

Research article

Late Abrahamic reunion? Religious fundamentalism negatively predicts dual Abrahamic group categorization among Muslims and Christians

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Abstract

Although extensive research has documented the effectiveness of common or dual in-groups on improving intergroup relations, little is known about how individual-difference variables affect people's willingness to make such re-categorizations in the first place. Here, we demonstrate that individual differences in religious fundamentalism predict willingness to categorize in terms of the common Abrahamic religious origins of Christianity and Islam among Christians and Muslims. Study 1 ($n = 243$ Christians, 291 Muslims) uses multigroup structural equation modeling and Study 2 ($n = 80$ Christians) an experimental manipulation to show that religious fundamentalism causes lower dual Abrahamic categorization, which, in turn, predicts more positive attitudes toward the respective out-group, mediating the negative effects of religious fundamentalism on religious intergroup bias. While making the general case that individual differences may play important roles for dual categorizations, these results also highlight the specific positive potential of dual ecumenical categorizations for improving interreligious relations. Research and societal implications are discussed. Copyright © 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Fundamentalism as it is called is not confined to the Muslim world. It is something that we have seen in different parts of the world. Let us hope that a dialogue between the followers of the three great monotheistic religions could help in putting an end to this.

King Hussein I, 1999

Throughout history, humans have justified the derogation, discrimination or even persecution of members of faiths other than their own, often on the basis of minuscule theological differences (Gort & Vroom, 2002). And also in contemporary Western Europe, the climate toward religious minority groups tends to be tense. About 14 million Muslims presently live in Western Europe as a result of labor migration in the aftermath of World War 2 (Maréchal, 2002), and countries that were relatively homogeneous in terms of religious beliefs have become multireligious over the last few decades. This profound change has not been embraced by everyone. In particular, since the terror attacks of 9/11, religion has resurged as a salient social marker in the discourse on intercultural relations in the West (Poynting & Mason, 2007; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008), and reports have documented a rise in negative attitudes toward Muslims and Islam (see, e.g., EUMC, 2005; EUMC, 2006; Kunst, Sam, & Ulleberg, 2013).

The public discourse in many western European countries has been inordinately preoccupied with what distinguishes Muslims

and Christians (Fekete, 2004; Zelizer & Allan, 2002), focusing on “insurmountable cultural differences” (Kunst, Tajamal, Sam, & Ulleberg, 2012, p. 519) and, arguably, on Muslims as “Islamic fundamentalists.” Yet, from a theological perspective, Islam and Christianity share several communalities, and scriptures and central religious figures emphasize this common origin. Because both Islam and Christianity trace their origins to the common progenitor Abraham/Ibrahim, Muslims as well as Christians believe in an Abrahamic religion, and a number of other religious figures, such as Noah/Nuh, Adam, Moses/Musa, Jona/Yunus and Jesus/Issa, are central in both religions. Indeed, there is a certain theological awareness and acknowledgment of a common ecumenical Abrahamic group in both religions (Boase, 2005). For instance, the Surat Al-Baqarah of the Qur'an states:

Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve (Qur'an, 2:62; also see Qur'an, 5:69).

In a similar vein, the deceased pope Paul VI stated:

The church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself (...) and take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His

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inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God (Pope Paul VI, 1965).

Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to these striking theological communalities between Christianity and Islam, although they may positively improve intergroup relations between Christian and Muslim citizens—one of the most pressing social issues in contemporary Europe: Because belonging to a group promotes intergroup bias (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971), it should be the case that when “members of different groups are induced to conceive of themselves as a single group rather than two completely separate groups, attitudes toward former out-group members will become more positive through processes involving pro-ingroup bias” (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993, p. 6). A series of experiments (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Dovidio, & Bachman, 1996; Gaertner et al., 1993) and correlational research (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000, 2005) support this common in-group identity model (CIIM; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) to great extent. In some studies, however, efforts to establish a new, common in-group identity have led to more out-group bias (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; also see Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007). Possibly, this is because high identifiers can experience the establishment of an inclusive common group as a threat to their subgroup identity (Dovidio et al., 2007). In the present case, such identity threat would likely result from asking Muslims or Christians, who identify strongly with their religious faiths, to no longer identify as Muslims or Christians, but instead as “Abrahamic.” Instead, it should be more beneficial to establish dual categorizations that allow individuals to maintain pronounced subgroup identities within an overarching common group (Dovidio et al., 2007)—as “Muslim-Abrahamic” and “Christian-Abrahamic,” so to speak. Indeed, such dual categorizations generally appear to reduce out-group bias to similar, or even better, degrees than common group categorizations (Eller & Abrams, 2004).

Here, we investigate whether dual categorizations, including both the Abrahamic and Christian/Muslim identities, reduce bias toward the respective Abrahamic out-group and whether religious fundamentalism affects their willingness to consider these common religious origins in the first place. Specifically, we expect that religious fundamentalism will cause lower dual Abrahamic categorization, which, in turn, should mediate the negative effects of religious fundamentalism on interreligious bias.

