

Political Psychology, Vol. 0, No. 0, 2018
doi: 10.1111/pops.12508

Devoutness to Islam and the Attitudinal Acceptance of Political Violence Among Young Muslims in Germany

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This article investigates the links between religious beliefs and capitalist mentalities—namely devoutness to Islam and hierarchic self-interest (HSI)—and violence-accepting attitudes among the young Muslim migrant population in Germany. Following a situational perspective, these links are analyzed under different individual conditions structured by (socioeconomic) precariousness and education. Based on framing approaches and concepts from socialization theory, we derive the following hypothesis: The links between religious beliefs and capitalist mentalities and the attitudinal acceptance of violence are stronger among individuals with low levels of education and a precarious economic status (compared to high education/nonprecarious status). The strongest link is expected for a negative status inconsistency (high education/precarious economic status). Structural equation models for data from a random probability sample of 350 Muslims (aged 14–32 years) in Germany indicate that attitudinal acceptance of violence among young Muslims is not predicted by devoutness to Islam but by economic precariousness and by acceptance of capitalist values of the HSI belief system.

KEY WORDS: education, hierarchic self-interest, Islam, migration, social inequality, violence

Political discourse all over the Western world often suggests a general association of Muslim religiosity with the use of violence (Halm & Meyer, 2013; van der Noll, 2010). The current study attempts to challenge this widespread preconception by showing that among young Muslims attitudinal support for violence is less straightforward. Rather it seems determined by the interplay of individuals' dispositional characteristics and their living conditions. We focus on violence-accepting attitudes, defined here as attitudes attributing legitimacy to the use of political violence as a means of solving social conflict (Uslucan, Fuhrer, & Rademacher, 2003).¹ The present study reports data from a random probability sample of 14–32-year-old Muslims in Germany (Frindte, Boehnke, Kreikenbom & Wagner, 2012). This adolescent and younger adult sample allows for an analysis of the links between devoutness to Islam and hierarchic self-interest (HSI) in predicting attitudinal acceptance of political violence (e.g., Hadjar [2004] in regard to HSI; Silke [2008], Simon & Ruhs [2008], or Hanke, van Egmond, Rohmann, & Boehnke [2017] in regard to Islamic extremism). The study concentrated on younger Muslims, as this age group is often seen as most likely to engage in delinquent and violent behavior (Moffitt, 1993; Paloutzian & Park, 2013) and also shows highest rates of acceptance of political violence (Trécourt, 2017).

Two basic assumptions are formulated: First, attitudes (such as violence-accepting attitudes) are structured by the basic belief systems individuals hold. According to Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957), individuals strive for cognitive consonance and, thus, adhere to attitudes and behavioral intention patterns that fit the basic beliefs they hold. A general conceptual framework to theorize the mediating function of beliefs on deviance and violence is provided by framing models. Second, whether or not these beliefs lead to a particular behavioral intention is determined by social conditions, that is, socioeconomic characteristics of individual life circumstances.

We investigate two kinds of belief systems: A strongly self-centered Western-capitalist and a religious one, namely *hierarchic self-interest* (HSI)—a belief system that captures a self-centered orientation toward succeeding in highly competitive societies—and *devoutness to Islam*—a strong dedication of individuals to Islamic religious teachings. We test the assumption that the relationship between belief systems and attitudinal acceptance of violence is moderated by life circumstances, which we operationalize using educational attainment and the degree of socioeconomic precariousness prevalent in individuals' lives.

The subsequent theoretical sections will first introduce the Muslim immigrant group under scrutiny, followed by an elaboration of the theoretical link between belief systems (i.e., HSI and devoutness to Islam) and violence-accepting attitudes and an explanation of the assumption of a possible interaction with life circumstances.

Muslim Youth in Germany

Analyses presented below center on young Muslims (ages 14–32) in Germany, an economically prosperous high GDP country with a medium score on the Migrant Integration Policy Index (at the time of the survey in 2011: 60; compared to Sweden with a better integration score of 80; CIDOB/MPG, 2015). Well over four million Muslims currently live in Germany, which constitutes more than 5% of the total population. Roughly 60% of Muslims in Germany are of Turkish origin, followed by immigrants from Southeastern European countries (Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania), the Middle East, and North Africa (Haug, Müssig, & Stichs, 2009).² Most Muslims living in Germany are Sunni (74%),

¹Note that it is not violent behavior per se that is investigated in this study but rather attitudes towards violence. Although empirically related, both the acceptance and actual performance of violence are not identical. The step from attitudinal preferences to actual behavior is not at the core of this study. We see attitudes as roots of behavioral intentions that need certain situational specifics to manifest in actual behavior (cf. Theory of Planned Behavior; Ajzen, 2002).

² Considering that more than one million refugees came to Germany in the year 2015, these figures are under constant change.

followed by Alevi (13%) and Shiites (7%). On average, Muslims are more religious than Christians (Brettfeld & Wetzels, 2007; Haug et al., 2009). However, Muslims in Germany are still a rather heterogeneous group also in terms of religiosity. From a socioeconomic perspective, however, the Muslim population in Germany is rather uniformly underprivileged in terms of education, employment rates, and income levels (Brettfeld & Wetzels, 2007; SVR, 2010). They furthermore face quite dismissive attitudes by the German non-Muslim population. This rejection by many Germans is based on the claim that Muslims do not integrate well in terms of assimilation, plus a perceived generalized association of Islam with terrorism (Frindte et al., 2012; Heeren & Zick, 2012). Anti-Muslim propaganda is at the heart of right-wing populist campaigns (Ormsby, 2017). Of all European countries that in their current borders never—even in part—belonged to the Ottoman Empire, Germany is at the top in Europe with 5–10% resident Muslims (PEW Research Center, 2015) together with Austria, Belgium, France, Liechtenstein, and the Netherlands.

