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Emotions and extremism: The connection of discrimination, anger, and political violence

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Background and research focus

- Rising prevalence of discrimination experiences in connection with higher migration rates
 - 25% of people in Germany have a migration background, approx. 6-7% are Muslims
- Minorities as especially vulnerable groups in society
- At the same time, instrumentalization of these groups for political means

Research focus

- Role of negative experiences for negative emotions
- Need for coping strategies to deal with experiences and emotions → Political violence?

Project background & database

- MOTRA (Monitoring System and Transfer Platform Radicalization)
 - German research network funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community.
 - Goal of monitoring extremist phenomena over 5 years; evaluation of potential risk factors for the emergence of extremist attitudes or actions
 - <https://www.motra.info/>
- The surveys “People in Germany” (*Menschen in Deutschland; MiD*)
 - Representative population surveys conducted by the University of Hamburg
 - Focus: subjective evaluations of the social and political situation in Germany, own political attitudes, perceptions of intolerance, discrimination and political extremism in the social environment
 - <https://www.mid.uni-hamburg.de/en/startseite.html>

MiD

Menschen in Deutschland

JuMiD

Junge Menschen in Deutschland

MiDInt

Menschen in Deutschland: International

Project background & database

Database

- 2nd wave of MiD (spring 2022)
- Data collection between 29th March and 4th July 2022
- Representative sample of the adult population living in Germany of 18 years and older
 - 2 oversamples: Migration background, Muslims
- Overall analysis sample of N = 4 319 (representative)
 - Migration background & other religion than Islam: n = 1 451
 - Migration background & affiliation to Islam: n = 1 247

MiD

Menschen in Deutschland

JuMiD

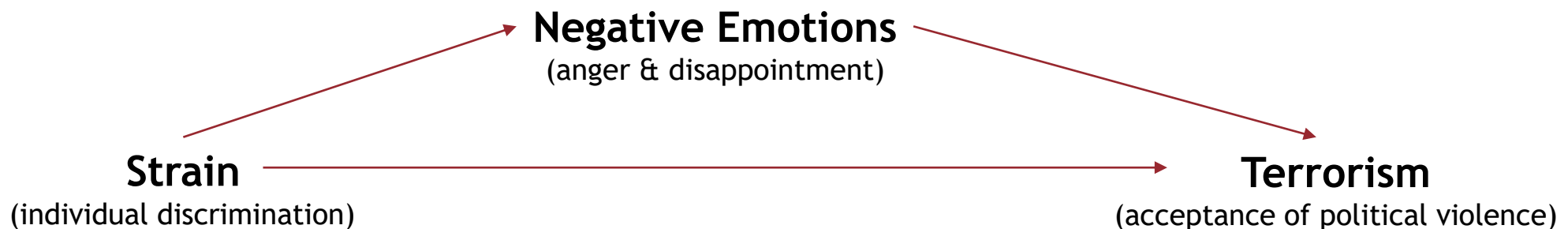
Junge Menschen in Deutschland

MiDInt

Menschen in Deutschland: International

Theoretical Background: General Strain Theory (of Terrorism)

- “[T]he GSTT [“general strain theory of terrorism”] states that **terrorism** is more likely when individuals experience “**collective strains**” [...]. These collective strains increase the likelihood of terrorism because they increase **negative emotions**.” (Agnew 2017, pp. 121-122)



Operationalization: Discrimination

“These strains include absolute and relative material deprivation; [...] the problems encountered by certain immigrant groups, including Muslims in Western countries; [...] a range of human rights violations, including the denial of civil and political rights; [...]religious and ethnic discrimination; [...].”(Agnew 2017, p. 124)

How often in the last 12 months have you personally felt discriminated against for one or more of the reasons stated below? (never - often)