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AS NEGATIVE PREDICTOR OF DUAL CATEGORIZATION AMONG RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Although there may be strong theological ground for categorizing related religions into supra-ecumenical groups, at the individual level, believers may strongly differ in the degree to which they endorse such dual groups. Despite extensive research on the CIIM, it has seldom been investigated in light of individual-difference variables that are consistent predictors of prejudice, such as social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1988) or—central in the present study—religious fundamentalism

(Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992, 2004). Although a few studies have shown that social dominance orientation moderates the relation between common in-group categorizations and out-group bias (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Esses, Wagner, Wolf, Preiser, & Wilbur, 2006; also see Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008), it remains unclear if and how individual-difference variables cause individuals to differentially endorse dual group categorizations in the first place. Here, we argue that religious fundamentalism should negatively affect believers’ willingness to categorize in terms of dual religious groups.

Religious fundamentalism can be defined as “the belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity” (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992, p. 118). Capturing this, Altemeyer and Hunsberger found their religious fundamentalism scale to predict prejudice and right-wing authoritarianism so strongly that they speculated that religious fundamentalism may simply constitute a specific expression of right-wing authoritarianism in the religious domain. Yet, studies have shown that, although both constructs are highly related, they account for unique variance in prejudice (Laythe, Finkel, Bringle, & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Laythe, Finkel, & Kirkpatrick, 2001).

Fundamentalists differ from their peers who score low on religious fundamentalism in many ways. They have less doubts about their own religious belief and are less tolerant toward religious disagreement (Wrench, Corrigan, McCroskey, & Punyanunt-Carter, 2006) and are more concerned about other people not living up to their religious standards than peers low on religious fundamentalism (Hunsberger, Alisat, Pancer, & Pratt, 1996). They also tend to be more negative toward women (see, e.g., Blogowska & Saroglou, 2011; Hunsberger, Owusu, & Duck, 1999), homosexuals (see Whitley, 2009 for a meta-analysis) and ethnic (Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010) and religious out-groups (Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2012; Rowatt, Franklin, & Cotton, 2005). Although this religious fundamentalism–prejudice link is empirically well established, so far research exploring its underlying processes has only focused on various cognitive styles. However, because religious fundamentalism is also a central theme of the public discourse on interreligious *group relations* in the West, core intergroup processes should also play important roles for its endorsement. In particular, the very cognitive styles that characterize religious fundamentalists should also make them less inclined to endorse dual religious groups, which, in turn, will have subsequent negative impact on intergroup relations, mediating the fundamentalism–prejudice link.

For religious fundamentalists, who tend to take holy scriptures literally and as the finite truth, religion provides a clear-cut and plain view on life and thereby “a sense of coherence in an otherwise chaotic world” (Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005, pp. 17–18). This notion is supported by the fact that religious fundamentalists have been found to have a less complex understanding of religious issues than individuals low in religious fundamentalism (Pancer, Jackson, Hunsberger, Pratt, & Lea, 1995). Consequently, Christian or Muslim fundamentalists may pay little attention to, ignore or even reject complex intertwined theological relations between Christianity and Islam and consequently express low endorsement of a dual Abrahamic group.

Similarly, their close-minded world view (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005) makes fundamentalists vehemently reject alternative ways to see the world (Brandt & Reyna, 2010;

Wrench et al., 2006). In fact, the out-group derogation typical of religious fundamentalists may function precisely to protect their world views (Brandt & Reyna, 2010). As Hood et al. (2005) state, “for fundamentalists, there is but one true avenue for finding meaning” (p. 30) and that involves exclusively following their own specific religion, which is seen as the one and only path to salvation. Their religion, in turn, provides answer to anxiety-eliciting questions such as those related to one’s own mortality (Friedman & Rholes, 2008; Vail et al., 2010). Acknowledging that one’s own religion is related to other religions or even partly is based on the same theological ground, however, can be seen as relativizing the absoluteness and infallibility of one’s own religious meaning system. Hence, for fundamentalist Muslims or Christians, endorsing common origins with another Abrahamic group that interprets the same religio-historical events, for instance, the role of Jesus, in a different manner may shake the very fundament of their meaning system that provided ultimate certainty. Consequently, Christian and Muslim religious fundamentalists should reject dual categorizations insofar as it constitutes a threat to their fundamentalist, rigid and preclusive conceptions.

Lastly, and importantly, religious fundamentalists identify strongly with their religious group (Shaffer & Hastings, 2007) and so may arguably perceive categorizing themselves into a dual religious group as an identity threat (Dovidio et al., 2007). For fundamentalists, belonging to their specific religion and religious group constitutes a central part of their self-concept, which may have been emphasized from the beginning of their lives (Altemeyer, 2003). Blurring these group boundaries by acknowledging dual or common group membership together with a related religion may again threaten individuals’ self-concepts. Thus, to maintain their clear group distinctions between “them” and “us,” Christian and Muslim fundamentalists should likely reject any type of dual Abrahamic group.

Overview of the Studies

In the two studies reported here, we empirically test whether

1. religious fundamentalism negatively predicts dual Abrahamic group categorization and

2. dual Abrahamic categorization is related to less out-group bias, mediating the effect of religious fundamentalism on out-group bias (Figure 1).