In mere numbers, the prevalence of accepting violent means of political action is somewhat higher among Muslims in Germany compared to Christians and the German general population (e.g., Baier & Pfeiffer, 2012; Mayer, Fuhrer, & Uslucan, 2005), although only a small minority of these Muslims can be described as “Islamic-authoritarian” and pronouncedly prone to accept violent means of political action (about 12%; Brettfeld & Wetzels, 2007). These higher numbers seem to emerge from an interplay of the above mentioned socioeconomic disadvantage and discrimination, the general challenges of growing up between two cultures with different basic religious orientations, intergenerational conflict, and cultural aspects such as specific parental styles or traditional images of masculinity (e.g., Baier & Pfeiffer, 2012; Mayer et al., 2005; Uslucan, Liakova, & Halm, 2011).

*The Link Between Belief Systems and Attitudinal Acceptance of Violence:
Hierarchic Self-Interest and Devoutness to Islam*

We will focus on how education and precariousness impact the link between belief systems and attitudinal acceptance of violence in terms of the situation-specific activation of certain frames: Framing approaches, thus, guide the formulation of our hypotheses. According to such concepts (e.g., Goffman, 1974), individuals’ experience with and perception of the surrounding world is organized by—or framed by—certain belief systems they hold. Such frames structure the evaluation of a situation and respective action alternatives. Hence, frames are closely linked to more concrete attitudes and subsequent behavior. People perceive, evaluate, and cope with a certain situation based on particular frames that structure “the situation by providing the criteria for selecting and ordering the alternatives” (Lindenberg, 1992, p. 12). Characterized by relative stability and abstractness, beliefs frame the selection of attitudes which then preform behavioral intentions and—under certain conditions—behavior (Ajzen, 2002).

In that respect, certain frames or belief systems can also increase or decrease the likelihood of choosing an action alternative that includes violence or crime. According to the framing model of Social Action Theory (Wikström & Sampson, 2006), orientations or social values are employed as frames for the selection of an action alternative. For example, if individuals internalized moral beliefs that condemn crime, then positive attitudes toward crime and criminal behavioral patterns are no longer taken into account or are actively dismissed. The current study contrasts two different belief systems assumed to structure violence-related attitudes: The Western-capitalist belief system of HSI and devoutness to Islam in terms of their relation to the attitudinal acceptance of violent political behavior.

Hierarchic self-interest (HSI) has been conceptualized as an individual expression of societal dominance ideologies and a core belief pattern of modern industrial societies and is strongly tied to the logic of free-market capitalism. HSI as a self-centered belief system encompasses the notions

that being successful in all life domains is of primary importance, that success can only be reached by outperforming rivals, that individualism is a main prerequisite for success, and that it is also legitimate to reach success through violating the interests of others (Hadjar, 2004; Hadjar, Baier, & Boehnke, 2008; Hagan, Hefler, Claßen, Boehnke, & Merkens, 1998).

HSI comprises several subdimensions (cf. Hadjar, 2004; Hagan et al., 1998). For the following analyses, we confine HSI to four elements: *Competitiveness* is linked to Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory and describes the wish to be better than others that arises from comparisons with others. It reflects the hierarchic structure of a (capitalist) society, perceived differences in success, status and wealth, and positional competition (Hirsch, 1977). *Success orientation* refers to the urge for effectiveness in working or learning processes and the impulse to produce material assets. It is linked to the materialism concept of Inglehart (1977). *Machiavellianism* describes a set of attitudes and behaviors intended to put through ones' own goals also at the expense of the interests of others (Machiavelli, 1531/2014). *Individualism* relates to concepts of modernized societies that emphasize the individual as the key unit of the contemporary world over the importance of the group or larger units (Bell, 1973). Individual goals are far more important than group goals (cf. Triandis, 1995).

The unique and innovative characteristic of the HSI concept is that it is located at the interface of psychological and sociological approaches to the emergence of human attitudes and behavior. On the one hand, it is an individual-difference variable that describes a certain aspect of an individual's personality (beliefs about "proper" individual behavior in a social system). On the other hand, it describes individual expressions of dominance ideologies prevalent in modern industrial societies (i.e., the logic of free market capitalism). These ideologies provide a frame for individual's attitudes and behavior such as the acceptance of violence.

Numerous authors have come to call this type of belief "idiocentric" (e.g., Dutta-Bergman & Wells, 2002). HSI does not refer to an autonomous individuality that is positively linked to universalism or postmaterialism; it is rather an expression of a highly self-centered and in essence antisocial individualism. The preference of HSI beliefs is negatively associated with parenting practices directed to increase autonomous individuality (Hadjar, 2004).

Whereas HSI is a distinctly Western-capitalist belief, very much linked to rationalization processes, *devoutness to Islam* is an expression of religious beliefs. Devoutness can be considered as one specific dimension of religiosity, which in turn can be described as the "state of one's belief in God, characterized by his piety and religious zeal" (Salleh, 2011, p. 266). Lenski (1961) describes devotionism (which resembles devoutness) as one of four dimensions of religiosity. It refers to a high degree of religiousness and piety. The sacral and the secular world are seen as one, and the religious perspective (thoughts, beliefs, and laws) is applied to all realms of the societal and individual everyday life as well as to all decisions and actions. Although devoutness is part of all religions, its expression can differ across religions; thus, its measurement needs to be adapted to the religion that is focused on (e.g., Salleh, 2011).

Why Do Hierarchic Self-Interest and Devoutness to Islam Relate to the Attitudinal Acceptance or Rejection of Violence?

First, holding beliefs of HSI involves self-assertiveness, self-enforcement, competition, self-centered individualism, and the idea of hierarchy and dominance as a valuable state (resembling modern market economies). Such beliefs are "in harmony with and conducive to criminality" (Sutherland, 1947, p. 73; see also Hagan et al., 1998) since they include antisocial rationalizations that legitimize and build the base for amoral behavior in terms of crimes. Furthermore, moralistic beliefs (i.e., religious values) which potentially prevent the individual from violence and other crimes can be

downplayed by such beliefs, a mechanism of “neutralization” as conceptualized by Sykes and Matza (1957). A person who perceives him- or herself “as an autonomous individual with the powers of reason and free choice” and who is characterized by “economic self-interest and the effort to surpass their fellows in the accumulation of wealth and status” (Coleman, 1987, p. 414) is very likely to commit offenses as long as this person finds a specific reason for the offense. Empirical evidence from previous studies supports this assumption. HSI is highly correlated with xenophobic attitudes, has proven to be a predictor of risky behavior and delinquency, and mediates the influence of other variables on delinquency (Hadjar, 2004; Hadjar et al., 2008; Hagan et al., 1998).

