

**Religious fundamentalism and out-group hostility
among Muslims and Christians
in Western Europe**

Presentation at the 20th International
Conference of Europeanists
Amsterdam, 25-27 June, 2013

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What is religious fundamentalism? (1)

- Original use of the term refers to an early 20th century movement within US Protestantism

Dictionary definitions:

- A movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles – Merriam-Webster dictionary.
- A form of religion, especially Islam or Protestant Christianity, that upholds beliefs in the strict, literal interpretation of scripture – Oxford dictionary

What is religious fundamentalism? (2)

Scientific definitions:

- “The belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by the forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity.” – Altermeyer and Hunsberger 1992: 118.
- The study „Muslims in Germany“ (Muslime in Deutschland – MID) distinguishes between fundamentalism in a narrower sense („an individual orientation towards the roots of a religious creed “) and **Islamism**, which is in addition characterized by „the subordination of political decisions under the primacy of religion.“
- Fundamentalism is generally distinguished from **orthodoxy**, which refers to „the *content* of what is believed rather than (as is the case with fundamentalism) the way the beliefs are held“ (Laythe et al 2002). Orthodoxy is therefore a concept that is measured specifically for each religion, e.g. by items such as “Jesus was born of a virgin”
- Fundamentalism as understood in these definitions can but must not be connected to the legitimation of violence to further or defend religious aims

Previous research on religious fundamentalism (1)

- Until the early 1990s virtually all research focused on Christian fundamentalism, within US Protestantism in particular
- Many of the studies that exist focus on the organizational or movement level or on highly selective (and often small) samples of university or secondary school students
- In terms of its causes, evidence suggests that (Christian) religious fundamentalism can be interpreted as a reaction to secularization and modernization and is on the individual level associated with socio-economic marginalization
- Research points to a consistent and strong connection between (Christian) religious fundamentalism, right-wing authoritarianism and rejection of outgroups such as homosexuals and members of other religions and races

Previous research on religious fundamentalism (2)

- In spite of the shift of political and media attention since the early 1990s to Islamic religious fundamentalism, there are striking research gaps
- Most research focuses on organizations and violence, mostly within Muslim countries. By contrast, very little is known about Islamic fundamentalist attitudes on the individual level, especially among Muslim immigrants in the West.
- There is almost no research that directly and empirically compares Islamic to other religious fundamentalisms

Previous findings comparing fundamentalism among Muslims and other religious groups

- Hunsberger 1996: Christians, Muslims, Jews and Hindus in Toronto. Highest RF among Muslims, lowest among Jews. Very small n's (n=21 Muslims).
- Hunsberger et al 1999: comparison of Canadian Christian and Ghanaese Christian and Muslim students. RF much higher in Ghana than in Canada, but equally high among Ghanaese Muslims and Christians. Small n's: n=57 Ghanaese Muslims. Both studies show that RF is associated with authoritarianism and rejection of homosexuals in all groups.
- Pew report „Muslims in America“ (2010): „There is only one true way to interpret [your religion]“: 37% of US Muslims, 28% of US Christians.

Data

- Six-Country Immigrant Integration Comparative Survey (SCIICS)
- Moroccan and Turkish immigrants (1st and 2nd generation) and a native comparison group in Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Sweden (only Turkish immigrants in Austria and Sweden because of the very small size of the Moroccan group in these countries)
- CATI-Interviews, n=500-600 per group per country; total n ~ 9,000; fieldwork conducted in 2008
- Further technical details, see SCIICS technical report (downloadable at <http://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/2013/vi13-102.pdf>)

Measuring fundamentalism in the SCIICS study

I use a religious fundamentalism scale that captures three key elements of fundamentalist belief systems:

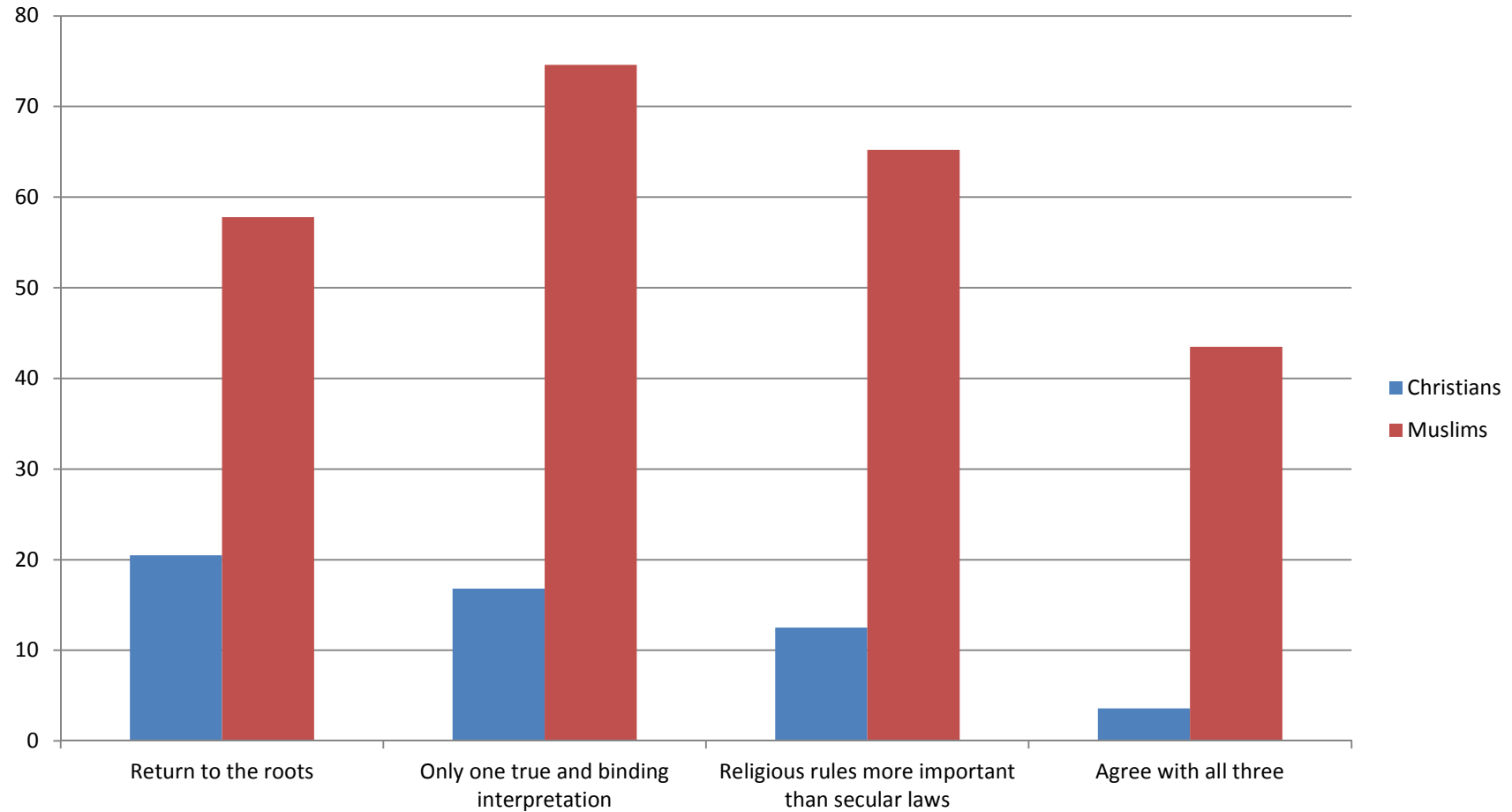
- that believers should return to the eternal and unchangeable rules laid down in the past;
- that these rules allow only one interpretation and are binding for all believers;
- that religious rules have priority over secular laws.

The items measuring these aspects read as follows for Christian and Muslims (in brackets):

- “Christians [Muslims] should return to the roots of Christianity [Islam]”
- “There is only one interpretation of the Bible [the Koran] and every Christian [Muslim] must stick to that”
- “The rules of the Bible [the Koran] are more important to me than the laws of [survey country]”

Cronbach’s alpha .76

Extent of religious fundamentalism among Muslims and Christians



Predictors of religious fundamentalism: multivariate regression analysis

Dependent variable:

religious fundamentalism scale; composed of the three items
(values ranging from 0-3)

Analysis only includes those persons of Turkish and Moroccan origin who self-identified as Muslims (97%) and natives who self-identified as Christians (70%)

