



Religious Fundamentalism and Radicalization Among Muslim Minority Youth in Europe

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Abstract: In Europe there are important concerns about fundamentalist religious beliefs among Muslim youth and “homegrown” radicalization that can lead to violent extremism. For these phenomena, different explanations are given, but there is very little systematic empirical research. Based on the existing conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature and using a social psychological perspective, the current paper discusses religious fundamentalism and radicalization among Muslim minority youth in Europe. Specifically, feelings of uncertainty, perceived hostility, and perceived injustice are discussed as three important psychological factors involved in radicalization. Furthermore, the critical importance of intra- and intergroup processes and social networks is discussed. The review of the research is concluded by providing some directions and suggestions for future research and for prevention and intervention.

Keywords: Muslim youth, religious identification, religious fundamentalism, radicalization

There are around 19 million Muslims in the European Union constituting an ethnically and religiously diverse population. Whereas most Muslims in Western Europe came as immigrants, some Eastern and South-Eastern European countries are home to significant numbers of non-immigrant Muslims. And whereas former colonial ties resulted in the settlement of Muslims in France, Britain, and Spain, the Muslim population in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands is the result of these countries' recruitment policies for manual labor. Further, although the majority is Sunni there also are Shiite and Alevi Muslims in Europe (Buijs & Rath, 2002). The large diversity makes it problematic to speak of a single Muslim “community” in Europe, or in one particular European country. Yet, within and across countries, Muslims with a strong religious group identification and a strict religious orientation can be expected to show important similarities in beliefs, values, and norms for behavior (e.g., Statham, 2016).

Islam has emerged as the main focus of immigration and diversity debates in Europe and is considered to separate Muslim immigrants from host societies (Foner & Alba, 2008). These debates are fueled by concerns about the (in)compatibility of Islam with liberal democratic values, and about fundamentalist religious beliefs and “homegrown” radicalization that can lead to violent extremism.

Fundamentalist interpretations of religion imply an “ideological” distancing from modernity that stimulates at least withdrawal from, and in the worst case violence against, the wider society that is perceived as violating one's holy principles (e.g., Buijs, Demant, & Handy, 2006). Recent years have shown a dramatic increase in the number of academic and popular publications on Muslim fundamentalism, radicalism, and terrorism. For these different phenomena, various explanations are given at different levels of analysis (e.g., societal conditions, group processes, individual psychology) and most often based on theoretical thinking, anecdotal evidence, case studies, or media and court reports (Christmann, 2012; Silke, 2008). Very few studies present systematic empirical evidence and the empirical studies that do exist tend to use data that have serious limitations, such as the lack of comparison groups and a focus on generational differences (first and second/third generations) rather than developmental outcomes (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010; Rink & Sharma, in press).

The great number of publications also has highlighted the lack of conceptual agreement leading to misunderstandings between researchers (“a source of confusion,” Sedgwick, 2010) and difficulties in assessing the literature. There is, for example, no generally accepted definition of radicalization and different forms of radicalization have

been distinguished, such as violent and nonviolent radicalism, and cognitive and behavioral radicalization (Bartlett & Miller, 2012). Yet, most scholars agree that radicalization involves a set of pathways in which perceived grievances and extreme beliefs are translated in a growing readiness to sympathize, support, and participate in nonviolent or violent political actions to change society's value priorities and the status quo. These beliefs can be political, such as political radicalism among the far-right and the far-left, and can involve single issues such as animal welfare, the environment, or abortion. Radicalization can also be based on religious fundamentalist beliefs with its distancing from modernity, and there are religious radical groups among all major religions.

In the current paper I focus on religious fundamentalism as well as radicalization among Muslim minority youth in Europe. Because of the lack of systematic empirical knowledge my discussion will be more theoretical than empirical. In the following sections, I will first discuss the construct of radicalization. This is followed by a discussion of religious fundamentalism. Subsequently I will go into feelings of uncertainty, perceived hostility, and perceived injustice as three important general psychological factors involved in radicalization. This is followed by a discussion of the critical importance of group processes and social networks. The paper concludes with some directions for future research.