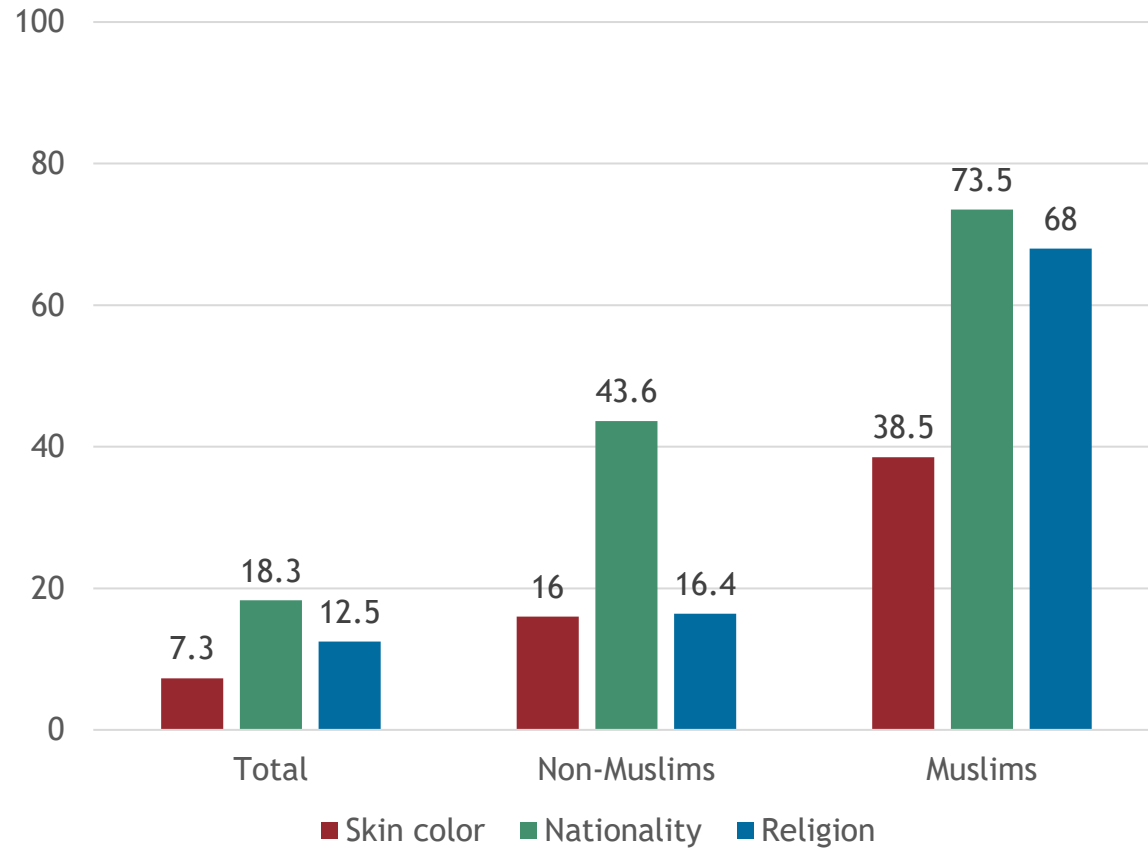
Skin colour

Nationality / Ethnicity

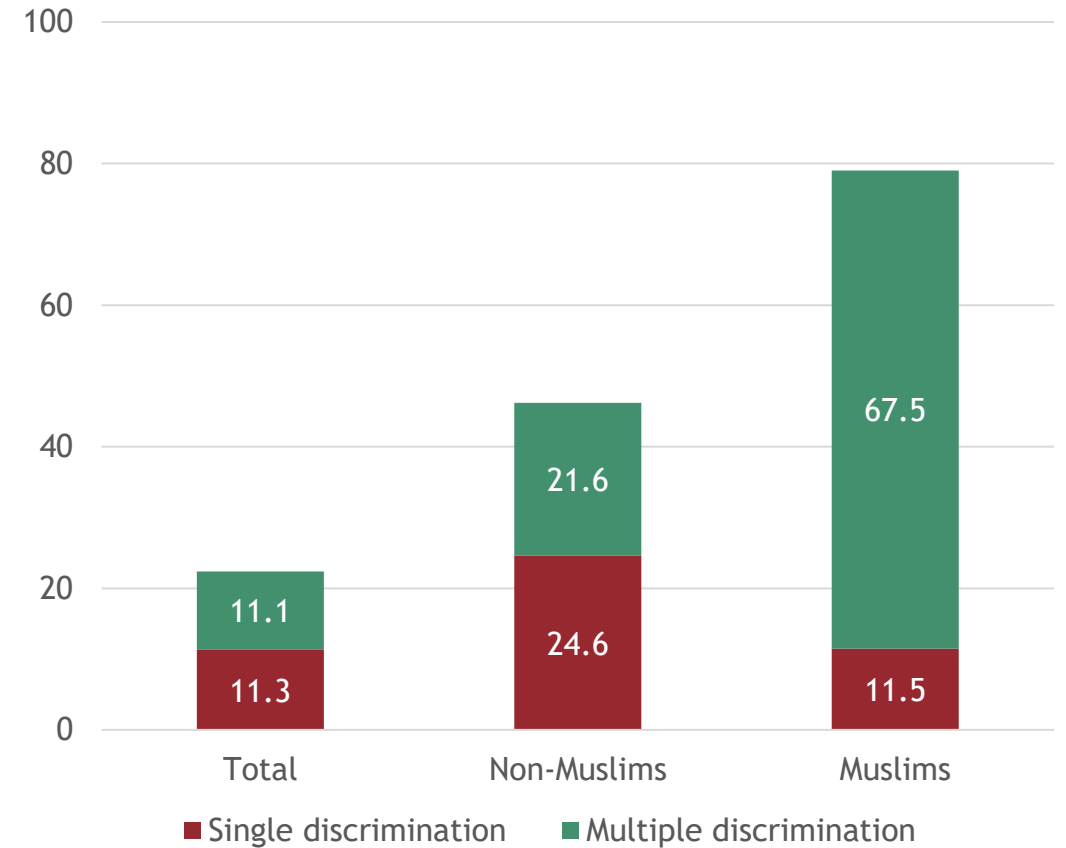
Religion

Distribution: Discrimination

Prevalence of discrimination experiences (at least „rarely“, in %)



Prevalence of multiple discrimination (at least „rarely“, in %)



