
A Call for Recognition - On the causes of Political Islamism in Western Europe

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Abstract

Why do Muslims born and socialized in Western European democracies radicalize towards Islamism? This is currently one of the most pressing questions plaguing scholars and Western European security agencies alike. Whereas existing studies largely focus on Islamist terrorism, this paper investigates the causes of political Islamism more broadly. As transitions from political to violent Islamism are smooth, I argue that effective prevention efforts should start at the stage of radicalization towards the former. Against this background, the present work asks “what are the causes of political Islamism in Western Europe?” I take up two explanations prominent in the literature on causes of conflict: socio-economic and cultural relative deprivation (RD). In contrast to the bulk of purely theoretical scholarship on the topic, I test both explanations in a structured, focussed comparison by collecting and analysing novel empirical data obtained through interviews and participant observation in five German cities. The article concludes that cultural RD – the perception that one’s primary in-group identity is not recognized as equally worthwhile – is more significant to onset radicalization. In sum, the article seeks to solidify our understanding about the causes of political Islamism and to thus thwart future radicalization in its infancy.

Introduction

In the wake of 9/11, the notion of Islamic terrorism is ubiquitous in the United States and Western Europe. In an undifferentiated and highly emotional public discourse, discussions about “Islamic terrorism”, “Islamism” and “Islam” largely merge, often in a ratatouille spiced with a set of other social problems. Moreover, governments throughout Western Europe spend increasing amounts of money to prevent Islamist activity. Yet, reviewing the existing

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academic literature one easily notes that very little is actually known concerning the *causes* of radicalization towards Islamism (Brettfeld & Wetzels, 2007). Indeed, the quickly rising amount of theoretical works on the topic during the last decade stand in sharp contrast to few existing primary studies. In light of their isolation and an extremely high degree of scepticism towards outsiders (Wiktorowicz, n.d.) collecting empirical data on extremist groups is a challenge. Where empirical studies exist, they are often funded by security agencies and hence have a more narrow focus on Islamist terrorism. In contrast, the present study focuses on the emergence of *political* Islamism, defined as a political extremist ideology that seeks to overcome the democratic constitutional state and justifies behaviour towards that aim in Islamic terms. "Political Islamism" is distinct from "jihadi-Islamism" primarily because of its rejection of violence (International Crisis Group, 2005). The present paper takes as its departure point that we need to understand the genesis of political Islamism if we want to tackle violent Islamic extremism as transitions from one to the other are smooth (Steinberg, 2012). Once radicalized, transgressions towards violent extremism and terrorism occur in a highly unpredictable manner whereby group-dynamics (such as in-group competition) and unforeseen trigger events play a much bigger role than rational calculations (Lützing, 2010). Hence, the most effective terrorist prevention efforts start at the stage of radicalization towards political extremism. Against this background, this work asks the research question "*what are the causes of political Islamism in Western Europe?*"

The present paper attempts to make two major contributions, one of an empirical and one of a theoretical nature. To counter the lack of primary data, the present work contributes new empirical evidence in the form of 12 in-depth interviews with Islamists and eight interviews with members of a Control Group obtained in five cities in Germany. In contrast to prior qualitative studies, the inclusion of a control group presents a new methodological approach that allows to contrast both groups by way of a structured, focussed comparison and ultimately to draw causal inferences with a higher degree of confidence. Theoretically, the study contributes to the radicalization research program by testing the causal strength of socio-economic as well as cultural relative deprivation in the emergence of political Islamism in Western Europe. The theory of socio-economic relative deprivation (RD) is already fairly well-established in peace and conflict research, especially in the research of rebel mobilization in civil war contexts (Gurr, 1970; Tilly, 1999). On the other hand, the theory of cultural relative deprivation (RD) represents an entirely new reading of relative deprivation that overlaps with social philosophical theories on the role of recognition (e.g. Honneth, 1996), Francis Stewart's concept of „Horizontal Inequalities“ (Stewart, 2010) and with the field of humiliation studies (Lindner, 2006). Because the concept of "cultural RD" or "cultural Horizontal Inequalities" had not yet been specified thoroughly, a further contribution stems from the theoretical elaboration and operationalization of that concept. In the present work, cultural RD captures how subjects may perceive that their in-group is denied recognition along several crucial dimensions. An analysis of the results reveals that socio-economic RD has only marginal effects on the cases tested. Cultural RD on the other hand seems to play a crucial role in predicting the radicalization towards political Islamism even when controlling for interaction effects among both factors and alternative explanations.

The paper will be structured along four major sections. The first section reviews existing literature on the causes for political Islamism in Western Europe. Next I provide key definitions and develop the theoretical argument. After laying out the research design that guides data collection and analysis in section three, the fourth part presents and analyses the empirical findings. In conclusion, the scope and relevance of the findings will be discussed.

I. The State of the Art

The following section will provide a short summary of the existing literature on the causes of Islamism in Western Europe. Dominant accounts can be situated at the structural-, group- or micro-level of analysis. In between the first and the latter, scholars focussing on relative deprivation seek to bridge the structural and the individual-level. Structuralists emphasise the struggle of Muslims in Western Europe to construct a positive identity in the face of their migration background and a socio-political context experienced as alien (Kepel, 2004; Roy, 2004). Discriminatory structures in Western European countries are theorized to inhibit identification with the surrounding mainstream society while identification with the cultures and traditions of their families is not an option either for subjects lacking a meaningful connection to that background. Hence, especially individuals in their second or third generation of immigration perceive a “double sense of non-belonging” (Khosrokhavar, 2005, p.185; Roy, 2004, p.193). Political Islamism should then be understood as an identity search and a coping strategy in difficult circumstances defined by a history of migration (Khosrokhavar, 2005; Meng, 2004; Roy, 2004). While structuralists hint at important structural features that impact Muslims in Western Europe, the variables identified are not operationalized sufficiently to apply them empirically and thus fail to explain why some radicalise while others do not.