Radicalization

The process of radicalization involves an increasing distrust in the established order and its majority representatives, together with a growing commitment to extreme beliefs, values, and norms of behavior that reject or undermine the status quo. For understanding the process of radicalization various models with different stadia or phases of radicalization up to terrorism have been proposed (see Christmann, 2012, King & Taylor, 2011). These stadia involve different degrees of radicalization that range from being receptive to fundamentalist messages, having sympathy for radical beliefs, to passive support for radical organizations, to active support, and to terrorist violence. This understanding of (Muslim) radicalization in terms of degrees has resulted in models such as the pyramid model (McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008), and the staircase model (Moghaddam, 2005) in which many individuals are at the base of the pyramid or staircase and very few at the top. These models indicate that different processes are involved in the development of different degrees of radicalization ("going steps up") and de-radicalization ("going steps down"). Sympathy for radical beliefs differs from passive

support, and passive support is different from actual engagement. These models raise the important question of specificity (Sageman, 2004); why only part of the Muslim youth in Europe has sympathy for radical beliefs, why a smaller part shows passive support for radical behavior, an even smaller part is an active supporter, and why very few are actively engaged in terrorism and violence. Only a very small number of individuals with radical beliefs turn to terror which indicates that radicalization can remain nonviolent in character.

These single dimension models are informative but also have their limitations because the movement from one stadium toward the next is not always empirically confirmed (Lygre, Eid, Larsson, & Ranstorp, 2011), and fundamentalist beliefs might also form a barrier against violence (Buijs et al., 2006). Terrorist violence is based on radical beliefs but not all radical beliefs (cognitive radicalization) lead to violence (behavioral radicalization). These beliefs can also lead to withdrawal in the own religious community and to normative forms of political action (e.g., protest, political organization; Bartlett & Miller, 2012).

There is no objective demographic profile of individuals who radicalize, apart from the fact that most individuals joining radical groups are late adolescents or young adults, and most often male. And there also is no distinctive (pathological) personality profile: radicals are not "crazy" (Corner, Gill, & Mason, 2016; Silke, 1998). Rather, there are different personal motivations and triggering factors at play resulting in different pathways to radicalization (Nesser, 2004; Slooman & Tillie, 2006). Living in unfavorable circumstances (e.g., low education, unemployment, broken family, being discriminated) or in a religious enclave is sometimes associated with more radical beliefs and actions, and sometimes not, and well-integrated and educated European youth also can become attracted to Islamic fundamentalism. This does not mean, however, that these conditions cannot constitute facilitating or contributing factors which make radicalization more likely. The broader international and national context and situational circumstances can create an environment conducive to recruitment and radicalization of certain youth. Social, economic, and political circumstances impact the psychological processes which can draw youngsters toward radicalism, and religious fundamentalist belief is an important aspect of this (Delia Deckard & Jacobson, 2015).

Religious Fundamentalism

Religiosity is multidimensional and different dimensions have been proposed. For example, conceptualizing and measuring religiosity, Kellstedt, Green, Guth, and Smidt (1996)

propose the three-B classification of religious belonging (group identification), behavior (praxis), and belief. These three aspects have been found to have different and sometimes conflicting effects on, for example, political and social tolerance (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012; Nunn, Crockett, & Williams, 1978). Religious fundamentalism can be considered a specific form of religious belief that is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for Muslim youth radicalization. This does not mean that every radical extremist starts with fundamentalist beliefs because these beliefs can also develop during the process of radicalization. Yet, religious fundamentalism is a central ideological ingredient in the politicization of Islam (Islamism).

Although the term “fundamentalism” is variously and loosely used (see Emerson & Hartman, 2006), the phenomenon of fundamentalism appears to have several commonalities regardless of the specific religion (Herriot, 2007; Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005). One of the most commonly used definitions in the psychological literature (Altemeyer & Hunsberger 1992) stresses, first, that in religious fundamentalism there is an emphasis on a single, unchangeable interpretation that is binding for all believers: one’s religion is considered an unchangeable entity laid down in sacred texts that need to be taken literally. Second, there is an emphasis on orthopraxy in which behavioral rules established in the past should be strictly followed and prevail over secular ones. Third, and most importantly, religious fundamentalism is directed against the modern secular world (Herriot, 2007; Hood et al., 2005). Fundamentalist beliefs imply a rigid in-group and out-group distinction between the superiority of our “true” belief and a modern world that is contradictory or hostile to our religion.