The *devoutness-violence link* has more frequently been systematically examined with regard to Christian rather than Muslim religiosity (cf., Baier & Pfeiffer, 2012). Furthermore, contemporary accounts of Islam and violence do not focus on political violence in general terms but on suicide bombing or membership in radical organizations (Hafez, 2006; Wiktorowicz, 2005). As the content of religions differs (and also the implications of this content in different territorial and cultural contexts), theory and empirical results in regard to Christian religions cannot simply be applied to Islam. Thus, we will base our arguments mainly on the content of Islam, the context of Muslim immigrants in Germany, and on findings from terrorism studies. What has been theorized and empirically tested with regard to Christian religiosity will only play a minor role.

Two arguments guide our research on the link between religiosity and attitudinal acceptance of violence. The *first argument* assumes a lower level of crime and violence among more religious individuals. Religious devoutness—conceptualized here as a belief system and frame of action that refers to religion and God as an objective truth—determines an individual’s attitudes and behaviors since a higher degree of devoutness goes along with a higher importance of religious values and motives (cf. Salleh, 2011). Although religious values do not automatically include a condemnation of delinquency and violence, in general, religious devoutness can be seen as a proxy for a high morality that prevents people to consider action alternatives that contradict these moral values. In regard to Islam, peace (on earth and of mind) is one of the fundamental goals (Bouhdiba & Al-Dawalibi, 1998). In his analysis of the Qu’ran, Aydin (2011) emphasizes that Islam (like other religions) is in its principles a religion of peace and salvation and that verses in the Qu’ran suggest the opposite (e.g., jihad verses) are often misinterpreted and taken out of the context.

From a sociological perspective, it is even more important to see how Muslims interpret their religion: The study of Kurzman (2011) shows that—particularly in a Western context—the great majority of Muslims lives a peaceful life and does not support terrorist groups. Empirical studies of the Pew Research Center reveal that “Muslims around the world strongly reject violence in the name of Islam” (Pew Research Center, 2013, p. 29) and that in countries with large Muslim populations (e.g., Lebanon, Indonesia, Pakistan, Palestine) the so-called Islamic State (ISIL) is only supported by small minorities that do not exceed more than 15% of the population in any researched country (Poushter, 2015).

According to control theory (Hirschi, 1969), religious devoutness is strongly linked to higher control levels. To devote one’s life to religion and religious moral values means to control one’s behavior and being socially controlled much more than others. Furthermore, the Theory of Differential Learning (Sutherland, 1947) argues that a religious environment may guarantee the transmission of moral religious values and enforce that behaviors are oriented toward these values. In religious environments, contacts to peers who share (nonviolent) moral beliefs condemning delinquency and violence are more likely than contacts to delinquent offenders (cf. Baier & Pfeiffer, 2012). For devoutness to Christianity, a crime-reducing impact of religion is almost universally backed empirically (cf. meta-analyses by Baier & Wright, 2001; Johnson, De Li, Larson, & McCullough, 2000); evidence by Brettfeld (2009), who studied Muslim adolescents, suggests that Islamic religiosity also reduces violence, although the link is weaker.

The *second argument* dominating research and public discourse—the assumption of a positive correlation between Muslim beliefs and violence—is drawn from the increasing scientific interest in Islamist extremism, especially in the aftermath of 9/11. Some of those studies provide evidence that an extremist Islamic attitude pattern, which includes the acceptance of violence for the sake of defending or preserving Islam (e.g., Goli & Rezaei, 2010) is correlated with a higher devoutness to Islam (e.g., Brettfeld & Wetzels, 2007). There is also German evidence that a high Islamic religiosity among migrants, under certain conditions, goes along with a *higher* prevalence of violence (Baier & Pfeiffer, 2012). The mechanism behind these positive empirical links is not the fact that the Quʿran is violent per se but rather that its verses are interpreted and communicated by a minority of Muslim fundamentalists in a way that it can serve the Muslim community as a frame for the legitimization of violent behavior (cf. e.g., Schreiber, 2017). Such messages, in turn, might reach especially those who are strongly devoted to Islam, since they are more prone to take Quʿran verses literally. Hafez (2006), thus, even claims a general (positive) link between religion and a culture of violence: “Religious notions of martyrdom and self-sacrifice have inspired violent campaigns in all religious traditions and can promote extreme violence” (p. 169), particularly in the aftermath of 9/11 (e.g., Stenski, 1993).

Taking these ambivalent, empirically backed arguments together, a strong devoutness to Islam together with a support of radical Islamist ideologies (including tolerance of violence in support of the Islam community) is a pattern that exists among a small minority of Muslims and is induced by background factors—in terms of a “misappropriation of religious labels for violent ends” (Awan, 2008, p. 13). Moreover, the strong devoutness to Islam among Islamist extremists often developed rapidly over a comparably short period of time (Awan, 2008; Silke, 2008). Finally, violence-accepting messages of Islamist ideologues might reach Muslims with a strong devoutness to Islam more easily than those with a weaker devoutness. Hence, the association seems stronger with regard to a subgroup and specific conditions, not the general population of Muslims.

Given the stronger empirical support of the violence-reducing effect of religiosity, and considering the argument that a link between devoutness to Islam and extreme Islamist ideologies that involve the acceptance of violence are a qualitatively different phenomenon of a small minority of Muslims, we stick to the argument of a delinquency- and violence-preventing role of devoutness.

Individual Life Conditions and the Link Between Beliefs and Violence-Accepting Attitudes

One of the core propositions of this study is that the link between Western-capitalist and religious beliefs and violence-accepting attitudes differs in its strength depending on the individual’s life circumstances. We investigate (1) the *level of individual economic status*, (2) the *level of education*, and (3) *the interaction between education and economic status* as moderators of the link between individual beliefs (HSI, devoutness) and acceptance of violence.³ Following Framing Theory (e.g., Lindenberg, 1992), beliefs in terms of frames are only employed when they fit a certain situational context. From that perspective, it is argued that both the socioeconomic situation people live in and their educational level have an impact on the frames people use. Whether or not HSI (in terms of Western-capitalist beliefs in the culture of competition) and devoutness to Islam (in terms of a religious worldview) are activated as frames and translate into violence-accepting attitudes depends—so our assumption—on the situation individuals live in.

