control variables are included in the models but not reported in the table; see appendix for full models). Model 1 is the simple linear regression, performed to see if Phinney et al.'s (2006) results can be replicated on the Danish data, that is, whether there is a negative mean association between ethnic identification and host national identification. Indeed, there is a statistically significant and negative association between the two identifications: the stronger the attachment to the ethnic group, the weaker the identification with the larger Danish community (and, by intuition, the other way around). Model 1 also shows that increased levels of regular contact with Danes strengthen host national identification.

Table 1. Identity compatibility and contact as a moderator

	Model 1	Model 2
Ethnic identification	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.19*** (0.04)
Contact with Danes	0.22*** (0.02)	0.11* (0.05)
Ethnic identification*contact with Danes		0.18** (0.06)

Note: OLS regressions. Controls for age, gender, origin country and generation, work-status, religion, religious strength, Danish versus home country language use, and experienced discrimination are included in the models.

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors in parentheses. N=3,404

From this point of departure, Model 2 tests the proposed moderation of contact on the relationship between the two identifications. The interaction term is statistically significant and positive, thus lending support to the hypothesis that contact functions to break down the perception of an exclusive host national boundary among immigrants who identify highly with their ethnic group.

To get a better grasp of what this interaction looks like, Figure 2 displays the marginal association between ethnic identification and host national identification over the contact measure. We see that at lower levels of intergroup contact, the relationship between the two identifications is statistically significant and negative. In fact, only at levels of very extensive contact (where most regular communication is with Danes) does the negative association disappear (become statistically insignificant). This result suggests that there are clear limits to contact as a positive force for highly identified minority group members and that these individuals must be engaged in great amounts of regular communication with host nationals before they are able to extend their self-concept to include the host national group. This supports the idea that intergroup encounters are often mediated by exclusive notions of group membership and that a few contact situations are not sufficient to remove initial anxieties and hostility (Valentine 2013). The pattern also supports Allport's (1954) claim that the nature of contact matters; superficial and, as indicated by these results, less frequent contact is unlikely to change attitudes and beliefs since this type of contact does not involve sufficiently deep or meaningful communication. This can also be given meaning from the original

formulations of the boundary-drawing perspective on ethnic group-making. Barth (1969) held that the function of boundaries (i.e. categorisations of “us” and “them”) is to organise social interaction and structure behaviour. Boundaries “make” groups because they prescribe different ways of treating people of one’s “own” kind versus people from “the other” group. Therefore, group boundaries may persist despite intergroup contact as long as group categorisations work to structure the interaction and restrict it to certain domains of social activity. *If* all social situations begin to involve intergroup contact, however, the boundary cannot be maintained because “interaction both requires and generates a congruence of codes and values” (Barth 1969: 16). This may explain why there is no positive moderation effect already at the “balanced” contact composition. Only when almost all of an immigrant’s regular contact situations involve contact with Danes will it be unavoidable to engage in the kind of communication that matters in terms of establishing perceptions of an inclusive rather than exclusive boundary. At this point, immigrants are able to conceive of the two identifications as compatible.

Figure 2. Marginal association between ethnic identification and host national identification over the contact measure, including 95 % confidence interval

Another aspect to note from Figure 2 is that at no point does contact lead ethnic identifiers to perceive a positive relationship between their ethnic identity and host national identification. This result suggests that in a context of exclusive boundaries (as in the Danish case), contact is not a sufficient condition to create positively reinforcing links between immigrants' ethnic identity and host national identification. Extensive contact can only help make both identifications possible at the same time. Turning now to the interview data, I will shed light on the processes involved and how they play out in the lived experiences of second-generation immigrants.