Religious fundamentalists have an adversarial stance toward Western modernity which can result in different forms of Islamism. It can involve a withdrawal from society and leading an ascetic lifestyle. But it can also involve the belief that society should be organized around one’s religious values and normative practices which have to be defended against those who corrupt the pure faith, such as religious moderates, apostates, and seculars. The latter possibility does not have to include the support or willingness to engage in violent means to defend the faith or achieve religious goals: “violence is certainly not a defining characteristic of fundamentalism” (Herriot, 2007, p. 1). Scriptural violence sanctioned by God can increase the support for actual violence (Bushman, Ridge, Das, Key, & Busath, 2007), and fundamentalists might sympathize with the aims of terrorists but the majority disagrees with violent means. Fundamentalist aims can also be pursued in more peaceful, democratic ways (Emerson & Hartman, 2006). However, because compromise is an essential element in democratic politics, the democratic process is

often considered alien to one’s fundamentalist beliefs leading to social, political, and intellectual segregation and disengagement. When all eternal truths can be found in the Quran and the religious teachings, political thought should be directly informed by Islamic belief only.

There is very little systematic knowledge about religious fundamentalism among Muslim minority youth in Europe. Some studies have described a weak but growing fundamentalist orientation among second and third generation Muslims which is expressed in literal interpretations of religious texts, an emphasis on basic religious principles and support for Sharia law (Kibria, 2008). For example, a survey research in Great Britain found that 42% of Muslim youth (16–24 years) agreed that Sharia law is absolute and should not be interpreted to fit in with Western values, and 36% agreed that Muslim converts to another religion should be punished by death (Mirza, Senthilkumaran, & Ja’far, 2007). In a survey research in Belgium it was found that around 45% of Muslim youth of Turkish and Moroccan origin indicated that everything that can be found in the Quran should be taken literally as written (Güngör, Fleischmann, & Phalet, 2011). In a survey study in six European countries (Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Sweden) second generation Sunni Muslims were found to have much more fundamentalist beliefs than Alevi Muslims and Christian natives (Koopmans, 2015). A little over 50% agreed that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam, 70% agreed that there is only one interpretation of the Quran to which every Muslim should stick, and 64% agreed that the rules of the Quran are more important than the laws of the country. Several other studies have identified the interest of Sunni Muslim youngsters in a “pure” Islam but it is unknown what exactly is driving this interest and to what extent these interests have an impact on their everyday life (see Voas & Fleischmann, 2012).

Psychological Dynamics

Research in Denmark, the Netherlands, and the UK indicates that there is no clear relation between Muslim family and child raising practices and radicalization (Sieckelink & De Winter, 2015). Rather, there often are intergenerational struggles in which young Muslims explicitly contrast their “real” Islamic faith with what they consider the culturally infected beliefs and practices of their parents (Lewis, 2007; Vertovec & Rogers, 1998). In their return to the “real Islam” children reject some parental homeland traditions as non-Islamic and intergenerational conflict is considered a factor in the radicalization of Muslim minority youth (Rink & Sharma, in press). Additionally, many Islamic extremists went to secular primary and

secondary education rather than Islamic religious schools, and there are Islamist extremists who were raised as Christians and converted to Islam later in life (Sageman, 2004; Uhlman, 2008). So the religious background of radicalized Muslims is not clear-cut and radicalization seems to have much to do with processes within and between groups and the related feelings of uncertainty, and perceived hostility and injustice (Doosje, Loseman, & Van den Bos, 2013).