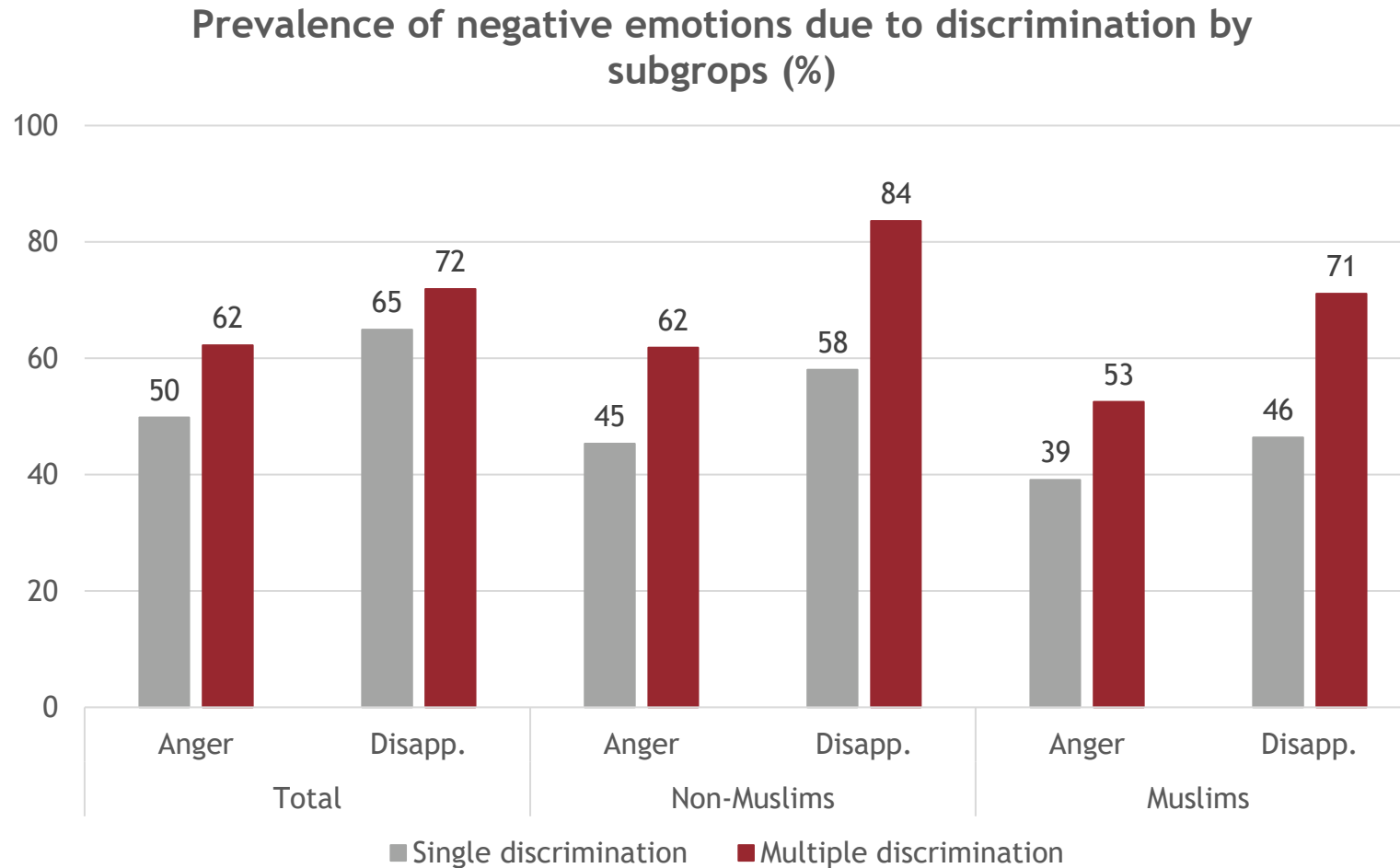
Operationalization: Negative Emotions

“These collective strains, [...] lead to strong negative emotions that are conducive to terrorism, including anger, frustration, envy, humiliation, and hopelessness.”(Agnew 2017, p. 127)

Please think about how you feel when you are disadvantaged or treated unfairly. In connection with that, how often in the last 12 months have you experienced the following feelings?

	never	rarely	some- times	often	mean	sd	n
Disappointment	23.5	29.6	32.8	14.1	1.4	0.99	4 279
Anger	34.4	27.1	26.8	11.7	1.16	1.03	4 268

Descriptive Results: Discrimination and negative emotions



Operationalization: Acceptance of political violence

Items (*strongly disagree* - *completely agree*)