INTERVIEWS WITH SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS

I conducted 20 interviews, 11 with women and 9 with men, as part of a project on second-generation immigrants' belonging in Denmark. The interviews took place throughout the spring, summer and fall of 2015, almost ten years after the survey data. As mentioned above, the two data sources are not meant to parallel each other but rather to enable different bases for evaluating the proposed theoretical argument. That said, the boundary is likely to be more rigid in 2015 compared to 2006, as for instance testified in the electoral success of the Danish People's Party referred to above. Thus, the interview material is nested in a context that produces tougher conditions for contact to overcome perceptions of exclusive boundaries and identity incompatibility. Interviewees were between 16 and 23 years old at the time of the interview and have parental backgrounds in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iran, or Iraq (or, in a few cases, a mix of these countries). These countries were selected to reflect where the largest groups of second-generation immigrants in Denmark have parental roots and the ethnic backgrounds that are most likely to experience exclusive boundaries in Denmark.

I made contact with interviewees through local schools (primarily an ethnically mixed high school and an ethnically mixed tenth grade centre, with a few contacts made at the university level). A small number of subsequent contacts were also made through snowballing. Prospective interviewees were told that I was interested in talking to young people of Middle Eastern backgrounds about life in Denmark when one has parents from another country. Those interested in participating in an interview were invited to contact me, and sometimes contact was established through a teacher. The interviews themselves were semi-structured and lasted between one and two hours (with a mean duration of just around 1.5 hours). Topics concerned daily life (school, work, and spare time), friends, family, experiences with boundaries and belonging, and reflections over what it means to be Danish.

For purposes of analysis, interviews were transcribed and analysed in the software programme NVivo. Transcriptions were coded for interviewees' identification with their ethnoreligious background, identification as Danish, reasons stated for having these feelings, perceptions of inclusion and exclusion criteria (to tap boundary perceptions) in terms of being accepted as Danish, and the composition of their friendship groups. Concerning the codes for identification, each interviewee was categorised as having either a strong or weak/non-existent identification with the Danish nation, his/her ethnic group, understood as the parents' home country, ethnicity, and/or religion. Only interviewees who did not have reservations or hesitance to call themselves Danish would be categorised as Danish identifiers – and in parallel for ethnic identification. In the presentation below, interviewees' personal details, including names, have been anonymised. Translations of quotes from Danish to English are my own.

OVERVIEW

Table 2 gives an overview of how interviewees are distributed in the four possible combinations of ethnic and Danish identification. Interviewees placed in the lower-left corner and in the upper-right corner resemble identity conflict as they were only able to identify with one of the two identities. The upper-left corner contains interviewees who saw the two identities as compatible. Note that, in parallel to the statistical analysis, the group in the lower-right corner falls out of the analysis as these three interviewees identified with neither their ethnic group nor the Danish nation.

Table 2. Interviewees' distribution in the different combinations of ethnic and Danish identification

	Ethnic identification (+)	Ethnic identification (-)
Danish identification (+)	4	3
Danish identification (-)	10	3

In the following, the three groups are analysed in turn. For each group, I follow the proposed theoretical model (Figure 1) by looking at how interviewees talked about the boundary to being Danish and how they related this to potential feelings of identity threat and ideas of (not) being Danish. Finally, information concerning friendships and contact with Danes is coupled to explore the links to interviewees' boundary perceptions.

IDENTITY CONFLICT I: ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION WITHOUT DANISH IDENTIFICATION

Ten interviewees identified with their ethnic groups without being able to combine this with feeling Danish because they have the impression that it is impossible for them to be accepted or seen as Danish. This sentiment is reflected by Zada, a 17-year-old woman with Palestinian parents:

When I've been to other countries, there, I often hear people say, "Well... I'm Turkish-Ukrainian," "I'm Turkish-this-and-that," or "I'm Arabic-eh... English." I've heard SO many people say that... And when I then go here to Denmark and hear people say, "I'm a Palestinian from Lebanon." No one says, "Well, I'm Palestinian-Danish" ... I've NEVER heard that. And that has a reason... The thing is, I don't feel that people treat me like, "okay, you've lived here for so long, so then... you're a Dane"... Sometimes you just think, "okay, relax, really, I'm also born here in Denmark, I'm a Danish citizen, I have a Danish passport." Why, really... How Danish do I need to be? How Danish do you need to be to be in Denmark, to be Danish, really?