Uncertainty

An important factor that makes Muslim youth sensitive and receptive to fundamentalist beliefs and also radicalization is personal uncertainty. Individuals react to uncertainty by hardening their beliefs and increasing their convictions (McGregor, Zanna, Holmes, & Spencer, 2001). Erik Erikson has noted that the identity development process implies that adolescents are uncertain about themselves and that ideologies assist in developing a secure identity. Muslim minority youth face the challenge of defining an identity for themselves within a Western, modern individualized world. Islamic fundamentalism provides a potential answer to the search for identity and meaning in offering a fixed value system amid the value pluralism of European societies. If young Muslims lack a clear sense of self, joining a fundamentalist group provides an absolute worldview about what to believe and how to act, and to distance themselves in a positive way from modern society.

Social psychological research has demonstrated that group identification reduces self-uncertainty. Feelings of self-uncertainty lead to joining and identification with “pure” or well-defined groups that reduce uncertainty by providing clear beliefs, values, and norms for behavior (Hogg, 2000). Religious groups are especially suited for this because they provide eternal and sacred truths that contribute to a sense of confidence, belonging, self-worth, and meaningfulness (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010). For example, survey research in Egypt and Saudi Arabia has found that Muslim youth who feels uncertain and insecure is higher on religious fundamentalism and more likely to rely on religious authorities (Moaddel & Karabenick, 2008).

In the European context, Muslim youth can turn to their religious group and fundamentalist beliefs as part of a search for certainty, meaning, and community. They live as a minority in historically Christian societies that are increasingly secular. So they not only have to deal with “normal” adolescent feelings of self-uncertainty but also with the uncertainties of trying to combine quite different sets of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms. They can experience a double sense of non-belonging because they do not feel part of the community of their parents and at the same time feel rejected by the host society

(Khosrokhavar, 2005; Roy, 2004). Survey research among Muslim youth in the Netherlands indicates that stronger feelings of self-uncertainty are associated with feeling superior to and keeping more social distance toward those having different beliefs (Doosje et al., 2013).

The psychological integration of different worldviews can lead to feelings of identity incompatibility that, in turn, lead to a distancing from the host society (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2012) and higher sympathy for radical political actions (Simon, Reichert, & Grabow, 2013). Neurological research has indicated that identity incompatibility involves activity in the behavioral inhibition system which produces anxiety and stress that can lead to a stronger commitment to a singly, clearly defined normative and moral framework (Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Youth with fundamentalist beliefs tend to be 24/7 believers in which their religious identity dominates all spheres of life and eclipses other identities and group belongings (Gielen, 2008). A fundamentalist religious interpretation implies that there is only room for the one identity of a truly believing Muslim (a Muslim to the core) which makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to consider oneself both Muslim and French, or German or Dutch.

Perceived Hostility

In Europe, Muslim minority members experience various forms of misrecognition, exclusion, and victimization. There is an increasing body of research documenting strong anti-Muslim public sentiments and feelings, and negative behaviors (Helbling, 2012). And not only populist movements (e.g., Pegida) and right-wing politicians but also “mainstream” politicians argue that Islam is incompatible with Western values and beliefs, such as the German interior Minister (Friedrich) who publicly stated that “Islam does not belong in Germany.” Anti-Muslim sentiments appear to be more widespread than antiforeign resentments (Spuyt & Elchardus, 2012).

In Europe, cross-national research has shown that a less welcoming societal context is associated with stronger religious group identification, stronger religious belief, and more strict forms of religious behavior among Muslim immigrants (Connor, 2010) and Muslim youth (Güngör, Fleischmann, Phalet, & Maliepaard, 2013). And extending the well-established rejection-identification model in social psychology (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999) to the religious domain, various studies in Europe have found that higher perceived rejection and exclusion is associated with stronger Muslim group identification and higher involvement in religious practices (e.g., Fleischmann, Phalet, & Klein, 2011; Kunst, Tajamal, Sam, & Ulleberg, 2012). Furthermore, a hostile context might bolster fundamentalist beliefs and support for radicalization as forms

of resistance against a non-accommodating, modern host society. An Islamist identity allows Muslim youth to express their resentment in a cohesive and organized way and with the markers emphasized by the host society.