Table shows unstandardized B-coefficients and significance levels in brackets

	All groups Model I	All groups Model II	Christians	Muslims
Reference: native Christians	Reference	Reference	-	-
Morocan Muslims	1.63 (.000)	1.59 (.000)	-	Reference
Turkish Alevites	0.58 (.000)	0.52 (.000)	-	-1.06 (.000)
Other Turkish Muslims	1.50 (.000)	1.43 (.000)	-	-0.19 (.000)
Medium education level		-0.31 (.000)	-0.28 (.000)	-0.36 (.000)
Higher education level		-0.68 (.000)	-0.39 (.000)	-0.96 (.000)
Employed		-0.14 (.000)	-0.11 (.004)	-0.12 (.000)
Age		0.01 (.000)	0.01 (.000)	0.00 (.231)
Male		-0.05 (.070)	0.00 (.921)	-0.05 (.109)
Married		-0.07 (.051)	-0.07 (.081)	-0.04 (.414)
Reference: Austria		-	-	-
Germany		-0.47 (.000)	-0.11 (.071)	-0.70 (.000)
France		-0.06 (.138)	-0.12 (.037)	-0.12 (.067)
Netherlands		-0.16 (.000)	-0.15 (.014)	-0.25 (.000)
Belgium		-0.04 (.389)	-0.15 (.007)	-0.05 (.367)
Sweden		-0.42 (.000)	-0.35 (.000)	-0.52 (.000)
Adjusted R ²	.349	.426	.131	.174
N	6533	6448	2097	4370