Not all interviewees in this group used the same indignant rhetoric as Zada, but the experience of an exclusive boundary was common across interviews as a reason for not feeling Danish. It was to a large extent through seeing their otherness in the eyes of majority Danes that this group came to

understand themselves as non-Danish. This was mostly described in subtle words, as being about a certain “gaze” which tells you that people do not see you as Danish. In particular, there was a strong sense among these participants of being revealed by their appearance, and this, in turn, was tied to an idea of coming from another place. Therefore, many interviewees said that they “come from” or “originate from” their parents’ home country, rather than Denmark, where they were actually born. They said this spontaneously when they presented themselves to me or during our conversation, or when other people asked them where they came from:

Interviewer: And then your answer is that you’re from Palestine?

Naja: Yes.

Interviewer: How come you don’t answer that you come from Denmark?

Naja: ... Because... They can see that I am not Danish.

(16-year-old woman with a Palestinian mother and a father from Iraq)

Malik: ...When people ask that question then... it, I do feel it somehow because... then you are making me aware that you have actually... You can feel the difference. Like in the way, “okay, he has, he has detected that I am an immigrant,” that’s how I feel.

(18-year-old man with parents from Syria)

Here, the experience of identity incompatibility is reflected in the idea that having non-Danish roots means not coming from Denmark. Some interviewees, such as Zada above, listed a number of factors that would seemingly qualify in a definition of national membership: being born and raised in the country, having lived there for all of their lives, speaking the language fluently, and having Danish citizenship. However, in the same breath, they also said that these markers were not enough

to be seen as a Dane. Instead, almost all interviewees in this group mentioned three exclusion markers preventing them from being (seen as) Danish: mixed language use, religion, and appearance.

To interviewees, the linguistic boundary marker reflected an either-or understanding of Danishness: Not only must you be competent in the Danish language (which all interviewees naturally were), you also must speak it the right way, that is, without accent and without mixing in slang or Arabic words. This demand prevented the interviewees from fully expressing themselves by using the words they found most natural (e.g. publicly using Arabic expressions when talking to Arabic-speaking friends). In addition, they felt that knowing Arabic was not seen as an advantage but as a challenge to being fully Danish.

The second exclusion marker – religion – goes to the core of the Muslim background of most of these young people. Being Muslim was seen as incompatible with “Danish behaviour,” which was associated with partying, drinking alcohol, and – for women – having a boyfriend. Several interviewees mentioned that they did not “behave like Danes” as one explanation for lacking Danishness, revealing a restricted idea about what kind of behaviour one must embrace to qualify as a Dane. Together with the linguistic boundary marker, this reflects the notion that citizenship is culturalized, meaning that immigrants must shed certain ethnic, cultural, or religious characteristics to demonstrate their belonging to the host nation (Tonkens and Duyvendak 2016). Since using Arabic expressions or following some Islamic prescriptions were experienced as basic elements of their ethnoreligious identity, the consequence for these interviewees was that they could not see themselves, or be seen by others, as Danish.

The final exclusion marker – appearance – is reflected in interviewees’ awareness of the visual cues by which they were categorised as “foreigners”: skin tone, eye colour, facial features and, for some

women, the Muslim headscarf. Note that while none of the interviewees used the vocabulary of race or racism themselves, the fact that particular phenotypical traits were seen as barriers to being Danish can be interpreted as expressing a racialized understanding of national membership (for theoretical discussions of the racialization of Muslims see Modood 2005 and Garner and Selod 2015, for recent empirical analyses of Muslim experiences of “visibility” see e.g. Kassaye, Ashur and van Heelsum 2016, Hopkins and Greenwood 2013). The combination of exclusion markers based on immigrant background, cultural characteristics and physical appearance indicates a particularly rigid perception of the boundary as these are basic, and often irremovable, identity elements.