Almost all theoretical models about Muslim radicalization point at the importance of perceived acceptance, respect, belonging, and recognition. A culture of suspicion and surveillance, feelings of insignificance and humiliation (Kruglanski et al., 2014) stimulate societal dis-identification and disengagement which makes Muslim minority youth more receptive to fundamentalist beliefs and also radicalization (Aydin, Fischer, & Frey, 2010; McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008). Rejection and humiliation motivates the search for inclusion and dignity. Islamism provides an answer to the quest of belonging and respect and offers an outlet for the frustrations of feeling a second class citizen living in a hostile Western society in which there is no place for Muslims.

Experiences and feelings of misrecognition and humiliation are not only harmful when they relate to oneself as an individual but also to the group of Muslims in the host society and the global *ummah*. Group identification implies an emotional merging of oneself and one's group whereby the fate of one's group becomes the fate of oneself. In Islam there is an emphasis on Muslims forming a single community of believers ("ummah"). Islam is not just about its five pillars and behavioral rules, but also about the unity of Muslims at local, national, and international levels. A common Islamic community bound by its religion and patterned after the community founded by Muhammad is central to the faith. Fundamentalist believers consider it important to establish and maintain a unified global Muslim community that transcend ethnic cultures. Identification with the *ummah* implies a sense of responsibility and solidarity with the perceived suffering and humiliation of Muslims in other parts of the world (Roy, 2004).

Perceived Injustices

Grievances and perceived injustices are considered important ingredients in radicalization processes. Radicalization would be the result of collective discontent caused by a sense of relative deprivation (see King & Taylor, 2011). When one personally or one's group is worse off than others (distributive injustice) or treated unfairly (procedural injustice), this leads to anger and resentment. The feeling of being in a disadvantaged position and being treated unfairly – for example, as a second class citizen, or because of perceived double standards used by institutions, politicians, and the media – can lead to disengagement from society and a stronger orientation on one's religious community (Schmitt & Maes, 2002). Whereas perceived personal relative deprivation tends to lead to anxiety and depression, group-based feelings of injustice are more likely to lead to

collective mobilization and action (see Smith, Pettigrew, Pippin, & Bialosiewicz, 2012). In a survey study among Muslim adolescents in the Netherlands it was found that higher feelings of group-based relative deprivation were associated with a more positive attitude and greater willingness to use violence to defend Muslims and Islam (Van Bergen, Feddes, Doosje, & Pels, 2015).

Importantly, individuals who themselves are not disadvantaged or face injustice can experience these group-based feelings of anger and resentment which motivates them to act in terms of their group membership and on behalf of their disadvantaged group (Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2007). Radicalized Muslims do not tend to be underprivileged, uneducated individuals on the fringe of society, but rather feel a strong sense of commitment and responsibility toward their religious community: "eradication of poverty and universal secondary education are unlikely to change these feelings. Indeed, those who are well-off and well-educated may even perceive such feelings more acutely" (Krueger & Malečková, 2003). College-educated Muslims can be keenly aware of (institutional) injustices and the gap between Muslims' deserved, equal place in the host society, and the actual disadvantages and inequalities that exist (Verkuyten, 2016). These perceived injustices are important determinants for the support of religious fundamentalist beliefs (Doosje et al., 2013).

Feelings of group-based relative deprivation can extend to fellow Muslims in other places in the world. Some individuals radicalize as a reaction to the perceived neo-colonial attitude of the West and the related oppression, injustices, and hostilities committed against Muslims in conflict areas such as the Middle East and Afghanistan (Slootman & Tillie, 2006). These conflicts elicit anger and resentment together with a feeling of powerlessness which makes the political goals of Islamist and radical groups attractive: to become active is attractive for those who feel powerless. These groups contain the promise of being able to support the fight against the perceived oppressors of Muslims in Europe and in other parts of the world. It offers an opportunity for revenge and retribution against the enemy, including the host society which because of its foreign policy can be seen as an oppressor (Bux, 2007; Silke, 2008).