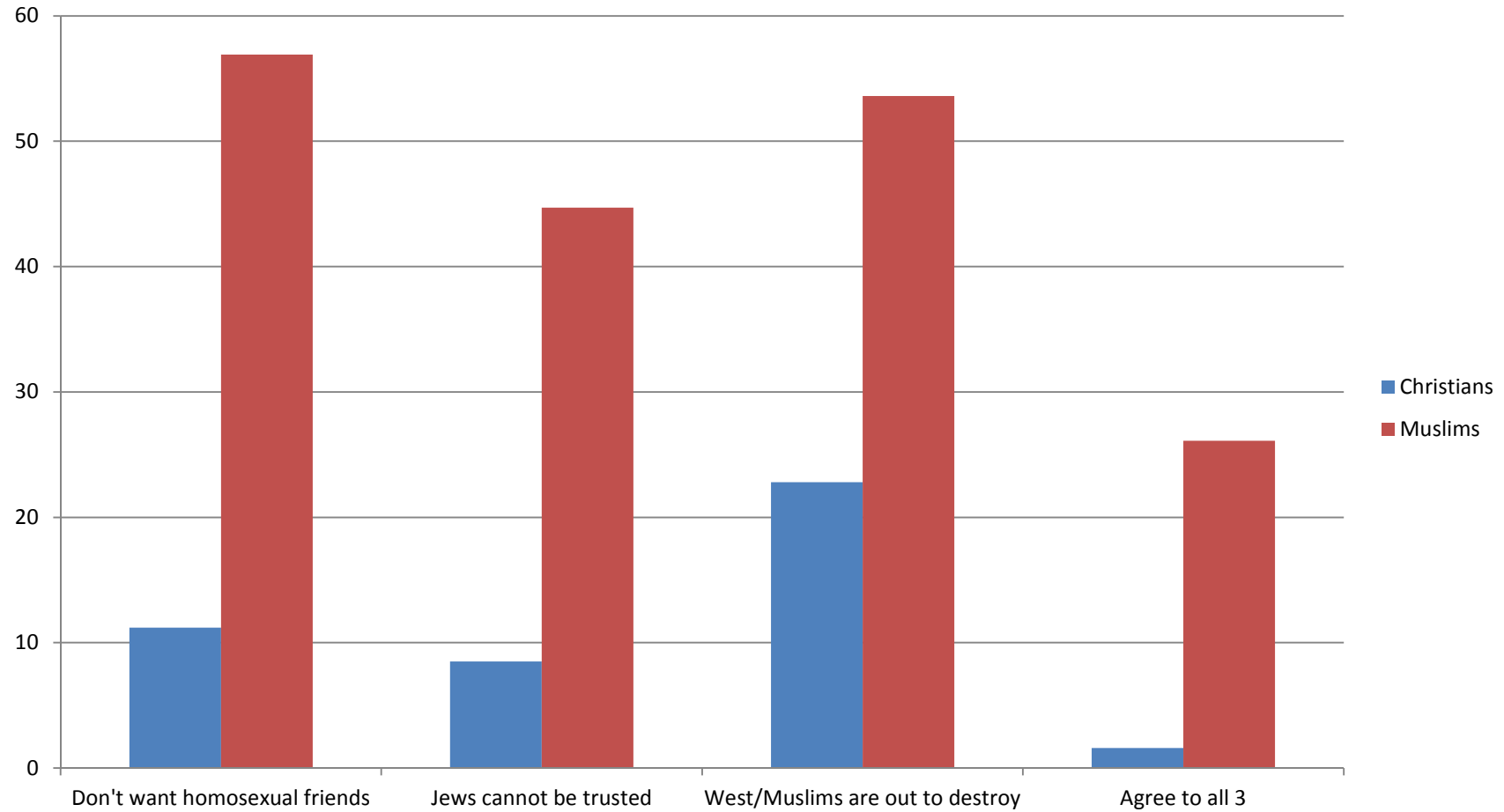
Measuring out-group hostility

I use a scale consisting of two items referring to homosexuals and Jews, and a third item, which refers respectively to Westerners (for Muslim respondents) and to Muslims (for native Christians):

- “I don’t want to have homosexuals as friends”
- “Jews cannot be trusted”
- “Muslims aim to destroy Western culture” (for Christian natives)
- “Western countries are out to destroy Islam” (for Muslims)

Cronbach’s alpha .66

Extent of outgroup-hostility among Christians and Muslims



Predictors of out-group hostility: multivariate regression analysis

Dependent variable:

Out-group hostility scale; composed of the three items (values ranging from 0-3)

Analysis only includes those persons of Turkish and Moroccan origin who self-identified as Muslims (97%) and natives who self-identified as Christians (70%)

Table shows unstandardized B-coefficients and significance levels in brackets

	All groups Model I	All groups Model II	All groups Model III	Christians	Muslims
Christian natives (reference group)	-	-	-	-	-
Moroccan Muslims	0.84 (.000)	0.84 (.000)	0.20 (.000)	-	Reference
Alevi Turks	0.65 (.000)	0.56 (.000)	0.39 (.000)	-	0.24 (.001)
Other Turkish Muslims	1.31 (.000)	1.23 (.000)	0.65 (.000)	-	0.45 (.000)
Medium education level		-0.17 (.000)	-0.04 (.246)	-0.12 (.063)	-0.04 (.357)
Higher education level		-0.57 (.000)	-0.28 (.000)	-0.30 (.000)	-0.33 (.000)
Employed		-0.18 (.000)	-0.08 (.001)	-0.09 (.013)	-0.08 (.012)
Age		0.00 (.000)	0.00 (.003)	0.01 (.000)	0.00 (.990)
Male		0.11 (.000)	0.11 (.000)	0.09 (.003)	0.13 (.000)
Reference: Austria		-	-	-	-
Germany		-0.37 (.000)	-0.16 (.000)	-0.10 (.046)	-0.18 (.004)
France		-0.16 (.000)	-0.13 (.003)	-0.06 (.265)	-0.20 (.001)
Netherlands		-0.24 (.000)	-0.18 (.000)	-0.17 (.001)	-0.23 (.000)
Belgium		0.05 (.219)	0.08 (.006)	-0.03 (.488)	0.08 (.177)
Sweden		-0.41 (.000)	-0.20 (.000)	-0.09 (.122)	-0.33 (.000)
Religious fundamentalism			0.45 (.000)	0.20 (.000)	0.50 (.000)
Adjusted R ²	.262	.342	.498	.184	.379
N	5994	5955	5349	1814	3535

External validation

- Study „Muslims in Germany“ (MID; 2007): „People who modernize Islam, destroy the true faith“: 43% agreement (by comparison SCIICS Germany: 50% of Muslims agree that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam)
- MID: „Following the prescriptions of my religion is more important to me than democracy“: 47% agreement (by comparison SCIICS Germany: 45% of Muslims agree that the rules of Islam are more important than the laws of Germany)
- Heitmeyer 1996: „Reform and modernization of Islam should be rejected“: 49% of Turkish 2nd generation agree (by comparison SCIICS Germany 2nd generation Turks: 55% agree that only one interpretation of islam is possible)
- Heitmeyer 1996: „Zionism threatens Islam“: 33% of 2nd generation German Turks agree (by comparison SCIICS German-Turkish 2nd generation: 36% agree that Jews cannot be trusted)
- Conclusion: answers to fundamentalism and out-group hostility items seem to be relatively stable over time and do not depend strongly on question wording