With regard to the *socioeconomic situation*, several authors and theories have emphasized its importance for the prevalence of certain beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. In his study on the attractiveness of radical violent Muslim groups, Wiktorowicz (2005), for example, argued that experiences

³ While in this study we only focus on moderation effects, some approaches and empirical accounts also suggest direct effects between life conditions, belief systems, and violence-accepting attitudes. We do not neglect these accounts as they add a more holistic picture to our moderation focus.

of precarious conditions like discrimination, socioeconomic crisis, or political repression may lead to a change in beliefs that are more radical and allow for the use of violence. This perspective is supported by more general theoretical approaches such as the contemporary account of Authoritarianism Theory by Oesterreich (2005) or Stellmacher and Petzel (2005): Authoritarian beliefs are activated when social threats—in terms of precarious life conditions—are perceived. People compensate for critical situations and insecurities resulting from different kinds of threats by sticking to a simple authoritarian worldview that provides rigid answers, clarity, and orientation.

With regard to the activation of religious beliefs, deprived and stressed individuals urge for rigid, predictable rules and therefore feel in need of religious guidelines or pseudo-religious dogmatic value systems, while “people raised under conditions of relative security can tolerate more ambiguity and have less need for the absolute and rigidly predictable rules that religious sanctions provide” (Norris & Inglehart, 2004, p. 19). Among those people lacking “existential security,” religion and other stable belief systems persist against the trend of secularization. Finally, Disintegration Theory (Anhut & Heitmeyer, 2008) argues that if a lack of integration is perceived regarding the access to goods, positions, or other integration dimensions, antisocial attitudes are activated and the risk of violence increases.

Education is assumed to weaken the link between belief systems and violence acceptance. A first reason for that assumption is that a higher educational level goes along with a higher socioeconomic status. However, it is important to conceive of the impact of education and socioeconomic status as separate moderators. What separates social status and education as independent entities are cognitive skills. Higher levels of education mean more advanced competencies in recognizing, understanding, and reflecting everyday life, values, norms, and even stereotypes. Hopf’s (1999) argumentation includes this cognitive argument but also goes beyond it by postulating that more highly educated people are: (1) Cognitively mobilized to a higher degree and thus stick to stereotypes to a lesser extent (cognitive complexity assumption), (2) have a higher social competence, since in higher educational institutions cooperation and perspective taking is a subject of schooling (social competence assumption), (3) show value preferences that are more distant to ethnocentrism and violence (value change assumption), and (4) spend more time in educational institutions and learn values and attitudes that are desired by mainstream society—e.g., less ethnocentric and violent orientations—more deeply (conformity assumption). Furthermore, highly educated individuals have a higher level of self-control, more patience, and are more risk averse to returns for actions (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hansen, 2003; Lochner & Moretti, 2004).

Interaction of Socioeconomic Status and Education

Besides the effects of socioeconomic status and level of education per se, we assume an interaction of both aspects that moderates the link between HSI, devoutness to Islam, and the attitudinal acceptance of violence. In particular, we suggest that the strongest link between HSI/devoutness to Islam and attitudinal acceptance of violence should be expected for a condition of *negative status inconsistency*, that is, high educational attainment combined with low economic status. Negative status inconsistency occurs when there is no successful crystallization of education into (vocational) status and income (Lenski, 1954), in other words, when an investment into education did not pay off in terms of status and income (i.e., no adequate jobs, social position, or income level). Such an inconsistency is experienced as a certain kind of downward mobility and is likely to have negative consequences for attitudes and behavior, such as “stress symptoms, voting decisions, deviant behavior, suicide, social change” (Kohler, 2005, p. 237). Following this argument, we further specify the postulated moderation function of life conditions on the link between beliefs and acceptance of violence: Existing beliefs are activated and translate into attitudinal violence acceptance especially

under the condition of a negative status inconsistency. For HSI, this means that in a situation of negative status inconsistency, that frame must be assumed to gain a stronger impact on violence-acceptance, whereas for devoutness to Islam it must be assumed that the preventative role of religion is *reduced*.

Hypotheses

The main hypotheses derived from theoretical reasoning, and to be tested at $p \leq .05$, read:

H1: Hierarchic self-interest and devoutness to Islam are linked to violence-accepting attitudes among young Muslims in Germany.

H1a: Higher levels of hierarchic self-interest are associated with more attitudinal acceptance of violence.

H1b: Higher devoutness to Islam is associated with less attitudinal acceptance of violence.⁴

H2: The link between the beliefs and violence-accepting attitudes is stronger when Muslims live in a precarious economic situation.

H3: The link between the beliefs and violence-accepting attitudes is stronger when Muslims have only achieved a lower level of educational attainment.

H4: Violence-accepting attitudes are most strongly affected by beliefs when Muslims live in a situation of negative status inconsistency (higher educational attainment coupled with a precarious economic situation).

Method

Sample

The current study was part of a larger research project named “Lifeworlds of Young Muslims in Germany” (Frindte et al., 2012). One part of that study was a phone survey with young Muslims aged 14–32 conducted between August and October 2010. Participants responded to a standardized questionnaire; interviews took about 30 min. Sampling was done by randomly dialing numbers selected from landline phone lists that had been screened by so-called onomastic methods (linguistically derived computer programs that offer a basis of assigning phone owners to a certain national/cultural background, thereby allowing a selection of phone owners with names prevalent in predominantly Muslim countries). The overall sample size was 350. Readers will find a thorough discussion of possible selection biases when sampling for phone interviews with young Muslims in Germany in Frindte et al. (2012) and Frindte (2013). Of course, it is unlikely that members of terrorist cells and their immediate supporters will have consented to participate in a phone interview. We must take this into consideration when interpreting results; however, at the same time, we believe that any quantitative study with voluntary participants will suffer from excluding extreme cases from the very beginning.