In terms of where interviewees’ boundary information stemmed from, most referred to the subtle looks they received from strangers in public and to debates in the media, politics and on Facebook. Concerning the role of contact, all interviewees in this group had only minority friends (i.e. people who had either migrated themselves or whose parents had migrated). Although the statistical analysis looked at contact in terms of regular communication, this finding from interview data is in line with the results from the statistical analysis: Individuals who did not have extensive and personal communication with the Danish majority population relied on the negative cues they picked up from the media and broader public discourse and in non-personalised encounters with people in their surroundings (e.g. the sceptical gazes they felt on the street). This illustrates the notion that macro-symbolic boundaries condition the experience of concrete encounters, as long as these encounters are of a superficial nature. This is reflected in the interpretation given to certain “gazes” from strangers on the street by interviewees in this group. While all interviewees attended mixed schools and therefore had ethnic Danes in their class, they also said that they did not talk to them in the breaks between classes because Danes and non-Danes (or “foreigners”) typically constituted their own groups. As such, mere exposure to majority members was not sufficient to

enable identification because people form closed social circles despite being embedded in a context of diversity (cf. Valentine 2013: 6).

IDENTITY CONFLICT II: DANISH IDENTIFICATION WITHOUT ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION

Three interviewees identified as Danish without feeling that they belonged to an ethnic identity. In a boundary perspective, these individuals had crossed the boundary to the Danish nation (Alba 2005: 23). The low number of interviewees in this category, combined with the fact that the three other non-ethnically identified interviewees were not able to identify as Danes, testifies to the difficulties of such boundary crossing. Indeed, in many ways these three interviewees actually echoed the idea that the boundary is exclusive and *impermeable* for most other interviewees. When they accounted for their feeling of being Danish, they referred to the fact that they were either not in possession of the excluding markers mentioned above or had been able to hide them:

Reza: So, I'm not a Muslim myself or anything. I'm, like, very Danish, if you can put it like that, like, integrated in a way. And I like to, to go to parties and stuff like that with my friends.

(18-year-old man with parents from Iran)

The two other interviewees in this group, both women, subscribed to the idea that being Danish was about adopting behaviour that involved partying, drinking, and having a boyfriend and that being Muslim was antithetical to being thought of as Danish. Laila, a 16-year-old woman with parents from Lebanon, explained that she was considered Danish by both the “Danes” and the “foreigners”

in her class because she behaved Danish (drank alcohol, had a boyfriend) and only hung out with “the Danes.”

While it was fairly easy for Reza, mentioned above, to adopt “Danish behaviour” because he did not have a Muslim background, the two young women in this group came from Muslim families but had decided not to follow Islam on issues such as partying, drinking, having boyfriends, and wearing the headscarf. This sometimes put them in a dilemma because they could not be as “Danish” at home as when they were out and because they had to lie to their parents. This also worked the other way around: Laila, for example, said that her Danish friends did not understand the Arabic elements that she brought with her from her upbringing, and therefore she put those elements away when she was with her friends – despite wishing that she could be Danish with Arabic features (i.e. combine the two identifications to a greater extent):

Interviewer: Would you like it to be so that you could... be both at the same time?

Laila: Yes (resigned smile). I would like that. But... the friends, because now... They see me as this girl who... IS very Danish and a lot like them. They don't see me, like, my Danish girl friends don't SEE me as a foreigner.

The quote suggests that Laila's lack of identification with her ethnic background was a strategic choice, the only way she felt it was possible to be Danish. For her, identifying as Danish carried its own restrictions on identity because of the rigid understanding of the boundary. If Laila brought in elements of her upbringing into her public behaviour, she felt that it would entail being seen as less Danish by her friends. Note that Laila did not mention any concrete instances or experiences where she felt that her friends were dismissive of her ethnoreligious background, indicating the power of broader cultural notions of group membership in colouring experiences of intergroup encounters. It

appears that the lack of explicit interest in or acknowledgement of her “other side” made her rely on the exclusive boundary presented in Danish public and political discourse.

As with the previous group, interviewees in this group also understood appearance to be a barrier to being considered Danish – the difference being that these interviewees were not personally affected by this exclusion criterion. In particular, neither women wore the headscarf, and both felt they looked rather Danish (light-skinned, red cheeks, tight jeans, etc.) – which they stated as reasons for being seen as Danish. They compared this to their siblings or friends who looked, and therefore also felt, more “foreign.”