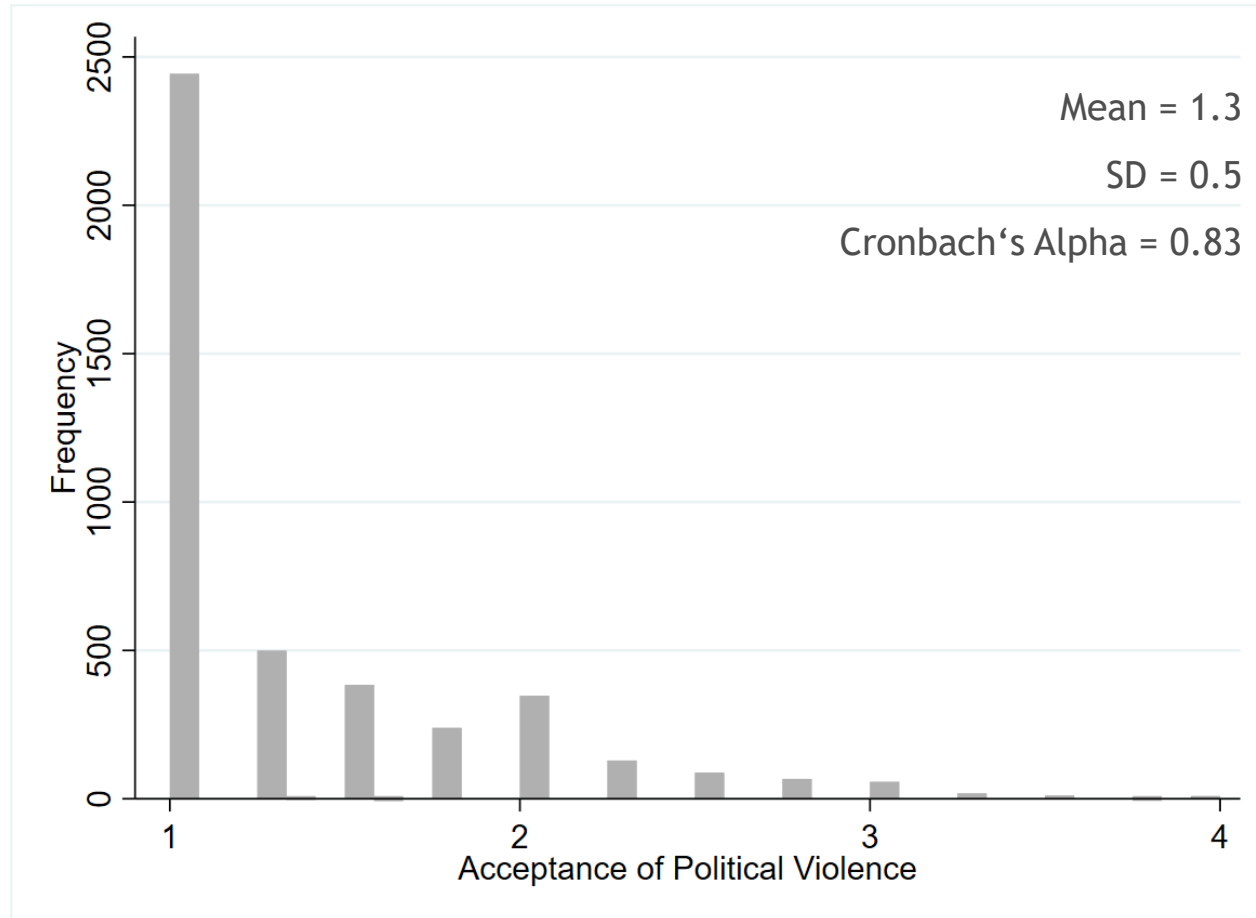
Every democratic society has certain conflicts that have to be dealt with through violence.

The changes needed in this society can only be achieved through violent revolution.

Sometimes you have to fight the representatives of the system using violence.

Even in a democracy, it is sometimes necessary to use violence to achieve one's political goals.

Prevalence of acceptance of political violence

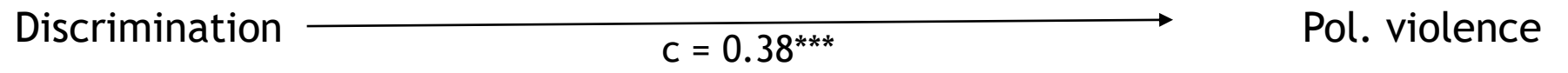


	Total	Non-Muslims	Muslims
Rejection	88	82	79
Openness	9	13	15
Acceptance	3	5	8

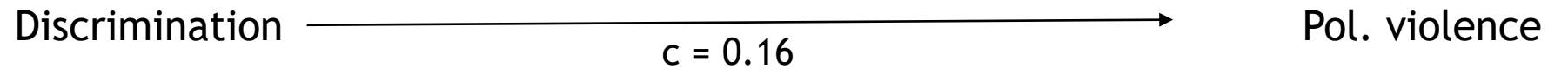
Methods

- Generalized Structural Equation Modeling
- DV: Acceptance of political violence (0/1)
- IV: Standardized sum scale on discrimination (0-9)
- Mediator: Anger, Disappointment
- Controls: Age, gender, education
- Data are weighted