Social movement theories on the other hand seek to tackle radicalization at the group level, sharing an emphasis on social networks, immediate social contacts and peer pressure in shaping an individual’s perceptions and behaviour (Bakker, 2006; Sageman, 2004, 2008, 2016; Wiktorowicz, 2006). Applying network analysis, Sageman and Bakker demonstrate how all individuals eventually affiliated with Islamic extremism exhibited personal ties to other extremists through friendship, kinship or discipleship prior to their own engagement. Radicalization then essentially becomes a question of being in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people (Bakker, 2006; Sageman, 2004). While Islamists in Western Europe are most often linked to radical Islamist groups abroad (Hoffman & Reinares, 2014), they do not depend on external guidance from abroad and typically operate out of their European-based networks alone (Vidino, 2011). Quintan Wiktorowicz’s qualitative study confirms the importance of local networks but integrates them into a process model which asserts that radicalization is initiated by a personal crisis, leading the individual to question previously held beliefs and to search for alternative perspectives on the world. In such a state of “cognitive opening” (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p.14), the presence of Islamist “frames” is crucial to align subjects to Islamist social movements (Wiktorowicz, n.d.). In addition, the role of gateway organizations that strategically recruit vulnerable individuals is emphasised as crucial in facilitating the translation of radical beliefs into action (CHANGE INSTITUTE, 2008; Neumann & Rogers, 2007). However, this approach fails to explain how exactly the presence of social networks leads to radicalization, why some individuals align with Islamist frames while others do not and how these events relate to structural factors.

Furthermore, the (social-) psychological research tradition has advanced explanations on the individual level investigating factors that determine people’s vulnerability to radicalise (McCauly & Moskalenko, 2008, 2011; Lützing, 2010; Neu, 2011; Slooman & Tillie, 2006). While Slooman and Tillie identify a very orthodox religious stance and deep seated feelings of injustice as crucial pre-requisites for joining Islamist groups (Slooman & Tillie, 2006), Lützing’s comparative study of right-wing, left-wing and Islamist extremists finds that similar developmental patterns are at the core of radicalization no matter where to. In fact, extremists of all camps shared biographies dominated by inner-familiar conflicts, a deficient identity characterised by a lack of self-esteem, long phases of being alone and an overall lack

of orientation (Lützinger, 2010). Both studies are important contributions to understanding psychological underpinnings of radicalization. Yet, given the reliance on secondary data in the former and the thin empirical base in the latter study, conclusions remain tentative.

Finally, explanations that centre on notions of relative deprivation (hereafter “RD”) seek to bridge macro- and micro-level explanations. Since its initial formulation in the 1940s by Stouffer (Stouffer, 1949), notions of RD have been refined considerably thanks to continuous empirical testing. Nowadays, RD theories are well-established as accounts of collective action in the fields of psychology, sociology and political science (Brown & Langer, 2010; Stewart, 2008, Tarrow, 1998). Specifically relevant for the current paper are the RD theories developed in the context of peace and conflict research originating in the work of Ted Robert Gurr (Gurr, 1970), Charles Tilly’s concept of “categorical inequalities” (Tilly, 1999) and the more recently developed concept of “horizontal inequalities”² (Brown & Langer, 2010; Stewart, 2008). Despite the established relevance of RD as a cause of social conflict, researchers on radicalization have largely neglected it, arguing that Islamists come from the whole social strata of society – that is, there are just as many disadvantaged Islamists as there are advantaged ones. This finding is cited by some authors to dismiss relative deprivation theory *a priori* (e.g. Sageman, 2008; Wiktorowicz, n.d.). However, the present paper argues that this criticism misses the point, as one needs to distinguish *collective* from *individual* relative deprivation. While *individual RD* refers to the recognition of personal deprivation when one compares oneself to a relevant comparison referent on some valued dimension, *collective RD* refers to “the recognition of the deprived status of one’s in-group when one compares one’s in-group to a relevant out-group with respect to some valued dimension” (Dubé & Guimond, 1986). This distinction is crucial because an individual who might be well-off personally can still feel that his in-group is disadvantaged. Depending on the identity salience of this social identity, a great deal of solidarity as well as personal concern can be expected. Moreover, while it is true that a relevant portion of the Islamists in Europe are comparatively well-educated, I consider the emphasis on the diversity in terms of social background to be overstated. In line with empirical evidence provided by Pfeiffer (Pfeiffer, 2010), I hold that a majority among the political Islamists also comes from an authoritarian-traditional social background with lower than average levels of education. Two recent studies suggesting a connection between a sense of minority discrimination and terrorism have been provided by Piazza’s statistical analysis of 172 countries between 1970 and 2006 (Piazza, 2011), as well as a study by Victoroff et al. (2012). The research objective of a study should ideally be “adapted to the needs of the research program at its current stage of development” (George & Bennet, 2004, p.74). Hence, it is time to empirically assess the validity and scope conditions of socio-economic and cultural relative deprivation when determining political Islamism in Western Europe via qualitative comparison.