General Processes and Specific Predictions

Feelings of uncertainty, and perceived hostility and injustice are likely to be very important for radicalization but do, of course, not have to lead to this, let alone violence. These feelings can underlie a range of behaviors, including withdrawal and disengagement from society and demo-

cratic forms of political activism (e.g., protest, democratic organization). Furthermore, a subjective sense of injustice or feeling of uncertainty is not sufficient for collective action. This also depends for example on whether one thinks that the actions will have an effect, and if your group actually is able to bring about change (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Furthermore, it will depend on the political and discursive opportunity structures and constraints (e.g., Cinalli & Giugni, 2016; Statham, 2016).

An analysis of basic psychological processes should not be confused with behavioral regularities in the social world. Similarly, religious group identification can go together with harmonious group relations, even in times of threat (Anisman, Ysseldyk, Haslam, & Matheson, 2012). Group identification tells us something about how strongly people feel committed to their community but not about the direction in which they will act (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). It is the specific meaningful content of the identity that should be taken into account for understanding when and why people are, for example, involved in peaceful demonstration or rather violent action. As a Muslim you can defend the interests of Muslims, but the sense of commitment to do so is much stronger in radical Islam. It is by defining a particular identity in a particular way that people can be mobilized and moved in a particular direction.

Group Processes

Social psychological research on the “worldview-conflict proposition” demonstrates that dissimilar values, beliefs, and moralities between groups contribute to intolerance (Brandt & Van Tongeren, 2015). People seek to affirm the validity of their own beliefs and worldview and therefore express intolerance toward groups whose beliefs and worldviews are dissimilar to their own. This has been found among individuals high and low on measures of religious fundamentalism (Brandt & Van Tongeren, 2015), but the intolerance is stronger among those with more fundamentalist beliefs, and when other groups are not only dissimilar but also perceived to threaten the ability to live according to one’s religious practices.

Religious individuals can believe in the true faith and the literal interpretation of the holy scriptures without necessarily demonstrating hostility, but rather withdraw from society to live an ascetic life or promote prosocial behavior (“Islam as a religion of peace”). Yet, religious fundamentalism implies a clear in-group versus out-group distinction, whereby the own superiority can go together with hostility toward the threatening out-group, and toward members of one’s own religious group who are not viewed as true believers or dissenters (Herriot, 2007; Hood et al., 2005).

In his survey research among Muslims in six European countries, Koopmans (2015) found that 62% of the second generation Sunni Muslims see the West as an enemy out to destroy Islam, whereas this percentage was 37% among the Alevi Muslims. Furthermore, religious fundamentalism was found to be very strongly related to out-group hostility, and more strongly so among Muslims than Christians. Muslim fundamentalists tend to perceive the West as trying to destroy Islam or to subvert the very nature of their religion into an Euro-Islam (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2012).

Radicalization does not happen in a vacuum but is a social process that results from interactions within and between groups. It first of all involves the Muslim communities themselves in which there is a continuing and strong debate about the interpretation of Islam and what it means for Muslims to live in Europe. There are profound cleavages within the Muslim communities such as the division between moderates and seculars versus fundamentalists and Islamists. The latter groups of people consider their way of being Muslim the only correct one and they spend much time in criticizing what they consider “contaminated” or “compromised” interpretations of Islam (i.e., Euro-Islam; Slooman & Tillie, 2006). They do not hesitate to denounce and reproach the non-pious lifestyle of “moderate” Muslims (Hoekstra & Verkuyten, 2015) branding them as unbelievers and sometimes threatening them with violence. This makes it difficult for “moderate” Muslims to speak up as a Muslim, and many Muslim youngsters find themselves caught in the middle between, on the one hand, religious fundamentalism that they fear, and, on the other hand, a host society that rejects and humiliates Islam (Gest, 2015).