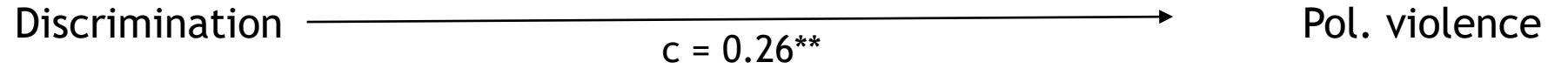
Total



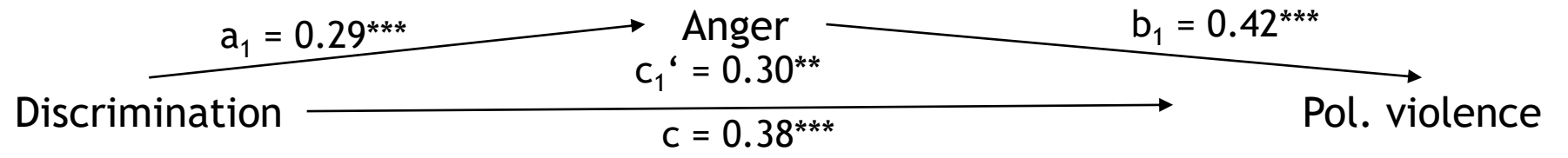
Non-Muslims



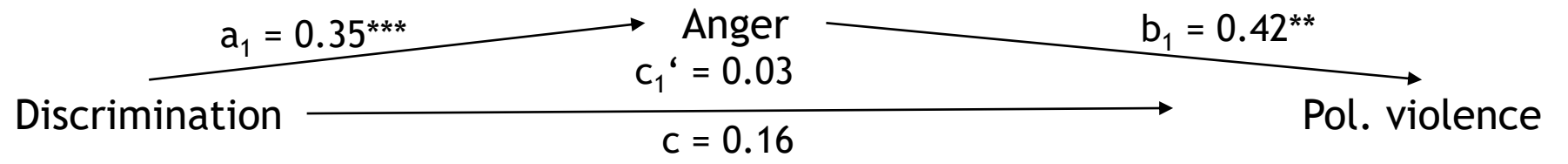
Muslims



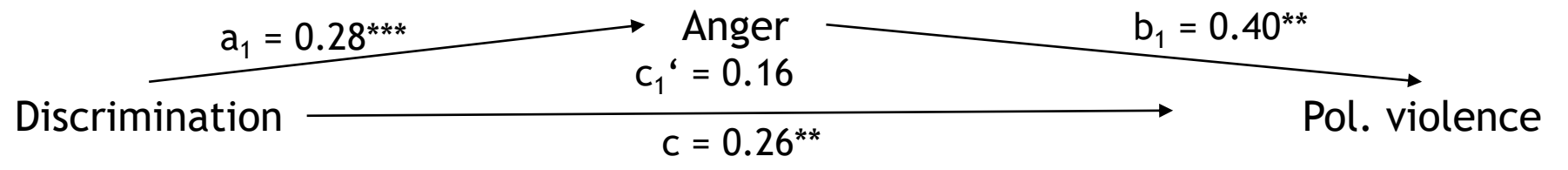
Total



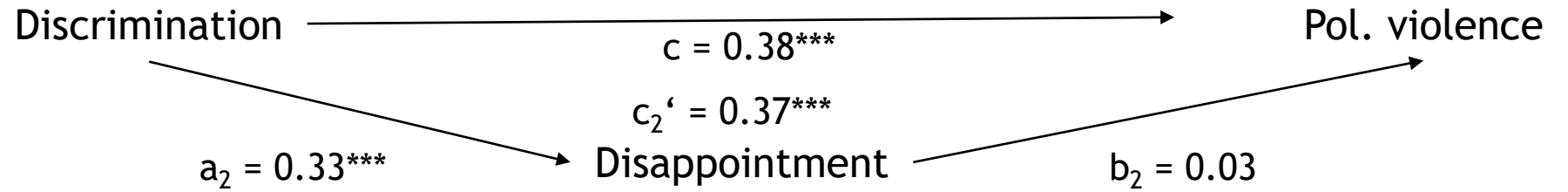
Non-Muslims



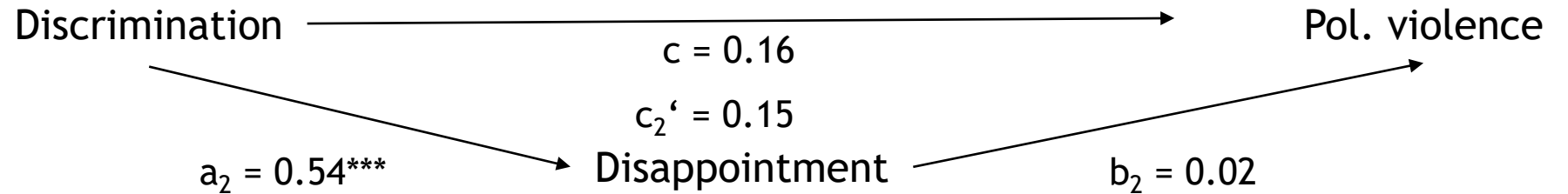
Muslims



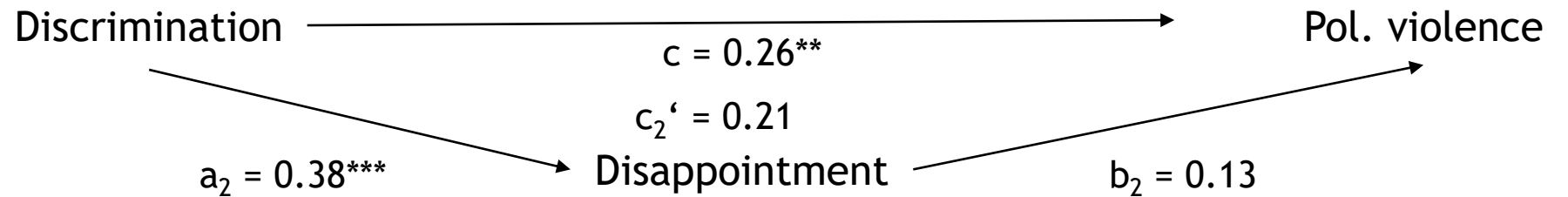
Total



Non-Muslims



Muslims



Summary & Discussion

- Discrimination is widespread across minority groups
 - Discrimination experiences lead to both anger and disappointment, but only anger has an effect on the acceptance of political violence
 - Full mediation only for Muslims
- Anger projects discrimination experiences outwardly, disappointment does not
- Analyses raise the question of path directions
- Importance of subgroup analyses
- Consequences of discrimination: disturbance of acculturation process → potential separation from society → mutual radicalisation
 - Importance of local communities to condemn violence and support alternative coping strategies
 - Duty of political actors to protect vulnerable groups

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Politische Gewaltakzeptanz als Folge von Ausgrenzungserlebnissen und negativen Emotionen bei Angehörigen der Mehrheits- und Minderheitsgesellschaft

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in social conflicts that are accompanied by dissatisfaction with state institutions. When such conflicts turn violent, they pose a direct threat to the political and social system. Based on General Strain Theory the association between experiences of discrimination and the acceptance of politically motivated violence is analysed. Additionally, the mediating role of negative emotions such as anger and disappointment are explored. Ethnicity/nationality, colour of skin and religious affiliation are considered as possible reasons for discrimination in the analyses. Comparisons are made between individuals with and without a migration background as well as Muslims in order to identify particularly vulnerable subgroups. The analyses are based on data from a representative survey of the German population (N = 4 319) conducted in 2022. The findings reveal a positive, significant relationship between a) discrimination and anger and b) anger and the acceptance of violence across all subgroups. However, no such relationship can be found for disappointment. Similarities and differences across subgroups in these mechanisms as well as societal and political implications of those findings are discussed and evaluated.

Keywords: Political violence, extremist attitudes, discrimination, negative emotions, minorities

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Thank you!

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