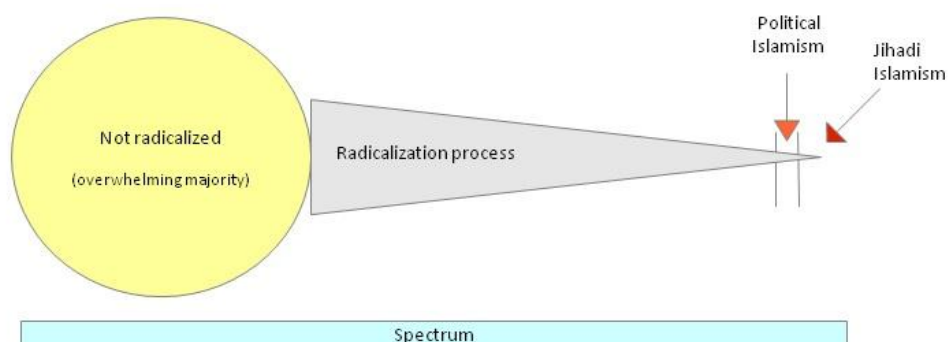
II. Theory and Argument

In this section, I first define the key terms for my research – Islamism, socio-economic and cultural relative deprivation. Next, I present the two competing arguments that I will subsequently test empirically in this paper.

² In my view the idea of „Horizontal Inequalities“ including collective mobilization by the privileged along group lines subsumes the relative deprivation agenda. Yet, because relative deprivation is more precise with respect to my work and because it is still the dominant paradigm, I will frame the theories used as belonging to the relative deprivation research program.

Islamism

Defining Islamism is an especially challenging task. A review of academic texts and administrative reports reveals a range of concepts used interchangeably. Hence, what one author describes as “Islamism” may be referred to as “Islamic Fundamentalism”, “Islamic extremism”, “Neo-fundamentalism” or “Jihadism³”. Especially in the Western European context, the term “Salafism⁴” has widely replaced the use of the term “Islamism”. In addition, many attributes such as “classic”, “conservative”, “purist”, “political”, “radical”, “militant” or “transnational” make a clear definition and demarcation very difficult. Clearly, “political Islamism” needs to be distinguished from “Jihadi-Islamism”. While the former variation of Islamism largely operates within a legal framework, the latter one stands for the armed Islamic fight (*al-Jihad*) and it is this acceptance and/or pursuit of violence which represents the clearest demarcation point between both (International Crisis Group, 2005). Followers of Salafism are Sunni Muslims who propagate a return to the “ideal” Muslim life as allegedly exemplified by the “rightful forefathers” (*al-salaf al-salih*) composed of the first three generations of Muslims after Mohammed (Dantschke et al., 2011). Islamism is a variant of an extremist political ideology in which religious doctrine is instrumentally used to legitimize ideals of an Islamic theocracy, access to an absolute religious truth, the inferior status of unbelievers and an inferior legal position of women. All of these ideas are diametrically opposed to core fundamental principles of the democratic constitutional state: autonomy of the individual, freedom of speech, pluralism, secularism and sovereignty of the people as well as the equality between women and men. Because of its political character, the behavioural norms of Islamism are theorized to have a compulsory, law-like character. Interested in the conflict potential of political Islamism for Western European societies, the thesis defines Islamism as “an extremist political ideology constituting a threat to the constitutional democratic state” (cp. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2008). “Radicalization” designates the process towards Islamism, which Slootman and Tilly conceptualized as “the increasing willingness to pursue or support fundamental changes (possibly in an undemocratic manner), or to persuade others to do so” (Slootman & Tillie, 2006, p.5). On the level of individual subjects, this continuum towards Islamist norms and behaviours can be depicted in the following graph:



Graph 1: Location of Political Islamism on Radicalization spectrum

³ Jihad refers to “striving” or “effort”. The term usually denotes the holy war of Islam. Later Muslim scholars differentiated between violent and non-violent forms of jihad whereby the “greater jihad” denotes a struggle against the sinful self of the believer.

⁴ The pious forefathers. The term usually refers to the first three generations of Muslims after the Prophet Mohammed.

While Slootsman and Tilly leave the direction of radicalization open, I adopt the definition by Helfstein and define radicalization as “the process by which people come to adopt extremist political beliefs with a particular emphasis on those ideologies that encourage violent action” (Helfstein, 2012, p.6).

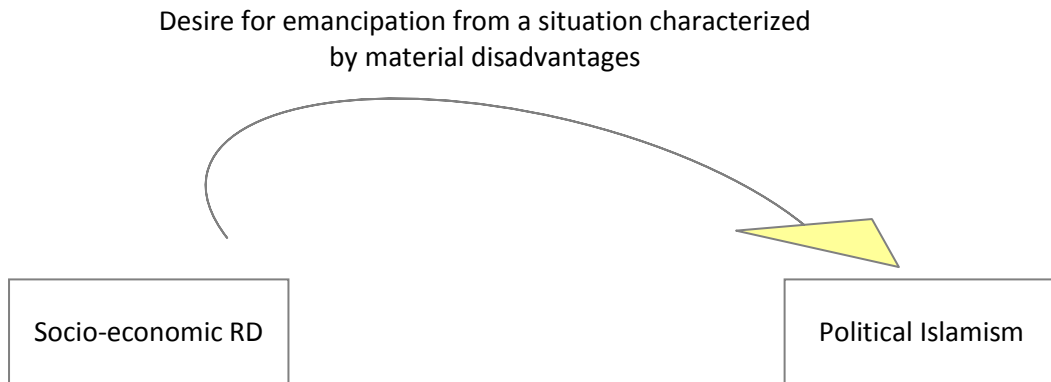
Socio-Economic and Cultural Relative Deprivation

In line with Francis Stewart’s work (Stewart, 2009) I then define socio-economic RD as the perceived discrepancy between the actual situation and what individuals feel members of their in-group are entitled to in terms of a) educational opportunities, b) job opportunities and c) income as variables for “economic RD” and d) access to housing as well as e) access to social services as indicators of “social RD”. As for the second independent variable, Stewart conceptualizes cultural RD as the perceived lack of recognition (Brown & Langer, 2010). At the heart cultural RD is the perception of being put down and forced into passivity by a more powerful Other. To specify what a lack of recognition in the relationship between subjects and groups of a society means, the thesis will draw on the work of Axel Honneth (Honneth, 1996) who distinguishes between three different levels of recognition: a) the group is recognized as a collective whose basic needs and desires are of unique value to the greater society, b) the group is recognized as composed of individuals that convey the same autonomy /moral accountability as enjoyed by members of other groups and c) the group is recognized as a collective whose capabilities are of constitutive value to the greater community.