There often also is a specific intergroup dynamic or what is termed co-radicalization (Pratt, 2015). The discrimination that Muslim minority youth face can lead to stronger Muslim group identification with an engagement in the related religious normative practices such as Islamic clothing (e.g., Djellaba) and growing a beard. These practices publicly express and affirm one’s religious identity. In turn, majority group members can react more negatively toward these identity enactments because they see them as threatening their cultural identity and worldview, leading to the fear that Islam will override one’s own way of life and thereby the prevailing status arrangements in society (“Eurabia,” “Londonistan”). Discrimination is one way to deal with this challenge: making it more difficult for Muslim fundamentalists to publicly perform their identity and to enter the social system. Across six studies, Kaiser and Pratt-Hyatt (2009) found that majority group members do indeed express more negative reactions toward strongly identified cultural minorities who enact their identity, than toward weakly identified minorities.

Co-radicalization is not restricted to discrimination processes but might also ensue from right-wing extremists

(e.g., attacks on Mosque's, other hate crimes) and the counter-radicalization and terrorism measures of European authorities (Khosrokhavar, 2005). Islamic extremist use right-wing extremism to claim that the West is hostile and violent toward Islam, and right-wing extremist use Islamic extremism to argue that Islam is incompatible with the West. Islamists welcome events such as calls for a headscarf ban in France, Belgium, and Germany and the 2009 Swiss minaret ban because they see this as a confirmation of oppression, injustice, and hostility toward Islam and they try to use it for political provocation and escalation purposes (Holtz, Wagner, & Sartawi, 2015). And radical Islamic organizations can seek to incite Western authorities to take ever more restrictive and harsh measures that further disengage Muslim youth from society making them more receptive to extremist messages and recruitment (Heath-Kelly, 2013). Intergroup conflicts in society and restrictive policy responses can serve to make extremist messages more credible and espouse a cultural of enmity in which the host society and the West are considered the enemy (Abbas, 2007). The feeling that Muslims face many injustices and that the West seeks to change or destroy Islam, or even is at war with Islam, makes it possible to legitimize violence as self-defense. A "true" Muslim should take on the fight in the face of the enemy's aggression. The violence becomes virtuous: it is morally right or even obligatory to defend one's faith and one's threatened "brothers" and "sisters" around the world, and to right the perceived wrongs (Fiske & Rai, 2015). People become morally motivated to act violently on behalf of their religious group and against Western injustices, and the violence is religiously sanctioned.

Social Networks

Being embedded in a family, peer group or local support network can function as a protective factor to all sorts of risks, including the feeling of being rejected, misrecognized, and victimized. For example, among British Muslims resilience against victimization is reinforced by social networks (Hargreaves, 2016). Furthermore, a supportive social network can function as a shield of resilience that protects against radical influences (Doosje et al., 2016). Yet, social networks can also present a risk because fundamentalist beliefs and also radical ideals are transmitted by (virtual) social networks, and violent radicalization takes place within small groups. Radicalization is very much a question of who you (happen) to know (Neumann & Rogers, 2007; Sageman, 2004). Individuals who develop more fundamentalist beliefs gradually become more isolated from family and friends and are increasingly depended on and loyal

to small fundamentalist groups (Bakker, 2006). These groups make their group members resilient against "external" de-radicalization influences, thus turning the shield of resilience around (Doosje et al., 2016).

The Mosque provides a setting not only for non-radical Muslims to socialize but also for small groups to develop stronger fundamentalist beliefs. The social bonding and peer pressure within small groups can facilitate the adaptation of fundamentalist beliefs and set one on a path toward radicalization (Neumann & Rogers, 2007). Physical and virtual social networks can validate or shape one's own views, and they provide a feeling of peer acceptance, recognition, and being respected. Through interactions with and within radical groups, Muslim youngsters are gradually convinced of the need to defend Islam and to stand up against injustices and humiliation. The Mosque is replaced by small personal ("backyard Mosque") and virtual networks on the Internet and social media ("virtual Mosque").