In terms of contact, all three interviewees had many Danish friends. This corresponds to the finding from the statistical analysis of a positive correlation between contact and Danish identification (not considering the moderation effect, as the interviewees did not identify with their ethnic background, thus cancelling out the interaction term). However, for these interviewees, identifying as Danish was largely grounded in renouncing an ethnic identity – thus confirming the difficulties of conceiving of the two identifications as compatible in the Danish context because they too relied on the boundary messages communicated in public and political discourse.

IDENTITY COMPATIBILITY: ETHNIC AND DANISH IDENTIFICATION

A small group of interviewees, four in total, both strongly identified with their parental backgrounds *and* felt Danish. Importantly, for most of them, it had not always been self-evident that they could be both. Rather, it was something they realised was possible. Interestingly, all four interviewees in this group connected this development to learning what it meant to be Danish through having Danish friends.

For example, for Jamal, a 16-year-old man with a father from Palestine and a mother from Lebanon, a turning point was changing schools from one with primarily first- and second-generation immigrant children to one with primarily ethnic Danes. This move opened the door to having Danish friends. As Jamal expressed it, “it was something different to come home to Malthe than to Ahmed,” suggesting that he needed to gain familiarity with the Danish way of doing things before he was comfortable saying he was Danish himself. In addition, gaining familiarity with “what Danish means” also worked to break down rigid stereotypes about the incompatibility of Danish and Arabic/Muslim identities:

Iqbal: As a child, there was all that with... drinking, then you were just not Danish. And if you had a relationship before marriage, then you were not an Arab. But then, when I became a teenager, when a lot of my friends [of Arab backgrounds] began going, like, out in town and drink and have girlfriends and so on, then I began to, like [think], “Oh, okay, it doesn’t have anything to do with where you are from. It has something to do with what you believe in.” ... And then, on the other hand, ... there were some of my Danish friends who did not drink [alcohol]... Again, it’s so... *That whole black-and-white image, world image, I had in my head, just began, like, to move...* And that is where, that is where it primarily comes from.

(23-year-old man, parents from Palestine, emphasis added)

As expressed by Iqbal, the learning involved in having Danish friends made it possible to see the boundary as more inclusive than he had originally envisioned.

Realising that “Danish behaviour” did not necessarily entail “drinking [alcohol], partying and eating pork” (as expressed by Iqbal) also worked to remove what was otherwise experienced as an identity threat. In fact, all interviewees in this group are active Muslims, but they did not mention this as an

obstacle to being Danish. At the same time, they did not seem to make any compromise on their Muslim identity (none of the interviewees in this group drank alcohol, for example, and Aisha – the only woman in this group – wore the headscarf). As such, these interviewees did not experience conflict between maintaining essential elements of their ethnoreligious identity and feeling confident about their Danish belonging. Central to perceiving the two identities as compatible were experiences of acceptance from Danish friends. Several interviewees in this group recalled being nervous about asking their ethnically Danish friends not to drink alcohol in their company. However, when they asked, their friends made no issue about the request, which quickly removed the interviewees' anxieties. Here, then, difference was accepted and not experienced as something to be hidden (in contrast to interviewees in the previous group).

Whereas the first group of interviewees was not even confident to say that they came from Denmark, in this group, there was a clear sense that "Denmark is MY country." This confidence also was clear when three interviewees said that they were not personally affected by immigrant-sceptical political rhetoric and would not be affected if someone told them that Denmark was not their country. In other words, interviewees in this group were aware of the way in which immigrants are sometimes portrayed in politics and the media (the macro-symbolic boundary), but their generally positive contact with Danes – through friendships and school experiences – made them feel immune to the negative sources through which other interviewees formed their boundary perceptions. In addition, several of them said that it was important to publicly "announce" one's feeling of Danishness so that those who might have another impression can learn that "actually, some people have other roots but still feel Danish." Importantly, the confidence associated with claiming and performing a Danish identity seemed to stem from having these claims validated in encounters with trusted members of the Danish majority population, as in the experience referred above with being respected for not drinking alcohol and still being able to hang out with ethnic

Danes. Thus, the agency demonstrated among interviewees in this group depended on positive contact experiences which explicitly challenged boundary perceptions relying on Danish public and political discourse.