Hypothesis 1: Islamism as an Expression of Class Struggle

Following classical psychological models of human needs, social and economic goods are critical for the fulfilment of the most basic needs (Cantril, 1966; Runciman, 1966). Socio-economic relative deprivation comes with high levels of economic and social insecurity. The lack of social and financial capital means a deprivation of those resources that are central for societal participation. Socio-economic RD is hence closely associated with high levels of discontent among the affected group. The European Muslim population is, of course, not homogeneous. A share of this population is highly educated, satisfied with their jobs and belongs to the middle or higher income group. Yet, a majority of European Muslims faces higher than average risks of unemployment, residential segregation and lower education (Césari, 2004). Social psychological research shows that while the belief in the goodwill and benign intentions of others facilitates collective action, mutual cooperation and hence norms of reciprocity, the perception of unjustifiable inequalities produces resentment, frustration, a deep sense of injustice and distrust which in turn lead to a reduced commitment to the conventional social order (Kawachi, 1999). The discrepancy between the ‘expected’ and the ‘received’ conceptualized as a “legitimacy gap” has been commonly associated with an increasing potential for political mobilization (Ohlson, 2008). Moreover, emerging leaders can capitalize on this potential to address the shared grievances and the common incentives to act. In the words of Ted Robert Gurr, “shared identity and interests are the elements from which skilful leaders forge a group’s capacity for political action” (Gurr, 2000, p.41). In the face of ongoing or even increasing perceptions of deprivation, a dynamic between ever demanding masses and increasingly confrontational leaders emerges. With little connection to other established political parties or civil society organizations, Muslims sharing socio-economic RD may find their grievances addressed by the Islamist groups which position themselves in direct opposition to the ‘evils of global capitalism’ and the existing political elite (Tibi, 2006). Hence, socio-economic RD and Islamism are

connected by a desire for emancipation from a situation characterized by material disadvantages. The term “material” should be understood in a broad sense, designating tangible resources (e.g. money, educational opportunities, and access to social services). The following graph (*Graph II*) illustrates this causal mechanism:



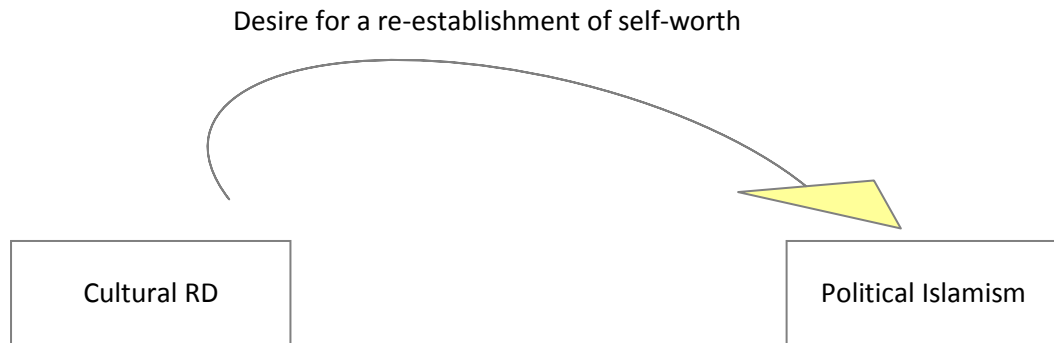
Graph II: Causal Mechanism Socio-economic RD

Hypothesis 2: Islamism as an Expression of Identity Struggle

Authors such as Alana Lentin claim that despite all the efforts to expunge race from the European political sphere, a new form of cultural racism is very much alive. While not exclusively based on skin colour, this new form of racism integrates a mix of biological, cultural and religious signifiers as demarcation lines to an inherent European superiority (Lentin, 2008). According to some authors (cp. Césari, 2013), anti-Muslim racism has intensified considerably after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, leading to a securitization of the Islamic identity. As Muslims became the central object in the “War on Terror”-discourse as well as the object of suspicion and surveillance, feelings of alienation deepened (Césari, 2013). Moreover, the financial and economic crisis intensified anti-Muslim racism, as right-wing populists used the Muslim and immigrant identities – in some contexts overlapping to a large degree – as scapegoats (Césari, 2011; Semyonov, 2006). Cultural relative deprivation (Cultural RD) captures the perception of a subject whose primary in-group identification is not recognized for what it is; that the most basic needs concerning the expression of its identity are not respected and that there is no recognition of the in-group’s contribution to the greater society. Such experiences constitute a threat to one’s social identity as a Muslim. Again, this will be felt more the stronger a person identifies with his in-group.