Both studies were conducted in Germany, because religion in Germany constitutes a salient social marker and because interreligious tensions between Muslims and Christians in Germany can be described as tense (Kunst et al., 2012; Kunst et al., 2013). More than two thirds of the German population is Christian, and in contrast to other West-European countries, there is no juridical division between the Church and the State. Hence, compared with European countries practicing the principle of Laïcité, such as France, Christian religious education is taught in schools, and large-scale political parties are declared Christian.

In Study 1, we test our mediation prediction using a multigroup structural equation model with Christians and Muslims. Here, we also control for religious identity as it has been found to be highly correlated with religious fundamentalism in earlier research (Shaffer & Hastings, 2007) and because it may also predict individuals’ willingness to endorse common or dual groups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Hence, controlling for religious identity allows us to assess the unique predictive role of religious fundamentalism. In Study 2, we use an experimental saliency manipulation to confirm that religious fundamentalism causes dual Abrahamic categorization and, once again, using a structural equation model, test the mediation model proposed—this time with causal data.

STUDY 1

This first study tests our proposed model with data obtained from a sample of Christians and Muslims. In terms of group bias, we distinguish between affective and cognitive aspects of out-group bias, as has been suggested in earlier studies (Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, 1991; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005), to gain a more comprehensive insight into the broadband of the effects of dual Abrahamic categorization. Given that

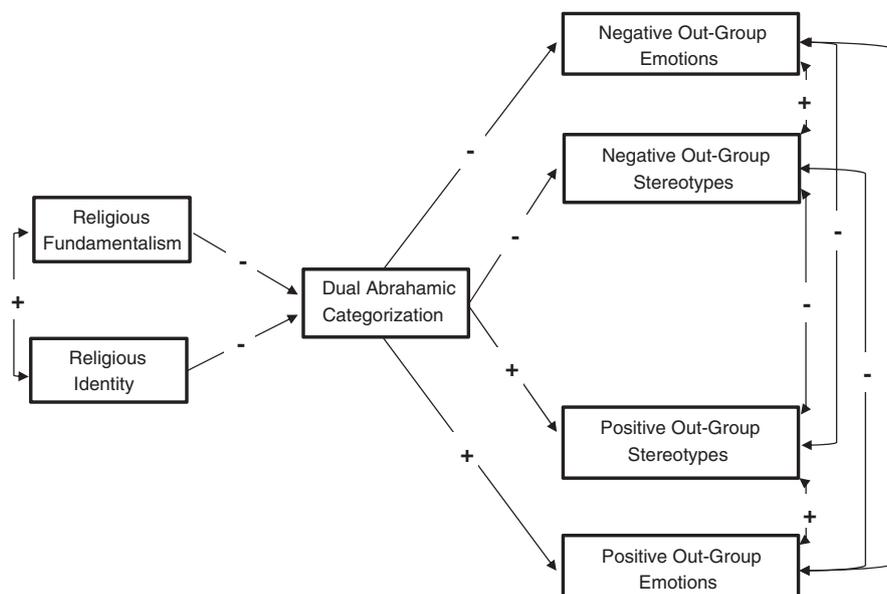


Figure 1. Hypothesized relations

subgroup identification in earlier research has negatively predicted common or dual group categorization (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), we control for the latter variable in the model. Including both religious identity and religious fundamentalism that have been shown to be highly correlated in earlier research (Shaffer & Hastings, 2007), but seldom are considered together, also allows us to assess the unique effect of the individual-difference variable religious fundamentalism.

Methods

Participants

In all, 243 professed Christians and 291 professed Muslims participated in the study. Most participants were young adults, $M_{age} = 23.62$, $SD_{age} = 6.42$, and no age differences between the groups were observed, $t(532) = 1.47$, $p = .143$. The samples were also comparable in terms of gender (Christians: 46.5% women; Muslims: 51.2% women) and educational status (Christians: 30.3% lower secondary school, 46.1% upper secondary school, 23.9% university degree; Muslims: 38.8% lower secondary school, 38.8% upper secondary school, 22.3% university degree). All Muslim participants had a Turkish ethnic background. Of the Christian participants, 68.3% described their ethnic background as German, followed by 23.6% who indicated a European state as their cultural heritage country. Among Christians, 37.4% identified themselves as Catholics and 36.3% as Protestants, whereas the Muslim sample primarily consisted of Sunni Muslims (83.8%).

Procedure and Measures

Participants were recruited through social online networks, relevant webpages and snowball sampling in November 2012. All respondents were informed that the study dealt with interreligious issues accompanied by a picture showing a circle of the symbols representing the biggest world religions. Moreover, they were informed about the confidentiality and their right to withdraw from participation. As a financial incentive, participants could participate in the drawing of a €50 gift voucher. At the beginning of the study, participants were asked whether they were religious or not, and non-religious individuals were automatically excluded from participation.

Unless stated otherwise, responses were rated on 6-point Likert-type scales, with endpoints 1 (*totally disagree*) and 6 (*totally agree*). All scales showed satisfactory structural equivalence (Table 1), which is a prerequisite for cross-cultural research. Valid group comparisons can only be conducted when equivalence in underlying factor structures of the measures has been established (Matsumoto & van de Vijver, 2012). Furthermore, reliability was satisfactory for all scales despite the negative out-group stereotypes scale, which showed acceptable reliability in the Muslim sample (Table 1).