The analysis of this small group of interviewees supports the idea that contact can work to change boundary perceptions from exclusive to inclusive. In particular, contact with Danes appears to have worked to introduce nuance into conceptions of what it means to be Danish – for example, that alcohol consumption is not required to be a Dane. In addition, or as an effect, such realisations helped reduce initial anxiety about seeing oneself as Danish and gave confidence to claim that identity. Comparing the insights from the analysis of this group and the previous group, it is suggested that to change boundary perceptions, contact must directly challenge exclusive understandings of host national identity. If this does not happen, contact – even in the form of friendships – may rather seem to confirm exclusive boundary perceptions and experiences of identity incompatibility.

CONCLUSION

The present study is situated within the context of growing concern about immigrants' identifications across Europe. While governments throughout Europe express the wish to see immigrants become attached and committed to their new national communities, these same politicians are often suspicious of the ethnic identities that immigrants bring, because ethnic identification is thought to compete with identifying with the host nation.

The analyses of survey and interview data from Denmark suggest that ethnic identification may not be antithetical to host national identification if immigrants have extensive contact with members of the majority population. As reflected in the analysis of interviews, such contact can establish a great

measure of confidence in host national belonging and can even work as a defence shield when confronted with negative rhetoric about immigrants and their place in society. What is more, this confidence is coupled with seeing the host nation as “my country,” suggesting that for those immigrants who manage to combine ethnic and host national identities, there is a strong commitment to the host nation – something which speaks directly against the political suspicion referred to above.

In the same breath as I draw these positive conclusions about the power of contact, however, the analysis also showed that this positive potential is severely constrained in a country such as Denmark where the general discourse about immigrants is negative and the national boundary is presented in exclusive terms. Immigrants, and even their children who are born and raised in the country, find it difficult to self-identify as Danish because being Danish does not seem compatible with preserving one’s ethnoreligious identity. In particular, the finding that immigrants see ethnic and host national identifications as conflicting even at “balanced” (i.e. 50/50) levels of contact with the ethnic majority suggests that much of the contact with majority Danes confirms, rather than softens, the experience of an exclusive boundary. This finding speaks to the constraining power of macro-symbolic boundaries, suggesting that contact is no miracle cure to overcoming ideas of identity incompatibility (Valentine 2013).

This at the same time positive and negative conclusion reflects the article’s synthesis of two very different theoretical perspectives. I wish to highlight this synthesis as a central contribution to the literature on immigrant identifications. By being sensitive to how broad cultural notions of group membership interact with concrete intergroup encounters, this synthesis enables a more complex understanding of immigrants’ experiences of their identity options. Specifically, in the present analysis I have shown that macro-symbolic boundaries often condition how contact is experienced. This does not mean that symbolic boundaries assert a stronger influence on immigrants than their

concrete experiences with majority members, rather the point is that they colour the very meaning of the specific encounter. Because of the pervasiveness of exclusive boundary messages in the Danish case, immigrants have a tendency to read encounters with majority members in a negative light, to the extent that particular gazes are taken as signs of being “othered.” The dominance of exclusive boundary understandings even affects some of those who manage to identify with the host nation, as they find it difficult to express or display ethnic belonging toward their friends from the majority because they believe that their friends would not appreciate it.

This does not mean, however, that contact cannot alter boundary perceptions. But the central insight from the study is that to do so, contact needs to directly challenge exclusive understandings of group membership, that is, offer alternative meaning to the dominant reading of “us” and “them.” It seems that the combination of exclusion criteria based on immigrant background, culture and appearance creates particularly challenging conditions for immigrants in Denmark. While scholars disagree on the meaning of the term, this observation appears to resonate with Modood’s (2005) understanding of cultural racism as a distinct kind of “exacerbated” or “double” racism which depicts “the Other” both as inferior *and* unassimilable. This may explain the need for contact to explicitly communicate to immigrants not only that they are considered equals but also that it is possible to be seen as a national while maintaining one’s cultural distinctness. The implication is that contact must not only be of a certain form – involving meaningful communication and friendship ties, as suggested in the literature – but also have certain content – involving explicit acceptance of difference – if it is to alter boundary perceptions in a context of exclusive boundary drawing.