Evelyn Lindner further pointed out how the perceived lack of recognition can be accompanied by an experience of humiliation defined as “the enforced lowering of a person, a process of subjugation that damages the individual’s pride and dignity” (Lindner, 2006, p.22). To be humiliated means to be placed, against your will, in a situation that is greatly inferior to what you expect on the basis of present normative minimum standards which is why Lindner calls humiliation the “nuclear bomb of the emotions” (Lindner, 2009, p.84). Because of people’s strong motivation to maintain a positive self-image (Bégue, 2005), people are likely to attribute the sources of such feelings entirely to factors outside themselves. This “Other-blame” in turn has been found to translate into anger and the adoption of a “zero-sum” perspective (“either me or him”) (Gelfand et al., 2001). The desire to re-establish one’s self-worth increases the vulnerability of subjects to join Islamist groups

claiming to address these grievances. In sum, the causal mechanism linking cultural RD and political Islamism can be depicted as follows:



Graph III: Causal Mechanism Cultural RD

III. Research Methodology

The present paper will test the hypothesis by way of a structured, focused comparison between two cases consisting of an Islamist and a Control Group⁵. The essential logic underlying this comparison is borrowed from John Stuart Mill's "Method of Difference" which compares two cases with different outcomes and then seeks to identify where variance among the independent variables achieves to explain this difference (George & Bennet, 2004). The method of comparison itself is "structured" because the same set of questions derived from theory are asked of each case under study to guide and standardize data collection (George & Bennet, 2004, p.69). Moreover, the comparison is "focussed" because it only considers variables that are of theoretical interest - the effects of socio-economic and cultural RD on radicalization towards Islamism. The reasons for choosing a qualitative interview approach to collect the data is that solid empirical evidence is near to absent with regard to both, the causes for radicalization towards Islamism generally and on the relevance of relative deprivation experiences in that process specifically. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that an interview questionnaire with fixed questions and themes was combined with additional in-depth questions that emerged out of each interview. In line with the research aim and the chosen methodology, two groups were created – an Islamist group and a Control group. The individual interviews within each make up the "data" of the respective groups. Because it was impossible to determine in advance whether a subject qualified as "Islamist" or "Control", allocation to the groups was done in retrospect. Due to constraints in terms of time and data access, the thesis focusses on political Islamism in Germany where interviews could be obtained in the cities of Berlin,

⁵ Conducting field research on highly sensitive topics such as political Islamism amplifies some of the problems that have commonly been raised with regards to qualitative research ethics. During the research here presented the author has tried to reflect on the ethical questions involved before, during and after the research process. In order to protect the participant's safety, all interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and that their information was treated with confidentiality. In order to conduct an effective interview, the researcher needs to build rapport with his subjects. This rapport building involved active listening, a non-judgemental attitude and at times validating the respondents' core views even where in conflict with the researcher's own ones. The ethical dilemma here arises where one may legitimize extremist attitudes. The best way out of this dilemma surely was to remain silent and look for empathic ways to acknowledge the emotions behind the aggression.

Bonn, Cologne, Neuss and Mönchengladbach between October 2012 and April 2013.

Of course, field research in an extremist environment requires a careful and sensitive *modus operandi*. Next to cultural and language barriers, one has to deal carefully with prevailing fears of privacy invasions on behalf of reporters and potential persecution by the state (Wiktorowicz, n.d.). In the present research design, a combination of five overlapping approaches was used to get access to the field: a) an identification of Islamist institutions and actors in Germany through a review of academic papers, government reports, media articles, court documents, Islamist web-pages and newsletters, b) the direct contacting of Salafi organizations and individuals (no success), c) the visit of relevant mosques in Berlin, Neuss, Cologne and Bonn as well as the participation in an “Islam-seminar” (three interviews resulted), d) the introduction through acquaintances who had contacts to Salafist networks and e) subsequent snow-balling (the most successful strategy). In total, twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted.

In order to allow for a “structured, focussed comparison” among the two groups, a “structuring approach” (Mayring, 1990b) was chosen in order to analyse the data. According to Mayring, the goal of “structuring” lies in filtering aspects of the material on the basis of previously defined variables (ibid). Where deemed necessary to identify dubious or unclear but yet important aspects in the material, “explication” was used - a strategy whereby meaning is deduced by the controlled consultation of additional sources in the immediate neighbourhood of a text (lexical definitions and/or the use of statements from the same interview) and the wider text context (contextual factors of the interview and a consultation of relevant secondary sources) (Mayring, 1990a).

IV. Empirics and Analysis

The following section presents the empirical data obtained and assesses to what extent the two hypotheses that *socio-economic RD causes the radicalization towards Islamism (H1)* and that *cultural RD causes the radicalization towards Islamism (H2)*, hold. The first section illustrates an evaluation of subjects’ position on the dependent variable (Islamist and Control Group). The next section presents and analyses the results on socio-economic and cultural RD. Due to constraints of space, I will confine myself to illustrate only one feature of each variable. The analysis includes an assessment of the hypothesised correlation between the independent and the dependent variables as well as a cross-case comparison between the Islamist and the Control Groups which ultimately allows drawing causal inferences.

Conceptualization of Political Islamism – the Dependent Variable

The crucial feature distinguishing the two groups under study has been the subject’s degree of radicalization towards Islamism. An interviewee qualified as an Islamist when showing a high or very high values on this dependent variable. Among the 20 subjects included in this study, 12 qualified as “Islamist” and 8 as members of the “Control Group”. In order to capture the relative degree of radicalization within each group, four types have been constructed reflecting “very high”, “high”, “low” and “very low” values on the dependent variable, with the former two designating the Islamist and the latter two belonging to the Control Group⁶. The values assigned are a function of the presence of beliefs, their intensity and the kind of actions approved and / or used to further these beliefs. More specifically,

⁶ see Appendix for all questions informing the structured part of the interviews

subjects with a “*very high*” value of Islamism showed the presence of an all-encompassing ideology that is diametrically opposed to *all* the values constitutive for a liberal democratic state (pluralism/tolerance, popular sovereignty, division of powers/opposition parties, formal equality), a high degree of isolation and actions specifically designed to further the ideology’s aims. Subjects classified with “*high*” values showed the presence of an all-encompassing ideology that is opposed to *three out of the four* values constitutive for a liberal democratic states, a medium or high degree of isolation and actions. In the Control Group, “*low*” values indicate the presence of attitudes that overlap with an Islamist ideology but the relatively low intensity of these beliefs and the absence of action do not qualify subjects as “Islamist”. Finally, subjects with “*very low*” values showed a principle approval of liberal democracies, no desire to replace it with an Islamic theocracy and no action. The four components of this variable include “Sharia law and the Exclusive Access to Truth”, “Democracy, Pluralism and Tolerance”, “Isolation and Group Cohesiveness” and finally, “The Action-dimension”.