Religious Identity

An adjusted version of the identity subscale of the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) was used to measure the participants' religious identity (Christians: $\alpha = .89$; Muslims: $\alpha = .85$). The measure can be seen as assessing identification with one's religious group from a social identity perspective, rather than measuring intrinsic or extrinsic religiosity. Participants had to indicate their agreement with four items, namely "Overall, my religion has very little to do with how I feel about myself" (reversed), "The religion I belong to is an important reflection of who I am," "The religion I belong to is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am" (reversed) and "In general, belonging to my religion is an important part of my self-image."

Religious Fundamentalism

We adopted the revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale developed by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2004) to measure the degree to which the participants held fundamental beliefs about their religion. To increase the applicability of the scale among both Christians and Muslims, the following adjustments were made: First, we deleted two items that dealt with the existence of "Satan," because the concept was regarded as theologically too variant. Second, expressions such as "God," "God's religion" and "sacred scripture" were replaced by "God/Allah," "Christianity/Islam" and "Bible/Qur'an," respectively. Accordingly, participants had to indicate their agreement with 10 items, such as "To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one, fundamentally true religion." Exploratory factor analyses conducted separately for both samples supported a one-factor solution. To achieve an invariant factor structure that

Table 1. Psychometric properties and structural equivalence for the study variables

Scale	Items	α		Constrained CFA				
		Christians	Muslims	CFI	RMSEA	χ^2	p	df
1. Fundamentalism	8	.897	.883	.993	.026	56.67	.065	42
2. Religious identity	4	.894	.846	1.000	.000	3.85	.697	6
3. Dual Abrahamic categorization	4	.875	.863	1.000	.009	6.27	.394	6
4. Negative out-group emotions	4	.926	.906	.981	.055	88.12	.000	34
5. Positive out-group emotions	4	.878	.847					
6. Negative out-group stereotypes	5	.824	.642	.964	.039	134.67	.000	75
7. Positive out-group stereotypes	5	.872	.796					

Note: Christians $n = 243$; Muslims $n = 291$. Constrained CFA: Measurement weights and structural covariances were constrained. Two-factor structures were obtained for both the emotion and stereotype measures. CFI, comparative fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

is necessary in cross-cultural research, we deleted two items (i.e., “When you get right down to it, there are basically only two kinds of people in the world: The Righteous, who will be rewarded by God; and the rest, who will not” and “There is a particular set of religious teachings in this world that are so true, you can’t go any ‘deeper’ because they are the basic, bedrock message that God has given humanity”) that showed different loadings across the samples. The resulting scale had an invariant one-factor structure and good reliability across the samples (Christians: $\alpha = .90$; Muslims: $\alpha = .88$; Table 1).

Dual Abrahamic Categorization

Building on the dual identity conceptualization of Dovidio et al. (2007), seven items, of which two were reversed worded, were developed specifically for this study. The measure assessed the degree to which the participants considered Muslims and Christians as belonging to a common group of Abrahamic religions while also constituting two distinct religious groups. Accordingly, the items acknowledged the uniqueness and autonomy of each religious group while also emphasizing the common Abrahamic in-group. Exploratory factor analysis yielded a one-factor solution in both samples. Yet, to achieve structural equivalence across the samples, the two contrait items (i.e., “Islam and Christianity constitute totally different religions” and “Muslims and Christians belong to two groups, which couldn’t be more different”) and one protrait item (i.e., “Although Christians and Muslims belong to different religions, they are united in their belief in God”) had to be deleted. Consequently, the final scale comprised four items: “Because Abraham/Ibrahim is the progenitor of both Islam and Christianity, one can say that Muslims and Christians belong to the same ‘family’ of religions,” “Christians as well as Muslims believe in an Abrahamic religion,” “Even though Islam and Christianity are different religions, both belong to the same group of religions” and “Christianity and Islam have common roots” (Christians: $\alpha = .88$; Muslims: $\alpha = .86$).

Emotions Toward the Out-Group

A scale developed by Stephan, Ybarra, and Bachman (1999) measured the participants’ emotions toward the respective out-group (i.e., Muslims or Christians). On a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*extremely*), participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they felt 12 different types of emotions toward members of the religious out-group.

Exploratory factor analysis supported a two-factor structure across the samples, where the first factor represented negative and the second factor positive out-group emotions. After deleting four items (i.e., admiration, acceptance, superiority and rejection) that had substantial cross-loadings ($>.3$), the factor structure was relatively equivalent across the samples (Table 1). Consequently, two sum scores were created: one comprising four negative out-group emotions (i.e., hostility, dislike, disdain and hatred; Christians: $\alpha = .93$; Muslims: $\alpha = .91$) and one comprising four positive out-group emotions (i.e., affection, approval, sympathy and warmth; Christians: $\alpha = .88$; Muslims: $\alpha = .85$).

Stereotypes Toward the Out-Group

An index developed by Stephan and Stephan (1996) was used to assess the participants’ stereotypes toward the respective out-group. In the first step, participants had to indicate how many percent of the out-group they perceived as possessing 12 different types of traits. Next, participants were asked to evaluate the degree to which they found it favorable for a person to possess the different traits on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (*very bad*) to 9 (*very good*). Finally, to construct index items that take into account both the perceived favorability and the prevalence of the trait among the out-group, we multiplied each percentage item with the respective valence item.