With this theoretical discussion and the empirical insights on which it is based, I hope to have demonstrated the fruitfulness of integrating macro- and micro-perspectives in analyses of immigrant identity. Without such an integrated view, analyses risk becoming one-sided, and either overly

pessimistic or overly optimistic. Of obvious interest for future research is investigating in further depth how directly concrete encounters must challenge existing boundary definitions in order to alter boundary perceptions. Another line of research suggested by the discussion of micro/macro-interactions is comparative studies of how contact may work differently in different contexts. For example, it is possible that there is a ceiling effect to contact, a point at which it has no added contribution to identification in contexts of inclusive boundary drawing. Given that contact is often given meaning by dominant boundary definitions, it may primarily serve its purpose (that is: soften boundary perceptions) in societies – such as the present Danish case – where boundaries are rigid and exclusive. Further studies in different contexts are needed to specify this suggested interaction between the macro and micro levels of boundary drawing.

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Survey data: 'Etniske grupper værdier, 2006', DDA-21171, retrieved from Danmarks Rigsarkiv

ENDNOTES

¹ With the exception of the UK, all European countries in Phinney et al.'s study display negative associations between ethnic and host national identification. The European countries included in the analysis are Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and the UK.

² Note that while it is theoretically possible that the causality between contact and positive outgroup attitudes runs in the other direction (with greater identification leading to more contact), several studies have shown that the causality flows mainly from contact to reduced outgroup bias (see Pettigrew 1998).

³ For Turkey and Pakistan, both first- and second-generation immigrants were sampled for the survey. For the remaining countries, only first-generation immigrants were included in the survey. For first-generation immigrants, the age span was 18-50 years, and for second-generation immigrants, it was 18-34 years. Respondents must have resided in Denmark for at least 3.5 years to qualify in the survey.

⁴ For example, a battery of questions featured early in the survey distinguish between "Danes" and "people of another ethnic background than Danish."

⁵ However, the interview material gives reason to believe that most second-generation immigrants think of Danes this way as they reserve the term for people of Danish ancestry.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Identity compatibility and contact as a moderator, full regressions

	Model 1	Model 2
Gender (male)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
<i>(Parents') home country</i>		
Turkey – immigrant	Reference	Reference
Turkey – second-generation	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Pakistan – immigrant	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Pakistan – second-generation	0.04 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
West Balkan – immigrant	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Iraq – immigrant	0.05** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)
Iran – immigrant	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)
Vietnam – immigrant	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.06* (0.03)
<i>Work status</i>		
Employed, more than 30 hours/week	Reference	Reference
Employed, less than 30 hours/week	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Self-employed	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Retired	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Stay-at-home	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Student	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Unemployed	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)
Other	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
<i>Religion</i>		
Roman-Catholic	Reference	Reference
Protestant	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)
Orthodox Christian	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)
Muslim	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Buddhist	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
Not religious	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)
Other	0.07 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)
Atheist	-0.02 (0.11)	-0.02 (0.11)
Strength of religious belief (0-1)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
<i>Language most used in the home</i>		
Danish	Reference	Reference
Home country's language	-0.11*** (0.01)	-0.11*** (0.01)
Danish and home country's language equally much	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)
Personally experienced discrimination	-0.08** (0.03)	-0.08** (0.03)
Ethnic identification	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.19*** (0.04)
Contact with Danes	0.22*** (0.02)	0.11* (0.05)
Ethnic identification*contact with Danes		0.18** (0.06)
Constant	0.69*** (0.04)	0.76*** (0.05)

Note: OLS regressions.

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors in parentheses. N=3,404