In order to avoid additional participation bias, the questionnaire was translated from German to Arabic and to Turkish (the two main languages spoken by Muslims in Germany, aside from

⁴ We commence our empirical work with the assumption that findings for the relationship of Christian devoutness and violence acceptance also apply to the relationship of devoutness to Islam and violence acceptance.

German), and interviewers were proficient in one of these languages. Participants were offered their choice of the language they would like to use for the interview. The onomastic definition of the population coupled with random probability sampling assured an adequate representation of the population of young Muslims in Germany at the time of the survey.

Instruments

A *violence-accepting attitude* was measured using the item “The Western threat towards the Muslim world justifies that Muslims defend themselves employing violence.” Respondents had to rate this item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*no agreement*) to 5 (*strong agreement*). In our sample of young Muslims, the mean (2.44) for this variable is below the response-scale center. The standard deviation is rather high indicating a certain amount of heterogeneity within our sample of young Muslims (1.37). The other distribution parameters (skewness = 0.53; kurtosis = -0.91) indicate that the variable is usable for parametric statistical data-analysis techniques.

The four dimensions of *hierarchic self-interest* were measured using well-studied items (cf. Hadjar, 2004; Hagan et al., 1998): Respondents rated the items on a scale ranging from 1 (*no agreement*) to 5 (*strong agreement*). *Competitiveness* was measured by two items (internal consistency, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .65/2$ items): “I would like to be among the best in all domains of life (job, school, sports, etc.)” and “It is always my ambition to be better than average”; *success orientation* by “The most important thing in life is achievement” and “People who don’t perform well won’t be happy” ($\alpha = .59/2$ items). For *Machiavellianism*, the items “Winning is the most important thing in life, not how you win” and “Human actions should always be evaluated in terms of their success” were selected ($\alpha = .45/2$ items). (Self-centered) *Individualism* was also measured by two items: “We would all be better off if everyone would just look after themselves” and “To be superior, a man must stand alone” ($\alpha = .67/2$ items). All four subscale means (first-order factors) fit into the second-order factor HSI with an internal consistency at $\alpha = .62$ (HSI scale: Success orientation, competitiveness, Machiavellianism, individualism). We use factor scores of individuals on the second-order factor as our measure of HSI. A detailed exploration of the second-order structure of the HSI belief pattern is provided in confirmatory factor analyses reported elsewhere (Hadjar, 2004; Hagan et al., 1998). The factor scores of the second-order factor vary between -2.55 and 2.72; distribution parameters also allow parametric analysis being very close to a normal distribution with skewness and kurtosis coefficients very close to zero, .02 and -.02, respectively.

Devoutness to Islam was directly measured by asking participants how devotional (German: “*fromm*”) their family was, ranging from 1 (*not at all devotional*) to 5 (*very devotional*). Although the agreement to this devoutness item among the Muslim sample in Germany is rather high ($M = 3.77$), the distribution of the variable is satisfactory for parametric statistical analysis ($SD = 0.98$; skewness = -0.31; kurtosis = -0.46).⁵

A *precarious socioeconomic situation (precariousness)* was operationalized via the self-reported household net income of the family per month, taking into account the number of earners in the household. Respondents had to indicate household income as lying in one of seven categories, ranging from “under 500 €” via “1.700 to under 2.000 €” (as the middle category) to “3.200 € and more.” The variable was dichotomized into two categories by median split: (1) Precarious living conditions (from “under 500 €” up to 1999 € household income), (0) nonprecarious living conditions (2000 € and more). *Educational level* refers to the number of years in schooling. This variable also was dichotomized: (1) Stands for people who already passed or are on a school track leading to

⁵ As the item refers to the family’s and not the individual’s devoutness, we conducted several validity checks. The item is positively associated with individual religious practices such as number of prayers yesterday (Spearman’s $\rho = 0.37$) and weekly number of mosque visits (Spearman’s $\rho = .24$).

A-level education (upper secondary-school degree/high school diploma), (0) stands for people with a lower number of years in education or who are on a school track leading to less than an upper secondary-school degree.

Age was measured in years. Respondents were 14–32 years of age with a mean age of 20.78 (*SD* 5.26). Gender was measured via the conventional dichotomous variable. The proportion of respondents who reported a female gender in the sample is 51.9%.

Results

Before dealing with our hypotheses, first a look at the descriptive statistics (Table 1): The means of the central variables (HSI, devoutness to Islam, and acceptance of violence) differ more by level of educational attainment than by economic prosperity. HSI is lowest among Muslims with a high level of educational attainment living in good (nonprecarious) economic conditions and highest among Muslims with a low level of education and a precarious economic situation (income below average). Only the main education effect was significant at $p \leq .05$, whereas the economic prosperity effect missed significance by a small margin ($p \leq .10$).

Devoutness to Islam seems to be rather independent of both education and economic prosperity; neither of the two main effects nor their interaction were significant.

For acceptance of violence, the economic prosperity effect missed significance by a small margin ($p \leq .10$). Once again the impact of education was highly significant and strong. The strongest acceptance of violence was found among double-deprived (low education/precarious economic situation) Muslims; the lowest acceptance level of violence was found for double-advantaged (high education, nonprecarious socioeconomic situation) Muslims.

As coefficients should only be compared between the four different groups when there is variance homogeneity regarding the dependent and independent variables, we computed Levene tests revealing that neither the variances of violence acceptance nor the variances of devoutness to Islam or HSI differ significantly between the four groups.

All hypothesis-related analyses were performed controlling for age and gender because theoretical reflections (e.g., Uslucan et al., 2003) and preliminary analyses had shown that age and gender are related to all variables of interest to a nonnegligible degree, albeit to a different degree in the four groups under consideration (e.g., path coefficients of the links between age and acceptance of violence ranged from $r = .00$ to $r = -.33$).