After deleting two of these index items (i.e., clannish and proud), factor analysis supported a two-factor solution, which showed acceptable structural equivalence across the samples (Table 1). The first factor represented negative stereotypes (i.e., ignorant, aggressive, undisciplined, unintelligent and dishonest; Christians: $\alpha = .83$; Muslims: $\alpha = .64$), whereas the second factor represented positive stereotypes (i.e., respectful, hardworking, friendly, reliable and clean; Christians: $\alpha = .87$; Muslims: $\alpha = .80$).

Results

Test for Differences in the Means of the Main Study Variables

Muslim participants ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.32$) on average scored significantly higher on religious fundamentalism than did Christian participants ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.38$; see the note of Table 2 for all effect sizes of intersample comparisons). Muslim participants also expressed a higher dual Abrahamic categorization ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.28$) than their Christian counterparts ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.44$), supporting earlier research showing that, in particular, minority members endorse dual identity categorizations (e.g., Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007). Christians showed more negative and less positive out-group emotions (negative out-group emotions: $M = 3.11$, $SD = 2.45$; positive out-group emotions: $M = 4.52$, $SD = 2.05$) than Muslim participants (negative out-group emotions: $M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.97$; positive out-group emotions: $M = 5.58$, $SD = 1.94$).

Among Muslims, differences in religious fundamentalism and dual Abrahamic categorization were observed in terms of education. Muslim participants with a university degree ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.50$) scored lower on religious fundamentalism than their peers who held a lower secondary school degree ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.14$; $F(2, 290) = 5.92$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$). Moreover, Muslim participants with upper secondary school ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.15$) or university education ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.26$) expressed a higher dual Abrahamic categorization than their peers with lower secondary education ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.32$; $F(2, 290) = 9.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$). In contrast, no differences between dual Abrahamic categorization and religious fundamentalism were observed for education among Christians.

Structural Equation Model

In terms of our general analytical strategy, we tested the hypothetical model (Figure 1) using multigroup structural equation modeling (SEM). Because chi-square difference tests are

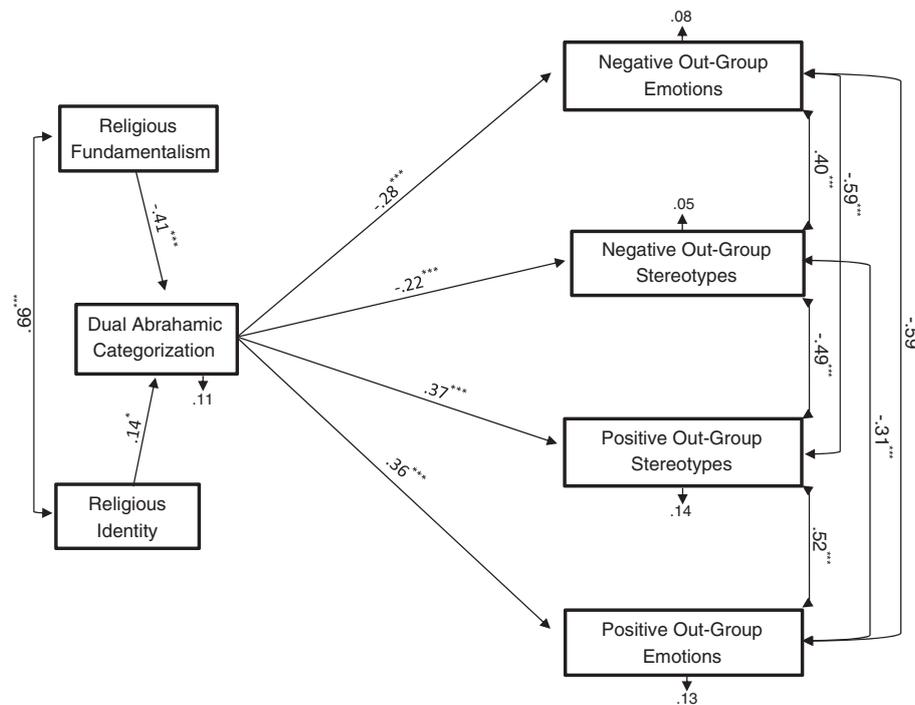


Figure 2. Estimated hypothesized multigroup structural equation model with constrained structural weights and covariances. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

indirectly predicted lower levels of positive out-group stereotypes (Christians: $\beta = -.15$, $p < .001$; Muslims: $\beta = -.15$, $p < .001$) and emotions (Christians: $\beta = -.15$, $p < .001$; Muslims: $\beta = -.15$, $p < .001$), and higher levels of negative out-group stereotypes (Christians: $\beta = .10$, $p < .001$; Muslims: $\beta = .13$, $p < .001$) and emotions (Christians: $\beta = .12$, $p < .001$; Muslims: $\beta = .14$, $p < .001$). Hence, as all indirect effects but none of the direct effects of religious fundamentalism reached significance, the results indicated full mediation.