Possible explanations for the high levels of religious fundamentalism and outgroup hostility among West European Muslims

- **Socio-economic marginalization and exclusion?** No: education and employment explain some of the variation within the Muslim and Christian groups, but not the large difference between the two religious groups
- **Alienation and acculturation stress as a result of immigration?** No: levels of fundamentalism and outgroup hostility among Muslim immigrants are very similar to those found in their countries of origin (see the various Pew Research surveys)
- **A lack of religious rights for Muslims in Western Europe?** No: there is no clear correlation between the legal inclusion of Islam (see Carol & Koopmans in *Ethnicities 2013*) and fundamentalism and outgroup hostility.
- **An inherent characteristic of Islam?** No: while many Sunni Muslims do subscribe to fundamentalist ideas and are hostile towards outgroups, significant numbers of Sunni Muslims hold more liberal views. Moreover, Alevite Muslims have a quite similar view on religion as Christians. To say that Muslims who are true to their faith must agree that there is only one legitimate interpretation of Islam and that the rules of the Koran are more important than secular laws, amounts to taking the point of view of the fundamentalists and saying that Alevites and liberal Sunnis who think otherwise are not good Muslims.

Main conclusions

- Religious fundamentalist attitudes are in Western Europe much more widespread among Muslim immigrants than among native Christians
- However, Turkish Alevites as well as a minority of Sunni Muslim immigrants, have a view on Islam that is similar to native Christians' view on religion
- Religious fundamentalism strongly predicts hostile attitudes towards, and threat perceptions of outgroups
- The socio-structural determinants of fundamentalism are very similar for Christians and Muslims (education, employment)
- However, they do not explain the much higher levels of fundamentalism among Muslims
- While young Christians are less fundamentalist and hostile to outgroups than older generations, this is not the case among Muslims
- The popular explanations for religious fundamentalism among Muslim immigrants are all contradicted by the data: it is not a consequence of immigration-related stress, socio-economic marginalization, or legal exclusion

Appendix: country scores for the fundamentalism and outgroup hostility items

Note: All statements had three answer categories: „I agree“, „I disagree“, and „I neither agree nor disagree.“ The figures in the following tables refer to percentages of respondents who agreed to the respective statement. The remaining share of respondents either disagreed with the statement or chose the neither/nor option

Christians in:	Germany	France	Netherlands	Belgium	Austria	Sweden
Back to the roots	20.5	21.6	19.6	20.1	27.4	8.3
Only one interpretation	14.4	21.9	15.4	18.0	17.9	9.9
Religious rules more important than secular laws	16.2	7.5	16.5	11.1	13.5	11.0
Agree to all three fundamentalism items	4.0	2.5	5.0	3.0	4.4	2.4
No gay friends	12.9	14.0	6.2	10.2	14.7	12.1
Jews cannot be trusted	10.5	7.1	8.4	7.6	10.7	8.6
Muslims out to destroy Western culture	16.7	23.7	20.8	26.6	25.2	20.5
Agree to all three outgroup hostility items	2.3	1.5	0.7	1.0	3.0	1.0

Muslims in:	Germany	France	Netherlands	Belgium	Austria	Sweden
Back to the roots	49.9	61.4	54.5	66.1	65.0	43.4
Only one interpretation	57.1	81.7	74.3	82.2	79.1	67.4
Religious rules more important than secular laws	45.1	73.2	70.0	69.6	73.1	52.1
Agree to all three fundamentalism items	29.9	52.3	44.6	52.5	55.2	30.8
No gay friends	61.0	57.6	47.4	60.9	70.8	42.9
Jews cannot be trusted	28.0	43.4	40.4	56.7	64.1	36.8
The West is out to destroy Islam	33.4	52.5	54.4	63.0	67.1	51.9
Agree to all three outgroup hostility items	14.4	25.0	21.7	35.0	43.2	19.0