Hypothesis 1 referred to the general links between HSI and devoutness to Islam and violence-accepting attitudes. Results of an OLS-regression model (using the whole sample; explained variance $r^2 = 0.66$ indicated a low general explanatory power of the independent variables) showed a relatively strong positive association of HSI ($\beta = .24$, $p \leq .001$) with violence-accepting attitudes, but no significant association between devoutness to Islam ($\beta = .07$, $p = .178$) and violence-accepting attitudes. Considering controls, female gender appears to be associated with a lower attitudinal acceptance of political violence ($\beta = -.12$, $p \leq .05$), whereas for age no significant effect ($\beta = -.05$, $p = .390$) emerged.

To investigate with more focus whether the link between the Western-capitalist frame (HSI) and the religious frame (devoutness to Islam) with violence-accepting attitudes is moderated by socio-economic condition and level of education (H2–H4), we estimated multigroup structural-equation models (SEM) employing AMOS (see Figures 1–4). The usage of a SEM approach was favored over OLS regressions with pertinent interaction effects, because multigroup SEM analyses allow the simplest test of intergroup differences in the sizes of path coefficients. The four groups are characterized by a certain coupling of levels of educational attainment and the degree of precariousness of their economic status. By estimating models for different groups, we were able to test for significant

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations in Four Socioeconomic Groups Within the Muslim Population

Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Low educational level/precarious status	Low educational level/nonprecarious status	High educational level/precarious status	High educational level/nonprecarious status	Significant effects ¹
HSI (factor score)	.315 (1.034)	.132 (.884)	-.111 (.993)	-.247 (.998)	Precarious status: $F = 2.870, p = .091$; Educational level: $F = 17.999, p \leq .001$; Interaction precarious status × educational level: $F = .054, p = .816$
Devoutness to Islam	3.780 (.933)	3.907 (.903)	3.810 (1.002)	3.667 (.935)	Precarious status: $F = .027, p = .870$; Educational level: $F = 1.929, p = .166$; Interaction precarious status × educational level: $F = 1.576, p = .210$
Violence-accepting attitude	2.798 (1.485)	2.450 (1.385)	2.197 (1.241)	2.008 (1.121)	Precarious status: $F = 3.192, p = .075$; Educational level: $F = 22.385, p \leq .001$; Interaction precarious status × educational level: $F = .177, p = .674$

Data Source. Research Project “Lifeworlds of Young Muslims in Germany” (Frindte et al., 2012).

¹Results obtained via univariate ANCOVAs; controlling for age and gender.

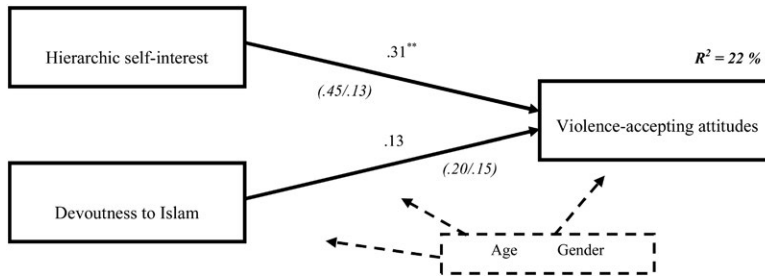


Figure 1. Belief-violence-accepting attitudes link for individuals with a low level of educational attainment and a precarious economic status (“double deprivation”). $N = 76$, standardized path coefficients (*unstandardized path coefficients/standard errors*); controlled for age and gender, factors represented by rectangles, since mean scores have been included. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$. *Data Source.* Research Project “Lifeworlds of Young Muslims in Germany” (Frindte et al., 2012).

differences among the groups regarding the link between beliefs (HSI and devoutness to Islam) and violence-accepting attitudes.

The models presented here are based on the respective covariance matrices and have been estimated using maximum-likelihood estimation. All scales were introduced as manifest variables into SEM to optimize the ratio of (a generally low) number of cases (N) to number of variables. The path coefficients are to be interpreted like standardized regression weights, ranging from -1 for a perfect negative relationship through 0 for no relationship to $+1$ for a perfect positive relationship. Goodness-of-fit coefficients show a good fit of the data to the hypothesized conceptual model: The multigroup model does fit the data in light of the χ^2/df -ratio ($\chi^2 = 4.471$, $df = 4$, $p = .346$) indicating no significant difference between the hypothesized and the empirical model and the other goodness-of-fit indices (GFI = .996, AGFI = .938, RMSEA = .017, SRMR = .043; CFI = .998; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Sharma, Mukherjee, Kumar, & Dillon, 2005).

Among “double-deprived” Muslims—those who live in a precarious situation (income below average) and also have a low level of education—there was rather a strong relationship between HSI and violence-accepting attitudes. Family’s devoutness to Islam, in turn, did *not* have a significant impact on violence-accepting attitudes in this group; the path coefficient was, however, positive (see Figure 1).

Among the “double-advantaged” Muslims—those in a nonprecarious situation and with a high level of education—no significant impact of either HSI or devoutness to Islam on violence-accepting attitudes (with path coefficients being close to zero) emerged (Figure 2).

The next group under scrutiny is Muslims characterized by a positive status inconsistency: Low levels of education, but a nonprecarious life situation (above-average income). In this group, no significant links between the beliefs and a violence-accepting attitude were found. The path coefficients were positive, but far from significant (see Figure 3).

Finally, in the group with a negative status inconsistency (high education but low income), a strong link between the Western-capitalist frame HSI and acceptance of violence was found. Once again, devoutness to Islam was not significantly associated with violence-accepting attitudes in this group (Figure 4). Considering the explanatory power of the models, the independent variables (including controls) explain most of the attitudinal acceptance of political violence in the conditions of “double deprivation” ($R^2 = 22\%$) and “negative status inconsistency” group ($R^2 = 19\%$), while explained variances are below 10% in the two remaining groups.

In order to offer a decision regarding our hypotheses, the coefficients of the link between HSI and acceptance of violence as well as between devoutness to Islam and acceptance of violence need to be statistically compared between the four groups.