Although our constrained hypothesized model demonstrated close data fit, stepwise releasing of the constraints for each path showed that the hypothetical model could be improved by removing the constraint on the path between religious fundamentalism and dual Abrahamic categorization, $\Delta\chi^2 = 12.03$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .001$. Moreover, modification indices showed that the fit of the model could be improved by adding a constrained path between religious identity and negative stereotypes, $\Delta\chi^2 = 12.03$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .001$, and unconstrained paths between the religious identity measure and the remaining bias measures, $\Delta\chi^2 = 20.47$, $\Delta df = 6$, $p = .002$. No other modifications of the hypothetical model were made. The fitted model showed a very good fit to the data, $\chi^2(17, 534) = 13.20$, $p = .723$, $sRMR = .027$, $CFI = 1.00$, with the lower boundary of the RMSEA even indicating an exact fit for the model, RMSEA .001, 90% CI [.000, .047].

In the fitted model, relations generally remained the same, with the difference that religious identity now was related to less bias in both groups but particularly among Christians. Moreover, after removing the constraint of the relation between religious fundamentalism and dual Abrahamic categorization, religious fundamentalism was now most strongly and negatively related to dual Abrahamic categorization among Christians (Figure 3).

Preliminary Discussion

The findings of Study 1 indicate that dual religious groups have a substantial potential to reduce prejudice between theologically related religious groups. However, irrespective of religious faith, religious fundamentalists, who are known for holding dogmatic worldviews (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Wrench et al., 2006), seemed less willing to endorse such superordinate ecumenical groups. Specifically, religious fundamentalism predicted lower levels of dual Abrahamic categorization, which led to less negative and more positive out-group bias.

However, we presented religious identity before religious fundamentalism and the out-group measures, assuming a role for the religious identity construct early in the causal chain. Consequently, religious identity was made salient to participants before answering all other questions, posing the empirical question whether our results would hold without such salience of religious identity. On the one hand, this presentation order should satisfy the categorization saliency criteria of Turner (1999) and arguably have led to more negative out-group bias, which is in line with earlier research (Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2010), but in contrast to our actual results. On the other hand, religious constructs have also been shown to prime pro-sociality (Pichon, Boccato, & Saroglou, 2007). Such an effect might, for instance, explain the unexpected finding that religious identity predicted more positive out-group attitudes in our unconstrained model. In the next study, we address these issues in the sample in which the strongest relationship between religious fundamentalism and dual categorization was observed, namely Christians. We also use an experimental manipulation of religious fundamentalism to further confirm that it does in fact cause dual Abrahamic categorizations, as suggested by the superior fit of our proposed mediation model compared with a model that specifies that religious

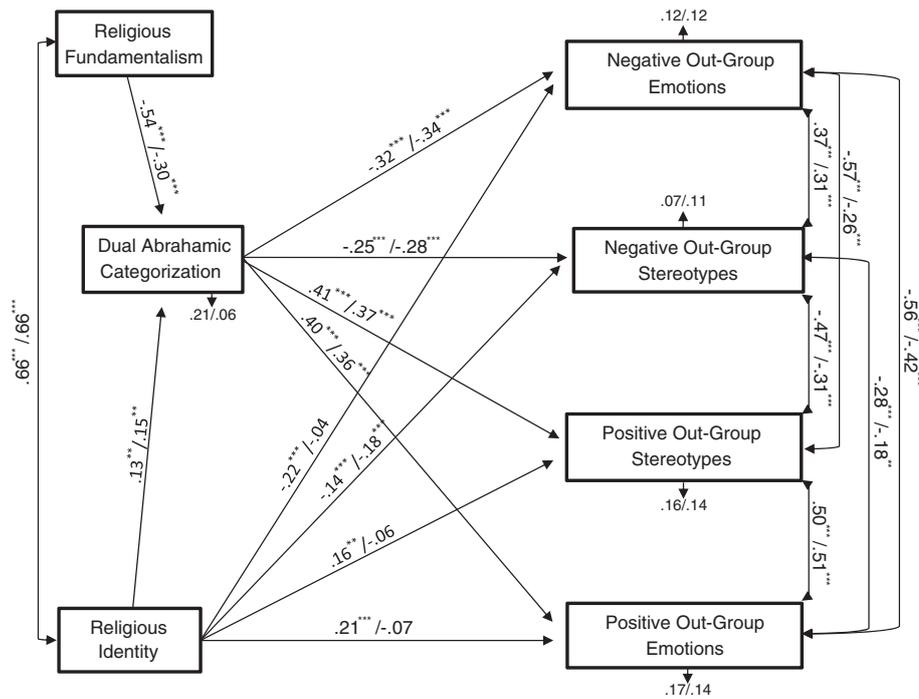


Figure 3. Fitted estimated multigroup structural equation model. Coefficients displayed in the following order: Christian sample/Muslim sample. $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$

fundamentalism instead mediates the effect of dual Abrahamic categorization on out-group bias.

STUDY 2

While several studies have established the negative causal link between dual or common group categorizations and prejudice (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1993; Gaertner et al., 1996), this study experimentally tested the novel assumption that individual difference variables—in this case, religious fundamentalism—causally predict dual group categorization. In other words, we set out to provide causal evidence for the first link of our hypothesized mediational model (Study 1). To avoid confounding effects caused by religious identity that may have been possible in Study 1 and, furthermore, to test whether our results hold in the absence of religious identity saliency, we did not present religious identity before the other measures this time.