Sharia Law and the Exclusive Access to Truth

According to members in the Islamist group, Sharia law (*sharīʿa*⁷) is the single authoritative source of law in an ideal society, in Germany and elsewhere. In contrast to the Control group, members of the Islamist group hence clearly preferred Sharia law over the German Constitution and seven out of twelve subjects also diagnosed a conflict between both sources of law. Because it is the only valid legal authority to prescribe behaviour, political Salafists emphasised the need to strictly follow the “right” sources⁸. There was little dispute that the Sharia was the relevant code of conduct for everyday life situations, or as **A8** put it: “When I refer to Sharia, I am talking about my everyday life of a Muslim” and when asked about the significance of Sharia in relation to the German law said that “*Of course, all Muslims will believe that Sharia is the right law for them as for our whole society. That comes with the belief in God.*” Among the Control Group, comments on the Sharia were much more reserved, the compatibility with the German basic law emphasized by a majority and a certain degree of scepticism articulated by half of the subjects with regard to people who call for the Sharia to be implemented in Germany. A typical example of the former is the statement by **B3** that “*We are in Germany and so I follow German law. Where I need to follow the laws of my religion, I am able to do so here. There is no conflict at all.*” Noticeable among the Islamist group was the strict division of the material and social world into “halal” (allowed) and “haram” (forbidden), the notion of “hell” as well as the obsession with which the rules were followed. As **A9** said:

“We were quite obsessed with the right way of doing things. Following Sharia in your everyday life is not easy at all. It starts with very basic rules and then proceeds to the right way of praying and finally almost all activities you engage in. Every single detail mattered.”

In the Control Group, the notions of paradise and hell were not emotionally embedded in the same way. Moreover, next to the acceptance of Sharia on a general level, only two (**B3** and **B7**) formulated its everyday life implications in an equally detailed manner.

⁷ Sources of Islamic jurisprudence as laid out in Qur’an and Sunna

⁸ According to Salafists, these consist in the Quran, the Sunna and the scholarly declarations by the pious forefathers of the first three generations of Muslims after Mohammed (Steinberg, 2012)

Democracy, Pluralism and Tolerance

Views on the legitimacy of democracy with its division of powers, popular sovereignty and opposition parties differed widely among both groups. The Salafist group rejected democracy as a system of disbelief, disregarding the absolute sovereignty of God. When asked about the option to articulate his political views in the context of political parties or non-governmental organizations, **A8** responded:

“Why would I want to do that? I do not believe in the system you are presenting me here, which means I also do not believe in political parties or elections. They are all part of that very same system based on the idea that people know best what is good for them. It is a violation of the loyalty towards God.”

The last sentence here needs some further exploration to fully understand its meaning. What is meant here is captured in the Islamic concept of *“al-Wala’ wa’l-Bara”* (lit. the loyalty and abjuration for Allah) and means that loyalty is reserved for God and his laws only. Salafists propagate a duty for Muslims to dissociate oneself from man-made laws that are supposed to conflict with the divine laws of God (Dantschke et al., 2011). Knowing the limits of what is legally viable, the idea that democracies are essentially inferior to an Islamic theocracy as defined by Salafism was more implicit and often times dealt with on an abstract level by a majority of interviewees. Among the Islamist group, there was an extremely low tolerance with respect to individual self-realization, pluralism and life-styles outside the normative framework of Salafist ideology. Clear expressions of this were the rejection of homosexuality as well as female emancipation, allegedly because both disrespects “human nature”. A sharp division along biological lines is also present when it comes to the morals guiding sexual behaviour, with homosexuality, sexual lust outside marriage and even the gazing at an attractive woman on the street is seen as belonging to the realm of “animals”. Perhaps most clearly pronounced is the strong devaluation of homosexuality in a statement by **A12**:

“Homosexuals are sinful; a typical example of where a society deprived of all norms ends up. I would say homosexuals are not really human beings. They have to behave like animals, fine, but it’s clear that this is the direct path to hell.”

This de-humanization of certain groups of people reveals not only the repulsion towards alternative forms of life, but also how the sharp contrast to other groups serves to underline the moral superiority of the Salafists. Yet, patriarchal family norms and homophobia is by no means restricted to the group of political Salafists since both elements could also be found among six of the eight subjects in the control group. Also, it is worthwhile mentioning that traditional family values as well as homophobic views are – even though in decline - also shared by a fairly large share of the German population⁹. Rather than a characteristic that is specific to Islamism, homophobia and patriarchy resonate well with traditional-authoritarian family values (Küpper & Zick, 2011). Having said that, important differences among the two groups exist. First of all, derogatory views concerning homosexuality and fornication were less strict. Secondly, they were not exclusively held with reference to religious laws and thirdly, they were advocated less intensely overall. Rather than serving as proofs for the group’s moral superiority, subjects in the control group seemed to be more in conflict with such views.

⁹ For instance, in 2011 about 40% of the German population (which is roughly the Western European average, much worse than The Netherlands (16%) and much better than Hungary, Poland, Italy or Portugal (around 60%)) could be qualified as “homophobic” (Küpper & Zick, 2011)

Isolation and Group Cohesiveness

Increasing isolation from mainstream society differentiated the Islamist from the Control Group. **A9** reported how the desire to live up to the ideals of the Quran meant a severe restriction of the radius of movement. Especially in summer, provocative lingerie was lurking everywhere and hence **A9** and his friends would not go to the lake, the city centre, even school were problematic. Moreover, disputes about the right way to follow the Quran with one's own family resulted in repeated conflict and not rarely isolation from them as well. **A9** recalls how

“Resentment and feelings of guilt were also directed towards our own families that did not show us the right way of Islam. On top, we were attacked for betrayal if we sought to evade conflict within our families. For instance, a narrative from the Koran where a father forbids his son to live the right Islam was cited. In that story, the son fights back and kills him. Eventually, I turned into a permanent terror factor in my own family”.