As there is no significant relationship between devoutness to Islam and violence-accepting attitudes in any single case, such a comparison emerged as obsolete for that predictor: All four

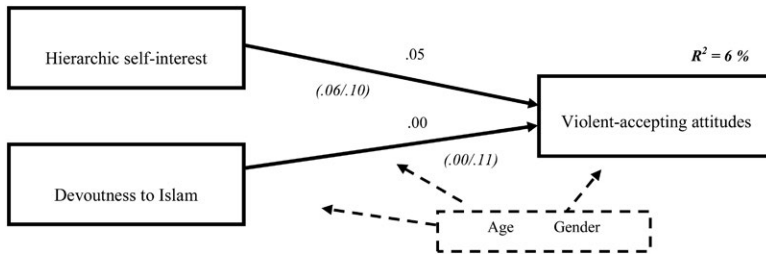


Figure 2. Belief-violence-accepting attitudes link under the condition of high educational level/nonprecarious status (“double advantage”). $N = 78$, standardized path coefficients (*unstandardized path coefficients/standard errors*); controlled for age and gender, factors represented by rectangles, since mean scores have been included. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$. *Data Source.* Research Project “Lifeworlds of Young Muslims in Germany” (Frindte et al., 2012).

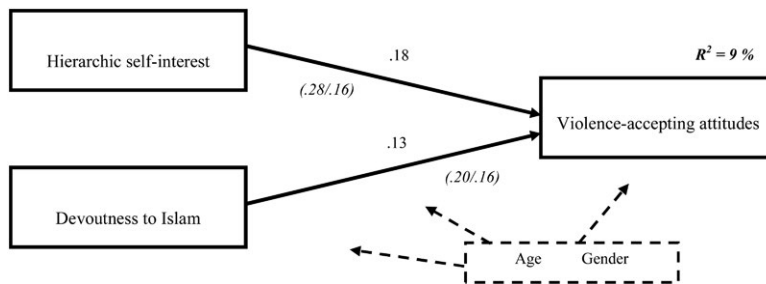


Figure 3. Belief-violence-accepting attitudes link for individuals with a low level of educational attainment and a nonprecarious economic status (“positive status inconsistency”). $N = 74$, standardized path coefficients (*unstandardized path coefficients/standard errors*); controlled for age and gender, factors represented by rectangles, since mean scores have been included. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$. *Data Source.* Research Project “Lifeworlds of Young Muslims in Germany” (Frindte et al., 2012).

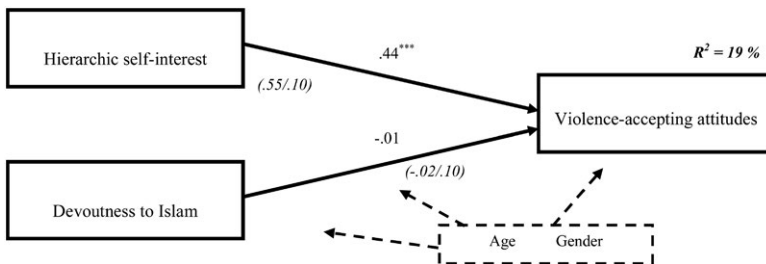


Figure 4. Belief-violence-accepting attitudes link for individuals with a high level of educational attainment and a precarious economic status (“negative status inconsistency”). $N = 98$, standardized path coefficients (*unstandardized path coefficients/standard errors*); controlled for age and gender, factors represented by rectangles, since mean scores have been included. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$. *Data Source.* Research Project “Lifeworlds of Young Muslims in Germany” (Frindte et al., 2012).

hypotheses must be rejected for devoutness to Islam; it does not predict violence-accepting attitudes. However, one is able to say that in none of the four cases is the relationship negative as assumed in Hypothesis 1b. To find no negative relationship in the four groups in binomial testing (expecting equal numbers of negative and positive signs a priori) has a probability of $p = .063$. One may thus

Table 2. Model Comparisons HSI Acceptance of Violence Link

Differences between restricted model and unrestricted model (restricted model: HSI-violence-accepting attitudes link does not vary between conditions)	df	CMIN	<i>p</i>
Comparison 1: HSI-violence-accepting attitudes link of “double-deprived” ^a equals “double-advantaged” ^b	1	5.433	.020
Comparison 2: HSI-violence-accepting attitudes link of “double-deprived” ^a equals the one of those with negative status inconsistency ^c	1	.333	.564
Comparison 3: HSI-violence-accepting attitudes link of “double-deprived” ^a equals the one of those with positive status inconsistency ^d	1	.680	.410
Comparison 4: HSI-violence-accepting attitudes link of those with negative status-inconsistency ^c equals the one of “double-advantaged” ^b	1	11.379	.001
Comparison 5: HSI-violence-accepting attitudes link of those with positive status inconsistency ^d equals the one of “double advantaged” ^b	1	1.351	.245
Comparison 6: HSI- violence-accepting attitudes link of those with positive status-inconsistency ^d equals the one for those of negative status inconsistency ^c	1	1.995	.158

Data Source. Research Project “Lifeworlds of Young Muslims in Germany” (Frindte et al., 2012).

^aLow educational level/precarious status.

^bHigh educational level/nonprecarious status.

^cHigh educational level/precarious status.

^dLow educational level/nonprecarious status.

be inclined to conclude that there is indeed little ground for assuming a validity of our assumption that devoutness to Islam is a protective factor against holding proviolence attitudes; this clearly is not the case.

Regarding the relationship between HSI and violence-accepting attitudes, the four groups under consideration indeed need to be compared. In Table 2, results of pairwise model comparisons are shown. The significance levels (*p*) indicate whether a restricted model assuming the path coefficients for the link between HSI and violence-accepting attitudes to be equal across groups causes a significant drop in the model fit compared to a nonrestricted model that allows the path coefficients to vary freely across groups. If the restricted model fits significantly worse to the data, the coefficients for the two groups compared can be assumed to differ significantly.