Participants

In total, 80 Christians participated in the study. The majority of participants were young adults ($M_{age} = 23.63$, $SD_{age} = 5.16$), male (63.0%) and indicated Germany (74.1%) or another European state (18.4%) as their heritage country. In terms of religious traditions, 34.6% of the participants were Protestants, 30.9% Catholics and 34.6% followed another Christian tradition.

Procedure and Measures

Participants were recruited using the same procedure as in Study 1 during February 2013. As manipulating a construct that is deeply entrenched into individuals' self-concepts, such as religious fundamentalism, may be difficult or

impossible, in this study, we simply varied the salience of religious fundamentalism beliefs, using an order-manipulation similar to earlier studies (e.g., Jost & Kay, 2005; Levin, 1996; see also Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006; Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). Such a manipulation activates and increases the accessibility of psychological constructs and, given a causal relationship, may have an effect on dependent variables (Schwartz, Bless, Wänke, & Winkielman, 2003). In the present study, participants were randomly assigned to a protrait condition or a control group. In the protrait condition, respondents indicated their agreement with the protrait religious fundamentalism items (e.g., "To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one, fundamentally true religion.") on a 6-point Likert scale, for which higher agreement represent higher religious fundamentalism. We expected this condition to increase the salience of religious fundamentalism. In the control group, no religious fundamentalism items were presented in the beginning of the study, but all were presented at the end. Next, we asked both groups to indicate their agreement with the dual Abrahamic categorization measure from Study 1 ($\alpha = .89$), the out-group measures from Study 1 (i.e., negative out-group emotions: $\alpha = .92$; negative out-group stereotypes: $\alpha = .76$; positive out-group emotions: $\alpha = .88$; positive out-group stereotypes: $\alpha = .78$) and a manipulation check (i.e., the contra-trait religious fundamentalism items; $\alpha = .80$).

Results

As predicted, participants assigned to the protrait condition expressed a significantly lower dual Abrahamic categorization ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.49$) than their counterparts in the control group ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.38$; $t(79) = 2.24$, $p = .028$, $est \eta^2 = .06$). Individuals in the experimental group also scored lower ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.43$) on the manipulation check (i.e., the contra-trait religious fundamentalism items) than those in the control group ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.37$), indicating an

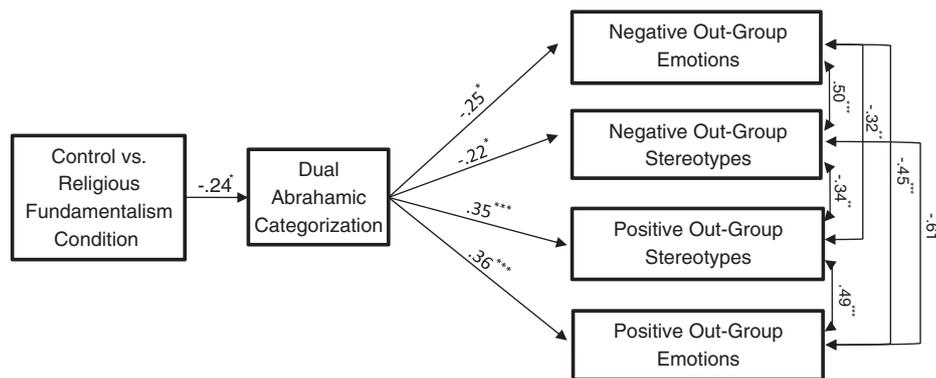


Figure 4. Estimated experimental mediation model. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

experimental assimilation effect in the protrait condition, albeit a marginally significant one ($t(79) = 1.79$, $p = .077$, $\text{est } \eta^2 = .02$). Hence, it is possible that the experimental manipulation not only heightened the salience but even directly manipulated participants' degree of religious fundamentalism. No significant direct effects were observed for any of the out-group measures (negative out-group emotions: $t(78) = -.29$, $p = .770$; negative out-group stereotypes: $t(78) = .18$, $p = .858$; positive out-group emotions: $t(78) = .04$, $p = .968$; positive out-group stereotypes: $t(78) = .32$, $p = .752$).

Next, we estimated the hypothetical model of Study 1 using SEM, with the difference that the religious fundamentalism variable was replaced by an experimental dummy variable (1 = control, 2 = protrait condition). Again, the hypothesized model obtained a good fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 0.97$, $p = .967$; $\text{sRMR} = .027$, $\text{CFI} = 1.00$, $\text{RMSEA} < .001$. In this model (Figure 4), the protrait condition negatively predicted dual Abrahamic categorization, which, in turn, was negatively related to negative out-group emotions and negative out-group stereotypes and positively related to positive out-group stereotypes and positive out-group emotions. Bootstrapping the resulting indirect effects, the protrait condition had a significant indirect effect on positive out-group emotions ($\beta = -.09$, $p < .05$), positive out-group stereotypes ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .05$) and negative out-group feelings ($\beta = .06$, $p < .05$). Moreover, it had a marginally significant effect on negative out-group stereotypes ($\beta = .05$, $p = .055$). In sum, experimentally manipulating religious fundamentalism caused congruent changes in dual Abrahamic categorization, which again mediated the effects of religious fundamentalism on out-group bias because it, as in Study 1, was related to less out-group bias.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present research supports the proposal that religious fundamentalism negatively predicts dual identification, which, in turn, leads to more positive and less negative out-group bias. SEM with both cross-sectional and experimental data supported this proposal, showing that dual Abrahamic categorization mediates the effects of religious fundamentalism on out-group bias.