On the other hand, the group cohesiveness resulting from the shared isolation experience is also an experience of feeling at home. Several subjects described how their fellow “brothers” and “sisters” are their family, made up of people who spend their free time together, sharing all their worries and sins and deeply caring about each other.

The Action-dimension

In order to qualify as a member of the Islamist group, subjects needed to follow up on their Islamist ideology with concrete, real-life activities. By far the most prevalent way to further the cause of their political ideals were missionary activities (*da'wah*)¹⁰ consisting in the spread of Islam through grass-roots efforts at the workplace, on the street, in schools, prisons and mosques or the realization of Islam seminars often times accompanied by the recording of audio and video tapes for the internet. Engaging in *da'wah* activities helped them legitimize their stay in Germany, a non-Muslim country. To nine of the twelve subjects in the Islamist group, missionary activities were all-encompassing and consumed their lives. As **A1** recalled,

“Da'wah became everything, all kinds of activities were somehow a part of it. For instance, I remember several instances where we would have a full day of helping out other Muslims we knew from the Mosque. Whenever we got somewhere, we would not miss to pray together and talk about religion at some point”

In a metaphorical statement, **A5** revealed his self-perception of *Da'wah* activist as the avant-guard of a broader movement saying “*We are like a spoon that you put into a glass full of gypsum. Once you pull it out, everything inside has to follow.*” Moreover, **A6** and **A9** hinted at strategies beyond *Da'wah*. For instance, **A6** claimed

“In Germany I am in the Dar al Hab (engl. “House of War”). After all, Germany is at war against the Muslims in Afghanistan. The truthful Muslim goes to Afghanistan or Syria right now to support our brothers there.”

When asked what kind of support he referred to, **A6** said support could take different forms, but most importantly a humanitarian catastrophe would have to be prevented. These equivocal passages of **A6** put him at the border between political and jihadi-Islamism. Yet, I

¹⁰ According to Islamic theology, *Da'wah* means the invitation of Muslims and non-Muslims to understand and follow the worship of Allah.

qualified A6 “political”, as he mentioned that he himself would do only Da’wah in Germany: *“Here in Germany I seek to engage in Da’wah. I am obliged to do Da’wah with respect to my family, then my neighbours and then my friends and wider environment”.*

IV 1: Socio-economic Relative Deprivation

According to the first hypothesis (H1), *the stronger socio-economic RD are experienced by Muslims for whom the social identity as “Muslim” is of primary importance, the more likely is a radicalization towards political Islamism.* The data obtained in the present study reveal that socio-economic relative deprivation (RD) was felt slightly more prevalently among subjects in the Islamist group (75% compared to 50% in the Control group). More specifically, the contrast between the two groups was the sharpest in the area of employment opportunities. While Islamists still perceived collective RD in the school system to a slightly greater extent than the control group, this difference almost disappeared in the area of housing and other social services. In sum, the socio-economic RD seems to matter as a causal factor determining radicalization towards Islamism. Having said that, the lack of socio-economic RD in three (out of twelve) subjects clearly indicates that this independent variable is not a necessary cause. Moreover, while significant the difference between Islamists and the Control group is simply not big enough to establish a strong causal effect.

Table II depicts the moderate support enjoyed by the hypothesis H1 comparing the *predicted* outcome on the basis of the obtained results with their *actual* outcomes. The values on the RD dimension are qualified on a continuum ranging from “very low” to “low” over “high” to “very high”. These attributes are assigned as a function of the content and the intensity with which subjects report on the variables in question. On the one extreme, a “very high” value is assigned where subjects perceive their in-group as relatively deprived on all three sub-categories and show strongly negative feelings with respect to at least two. On the other extreme, subjects receive the value “very low” where they do not perceive their in-group as relatively deprived with respect to other groups at all. Next to simply looking at the outcomes in binary terms (DV=1 vs DV=0), the table allows to assess to what extent the *degree* of radicalization varies with the *degree* in the independent variable. Measuring the predictive success of H1, a score is assigned to each subject in the data depending on its relative success to predict radicalization towards Islamism, with a “++” (perfect prediction) being the highest and “- -” (absolute failure) being the lowest score. In between, “+” indicates a correct prediction of the value on the dependent variable (Islamist or not) but a failure to predict the precise extent of radicalization. Lastly, a simple “-” stands for a wrong prediction on the DV. Having summarized the result, the next section provides a more detailed analysis of the relevant categories derived from the operationalization of both IVs.

Relative Deprivation in a School context

In the school context, members of the Islamist group tended to criticise the education system as a whole whereas Control group highlighted more specific topics and personal experiences. Overall, however, no substantial difference in socio-economic RD could be identified.

Employment

In was in the area of employment that collective relative deprivation experiences between the two groups diverged the most with the Islamist group depicting a higher degree of frustration. Six out of the nine subjects reporting RD in employment voiced a series of critical points, among which the chances of getting a job in the first place was the most pressing

issue. Perceived discrimination of Muslims at the workplace came up within the Islamist group wherever the practice of one's religion was affected, a point at which the clear separation between socio-economic and cultural RD is the most difficult¹¹. Two subjects raised the point that unemployment among real Muslims may be desired, because it leaves more room for Islamic practice. A typical interview pattern among subjects in the Islamist group was an initial emphasis on one's own indifference due to a firmly rooted belief in God, while discrimination on the job market experienced by other Muslims was harshly condemned.