Results indicate two major differences: The “double-deprived” group (low educational level and precarious socioeconomic situation) does differ significantly in the strength of the link between HSI and violence-accepting attitudes from the “double-advantaged” group of Muslims (high educational level and nonprecarious economic situation; Comparison 1). However, whether or not economic situation or educational level is the main mechanism behind this difference can only be decided by looking at the other comparisons. Among individuals living in precarious conditions, there is no difference between those with high compared to those with low educational level. Hence, education level does not make a difference among people living under precarious conditions (Comparison 2). Education also makes little difference among people living in nonprecarious conditions—here people with a low education level also do not differ from people with a high education level in the strength of the link between HSI and violence (Comparison 5). Furthermore, among individuals

with a low education level, living under precarious conditions (compared to living under nonprecarious conditions) does not make a difference either (Comparison 3). Finally, among the more highly educated people, precariousness does indeed make a difference (Comparison 4), with the people in a deprived social status showing a stronger link between HSI and violence-accepting attitudes than people who are economically well off. Lastly, a comparison of people with a low educational level, but a nonprecarious state (people who experienced upward mobility), and people with a high educational level living under precarious conditions (people who suffer status inconsistency) does not reveal any difference regarding the link between HSI and violence-accepting attitudes (Comparison 6).

Conclusions and Discussion

The main aim of the current study was to explore the links between both Western-capitalist and religious beliefs and violence-accepting attitudes among young Muslims in Germany and how these are moderated by living conditions. Considering the findings, there is antipopulist news: A family's devoutness to Islam is not associated with violence-accepting attitudes measured as the degree of legitimacy attributed by Muslims to the use of violence for political reasons. This also applies to Muslims who live under precarious conditions and who have a low level of education. Whereas the religious frame of devoutness to Islam shows no impact on violence-accepting attitudes (*no support* at the same time for H1b that it should have a protective effect against violence-accepting attitudes), the strongly self-centered frame—hierarchic self-interest—is, under certain conditions, clearly linked to the attitudinal acceptance of political violence (support for H1a). Such conditions include the conditions of “double deprivation,” namely having a low income level and a low education level, and experiencing a “negative status inconsistency,” that is, a high education level and a low income level. In support for Hypothesis 2, results indicate that the link between HSI and violence-accepting attitudes is stronger (and only there of statistical significance) when Muslims live in a precarious economic situation, whereas the level of educational attainment did not make a difference (no support for H3). Although, according to Hypothesis 4, the link between the beliefs and violence-accepting attitudes was stronger when Muslims live in a situation of negative status inconsistency (higher educational attainment coupled with a precarious economic situation), the effect of the HSI belief on violence-accepting attitudes was about the same size as under the “double deprivation” condition.

Our results support the Disintegration Concept (Anhut & Heitmeyer, 2008) for the Western-capitalist frame: Hierarchic self-interest is activated under deprived conditions and then goes along with a higher attitudinal acceptance of (political) violence. Regarding theoretical explorations on the link between religion and attitudinal acceptance of violence, results do not back populist views that a higher Muslim religiosity of the family is linked to violence, but they also do not support accounts in regard to religiosity (e.g., concepts of Hirschi [1969] for Christian religiosity) that suggest a lower violence proneness among religious people. In our study, we were able to show how the interplay between cultural factors (belief systems) as conceptualized by contemporary Islam researchers (Hafez, 2006) and conditions in terms of structural factors is linked to violence-accepting attitudes. Results seem to be in line with the interpretation of Wiktorowicz's findings (2005) that it is not the religion that drives people into attitudes of accepting violence as a means of political action (or prevents them from approving of it). Presumably, there are also direct or mediating effects of (socioeconomic) conditions on violence acceptance—as this article focused on moderation effects, these direct links may be subject to future research.

However, certain limitations of our study have to be taken into account: In line with Uslucan et al.'s (2011) assertion that acceptance of violence is not identical with engagement in violent behavior, our findings cannot and must not be generalized to behavior, as our dependent variable clearly referred to attitudinal acceptance of political violence. Secondly, answers of more highly educated respondents are presumably more biased than other responses, since highly educated people will

know better which answers are politically correct. Third, survey responses may be subject to social desirability. Muslims may tend to state a high attachment to being a Muslim even in cases where they actually lead a secular life. Fourth, we used only one item in regard to family devoutness and, thus, covered only one aspect of religion. However, validity checks show that the used item is after all related to individual aspects of religion. Muslim youth still very much act in line with their family's notion of religion (Paloutzian & Park, 2013). Fifth, due to a small sample size, we were not able to control for additional variables above and beyond age and gender (e.g., denomination of Islam such as Sunni, Alevi, Shiite) that impact the individual relationship to Islam as a crucial mechanism behind the devoutness to acceptance of political violence link and may be sources of biases. We performed a number of robustness checks including other control variables and leaving age or gender as controls out. Controlling for German citizenship (of the interviewed young Muslims as opposed to, for example, Turkish citizenship) does not change the results in regard to the paths under consideration. Finally, although the HSI concept also describes an aspect of an individual's personality (individual differences in beliefs), future studies should investigate the role other personality characteristics such as the Big Five dimensions (see, e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1992) and how they potentially account for, mediate, or moderate the link between HSI, devoutness, and the attitudinal acceptance of violence.

In sum, the predictors of an attitudinal acceptance of violence among young Muslims do not seem to be linked to devoutness to Islam but to a capitalist belief system that is widely spread in the Western world, which is activated and translated into violence-accepting attitudes when people live under precarious living conditions. Our findings furthermore emphasize the importance of integration of immigrants into the labor market and the education system (see Kogan, Kalter, Liebau, & Cohen, 2011). Particularly a state of negative status inconsistency—when high educational attainments did not result in higher economic wealth—seems to increase the likelihood of self-centered frames such as HSI being translated into violence-accepting attitudes. Hence, the key challenge is not only to provide Muslim immigrants with access to education but also with opportunities to transfer their educational degrees into status and income. Diminishing precarious living conditions among Muslims appears to be one step to reduce acceptance of violence or even violence itself. Obviously, the cherished latter conclusion does need further systematic research, as the current study only addressed young Muslim's attitudinal stance vis-à-vis using violence in the political sphere.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Klaus Boehnke's contribution to this article was in part prepared within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University, Higher School of Economics (HSE) and supported within the framework of a subsidy granted to the HSE by the Government of the Russian Federation for the implementation of the Global Competitiveness Program. This study was funded by the German Ministry of the Interior. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Andreas Hadjar, Institute of Education and Society, University of Luxembourg, Maison des Sciences Humaines, 11, Porte des Sciences, L-4366 Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg. Email: andreas.hadjar@uni.lu

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