In his speech at a mosque in Damascus on 6 May 2001, Pope John II highlighted the importance for Muslims and Christians to "explore theological questions together" to

achieve a common understanding that will lead "to a new way of presenting our two religions, not in opposition, as has happened too often in the past, but in partnership for the good of the human family." As our studies highlight, acknowledging religious communalities and the common Abrahamic heritage indeed has the potential to shape attitudes between Christians and Muslims in favorable ways.

To equal degrees, however, our studies indicate that religious fundamentalism is an obstacle to achieve awareness of such a dual group. Our studies showed that the individual-difference variable religious fundamentalism crucially limits the positive potential of dual Abrahamic categorization among Muslims and Christians. It can nevertheless be argued that individual-difference variables and social identity constructs may overlap. One may not consider religious fundamentalism as a construct separable from religious identity but, in fact, as a construct representing an extreme form of religious identification, involving strong (i.e., fundamentalist) adherence to religious group norms (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). In line with this, some authors have argued that "intergroup tension (rather than individual psychology) fuels fundamentalist attitudes" (Ysseldyk et al., 2010, p. 65). Nevertheless, we included religious identity in the first study exactly to disentangle the effects of social identity and the individual-difference variable. Here, results indicated that it was religious fundamentalism, and not identification, that limited dual categorization.

More generally, although the CIIM's potential for prejudice reduction is well documented, there is a lack of studies investigating re-categorization in terms of individual-difference variables and the few studies that exist have solely treated the latter variables as moderators (e.g., Esses et al., 2006; also see Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008). As the studies presented in this paper however show, individual-difference variables—in this case, religious fundamentalism—may also function as predictors of dual group categorizations early in the causal chain. Future studies should further investigate whether other individual-difference variables predict re-categorizations into common or dual groups. Clearly, religious fundamentalism, involving the belief that there is only one true path for believers to follow, constitutes an individual-difference variable that is particularly relevant to the dual religious group in the present study. When dual groups, however, are defined in terms of ethnicity or nationality as mostly has been done in previous studies, variables such as social dominance orientation (Sidanius

& Pratto, 1999) and right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1988) may play more of a role, as they are known for predicting out-group bias in this context (e.g., Whitley, 1999).

Societal Implications

Despite striking similarities between religions such as Islam and Christianity, “most people tend to fixate on religious differences rather than similarities” (Plante, 2009, p. 75). The present study highlights the positive potential of being aware of common theological origins for interreligious relations in the West, and it also shows that this potential is critically limited by religious fundamentalism.

Believers, who in addition to identifying with their religious group agreed with belonging to the overarching Abrahamic group, were substantially less prejudiced toward the Abrahamic out-group. These encouraging results indicate that the supra-ecumenical categorization was not perceived as a threat to the distinctiveness of believers’ religious subgroup identification, which might have led to worse out-group attitudes (see, e.g., Bianchi, Mummendey, Steffens, & Yzerbyt, 2010; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003). Indeed, more recent evidence shows that dual Abrahamic categorization affects not only attitudinal but also behavioral forms of bias as it leads believers to altruistic and real monetary donations to members of Abrahamic out-groups in need (Kunst & Thomsen, 2014).

Although dual categorization seems to contribute to more harmonious interreligious relations, religious fundamentalism emerged as a key obstacle to such dual group endorsement. Being an individual-difference variable that regards core characteristic of people’s faith, religious fundamentalism can be seen as difficult to change. Yet, the marginally significant manipulation check in Study 2 suggests that the construct has at least some degree of flexibility so that interventions may possibly change it. Here, our first study highlighted the potential of education, as it was negatively related to religious fundamentalism and positively related to dual Abrahamic categorization, at least among Muslims. It is possible that Muslim participants with higher formal education had obtained more knowledge about the complex intertwined relations between their own and others’ religious traditions, which challenge the less complex views on religious issues held by religious fundamentalists (Pancer et al., 1995).

However, education did not significantly affect religious fundamentalism among Christian participants. Nevertheless, it was in this group that religious fundamentalism emerged as the strongest predictor of dual group endorsement. On the one hand, this finding challenges the bias of the public discourse in many countries, where “the media have not scrupled to tar all Muslims with the same fundamentalist brush” (Fekete, 2004, p. 23), whereas self-declared Christian fundamentalists, such as Anders Behring Breivik (the Norwegian mass murderer), seldom are connected with fundamentalism (Rozbahani & Just, 2012). On the other hand, it begs the question of how Christian religious fundamentalist conceptions can be altered. Studies have shown that threat perceptions contribute to majority members’ negative attitudes toward Muslim minorities (e.g., González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010) and can lead to higher levels of fundamentalism (Salzman, 2008; Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Reducing perceptions of symbolic threat might

therefore be a way to diminish the breeding ground of religious fundamentalism among Christians, which eventually may lead to a heightened awareness of Muslims’ and Christians’ common Abrahamic origin.

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