Especially the Internet provides networking opportunities with like-minded individuals, in addition to supplying information and educational materials. For example, at Internet chat rooms Muslim girls discuss what it means to be a "true" Muslim and whether wearing a headscarf is necessary for being an authentic believer (Hoekstra & Verkuyten, 2015), and fundamentalist and moderate young Muslims discuss important events such as the conflict in the Middle East and the Swiss minaret ban (Holtz et al., 2015). The Internet contributes to the radicalization process and some radical jihadist base their knowledge of Islam solely on their online research (Aly, Macdonald, Jarvis, & Chen, 2017). Fundamentalists and also terrorist organizations are using the Internet to win the hearts and minds of young Muslims. They provide information and ideological justification for those who want to learn more and who are receptive to self-indoctrination by repeatedly exposing themselves to the vivid images on these websites. Yet, it is difficult to assess and to examine what role the Internet exactly plays in the radicalization process of Muslim minority youth in Europe.

Discussion

Research on fundamentalism and on radicalization of Muslim minority youth in Europe is scarce which means that an empirical-based understanding is weak. There is a lack of primary data and, to my knowledge, longitudinal research does not exist. And there are problematic assumptions, such as taken people's stories as accurate explanations for their radicalization rather than (in part) after the fact rationalizations (Pisoiu, 2013). Furthermore, because of the lack of systematic comparisons it remains

unclear to what extent radicalization among Muslim minority youth differs from radicalization within other religions (e.g., Christian fundamentalist) or from political forms of radicalization (e.g., extreme-right). For example, some have argued that religion is not a distinctive phenomenon, whereas others claim that religion is unique in its reference to the sacred and in providing ultimate meaningfulness (Pargament, 2002). And whereas some argue that radicalism of Muslims represents a radicalization of Islam (Kepel, 2017), others see it as an Islamization of a new version of anti-Western political radicalism (Roy, 2017).

There are two additional issues that I was not able to discuss and that provide further directions for future work. First, I have discussed fundamentalist beliefs and radicalization in relation to grievances and feelings of uncertainty, hostility, and injustices, in particular. This gives the impression that Muslim minority youth is only pushed or driven toward radicalization as a sort of “reactive religiosity.” But it is important to consider the possibility that Muslim youth also is pulled toward or drawn to Islamism and radicalization because of the promises of excitement, heroism, commitment to a meaningful moral cause, and a special status (Cottee & Hayward, 2011).

Second, I have not discussed the various initiatives that exist for radicalization prevention and de-radicalization interventions. Considering the various pathways to radicalization, the important societal question of “what works” in prevention and de-radicalization is not an easy one to answer. Preventing intergroup tensions, stimulating a sense of societal belonging, developing supportive social networks, and providing “attractive alternatives” are some of the ideas that have been put forward. But there is hardly any systematic research on the effectiveness of the various social interventions and policy initiatives (Christmann, 2012; Koehler, 2017), and there also is the possibility that interventions backfire if handled badly, for example when youngsters feel unjustly targeted and under constant suspicion (Heath-Kelly, 2013).

Being a young Muslim in Europe clearly encompasses a complex reality. The process of radicalization with its fundamentalist beliefs does not have one “root cause” but rather involves different combinations of many factors and conditions that lead to different “routes” or pathways. One person can indoctrinate himself on the Internet and then start to look for a (virtual) social network of like-minded peers, whereas someone else, by chance, can get into contact with an extremist social network that exposes him to pictures and stories about injustices and hostilities toward Muslim. There are personal needs, group grievances, intra- and intergroup processes, social networks, societal conditions, and global developments. And it is unclear how exactly these various processes and factors interact and contribute to radicalization and why only some

individuals and groups radicalize while the great majority with similar experiences and living in similar conditions, do not. This complexity further could mean that dimensional approaches (staircase, pyramid models of radicalization) are misleading. Implicitly these approaches assume that the one (fundamentalism) leads to the other (radicalization and then terrorism) so that the same processes underlying the one are also (indirectly) involved in the other. But it could also be that we are dealing with sometimes overlapping yet distinct phenomena that are the result of different processes. In this view there is not one dimension with terrorism as its endpoint but rather a separate set of factors and processes that explain, for example, fundamentalist beliefs and another set explaining radicalization. This possibility might be more in agreement with the limited empirical evidence and makes it all the more important to make clear conceptual distinctions when studying and addressing forms of religiosity among Muslim minority youth.

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