Among the Control group, job related RD was not as pressing and only three subjects indicated such perceptions. Yet, B8 was very much unhappy with the headscarf ban for teachers in public schools and B1 was the most outspoken and possibly the most frustrated among all the subjects with regard to hiring practices. Reflecting on the job application procedures, there was a perception of in-group disadvantages for Muslims and foreigners at large due to foreign sounding names. Even though a subject might be qualified, the foreign name or any other clear signifier of "foreignness" such as a picture with a "foreign looking face" is perceived as an obstacle to get a job. According to **A12**, *"There are many rounds when you look out for a job. If you look like me and if you have my name, you can forget it to pass all of them."* At the other end was the remark that "your German is really good" made to **B1**, a very fluent and educated man who came to Germany as a child, when asking about his application on the phone. Agreement on the clear discriminatory effect on Muslim women was present among the two women interviewed, one in each group. Throughout the last decade, half of Germany's 16 states¹² have laws prohibiting public school teachers and other civil servants from wearing the headscarf at work. None of the laws explicitly target the headscarf, but according to a Human Rights Watch report, parliamentary debates and official explanatory documents prior to their introduction make clear that the headscarf is the focus (Human Rights Watch, 2009). A10 and B8 both wear the headscarf and were unequivocal in their perceptions that this ruling was a violation of their employment rights. Two subjects in the Islamist group said they did not feel their in-group was discriminated on the job market, but rather that they preferred staying among themselves to live and practice Islam. The rejection of "the West" in its totality of course makes taking up a job within the framework of the German capitalist economy very problematic.

Access to Housing, Health Care and other Social Services

The pattern in the area of housing, health care and other social services was the most mixed and no weighty differences among both groups existed. The overall intensity of RD among both in this area was rather weak, with a majority saying that difficulties to find housing were more attributable to general problems applying to everyone. However, despite socio-economic RD encountered in this specific domain, there was no substantive difference between the two groups, weakening the generic causal force of Socio-economic RD on radicalization overall.

¹¹ Situations that had a predominantly cultural RD dimension will be dealt with under the section „cultural RD“

¹² These states are Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Bremen, Hessen, Lower Saxony, North Rhine Westphalia, and Saarland.

TABLE II: Socio-Economic RD - Predicted and Actual Outcomes

	<u>Interviews</u>	<u>Socio-economic RD</u>	<u>Predicted Outcome</u>	<u>Actual Outcome</u>	<u>Score</u>
Political Islamism DV = 1	A 1	Very low	Very low	High	--
	A 2	High	High	Very high	+
	A 3	Low	Low	High	--
	A 4	High	High	High	++
	A 5	High	High	Very high	+
	A 6	High	High	Very high	+
	A 7	High	High	High	++
	A 8	High	High	Very high	+
	A 9	Low	Low	Very high	--
	A 10	Very high	Very high	High	+
	A 11	Very high	Very high	Very high	++
	A 12	Very high	Very high	High	+
No Islamism DV = 0	B 1	High	High	Very low	--
	B 2	Low	Low	Low	++
	B 3	Low	Low	Low	++
	B 4	High	High	Low	--
	B 5	Low	Low	Very low	+
	B 6	Low	Low	Very low	+
	B 7	High	High	Very low	--
	B 8	High	High	Low	-

Legend for values on DV (Islamism)

- Very High Presence of an all-encompassing ideology diametrically opposed to *all* the values constitutive for a liberal democratic state + political actions + a high degree of commitment.
- High Presence of an all-encompassing ideology diametrically opposed to *three out of the four* values constitutive for a liberal democratic state + political actions + medium or high degree of commitment.
- Low Presence of attitudes that overlap with Islamist ideology. Low degree of radicalization + no action
- Very low Principle approval of the values constitutive for a liberal democratic state + no action.

IV 2: Cultural Relative Deprivation

Cultural relative deprivation (RD) proved to have a strong effect on radicalization and it is this detected effect which constitutes the central finding of the present thesis. Eleven out of twelve subjects (together making up more than 90%) in the Islamist group showed either “high” or “very high” values of cultural RD. This contrasts with four out of eight subjects reporting cultural RD in the Control Group. What is more, 50% (six out of twelve) among the Islamist group experienced a “very high” degree of cultural RD compared to only one subject in the Control Group. The Islamist group showed substantially higher levels of cultural RD on all three dimensions whereby the difference was most pronounced concerning the perceived disrespect of basic needs. Looking at the magnitudes within the two groups, a higher extent of cultural RD also comes with a higher likelihood to score “very high” on the dependent variable among the Islamist group as predicted by **H2**, stating that *the stronger cultural RD are experienced by Muslims for who the social identity as “Muslim” is of primary importance, the more likely a radicalization towards political Islamism*. In the Control on the other hand, the predictive success of cultural RD shows rather mixed results and its problems to explain why four out of eight subjects revealing cultural RD do not actually radicalise weakens its strength. Moreover, A1, B1 and B8 constitute three subjects where cultural RD strongly fails to predict the respective outcomes and indicate that cultural RD is not a necessary cause for radicalization. Yet, A1 and B1 are potential outliers with respect to both, socio-economic as well as cultural RD and while looking at the results without both adds support to socio-economic RD as well, it greatly increases the appeal of the second hypothesis (H2). Overall, it may be concluded that cultural RD appears as a strong causal factor predicting radicalization towards Islamism as it appears far more relevant than socio-economic RD. In the following, a more fine-grained analysis of the results along the relevant dimensions theoretically identified for cultural RD will be provided. To recall, the three categories operationalizing cultural RD are “The Recognition of Basic needs”, “The Respect for Autonomy” and a “Recognition of the Contribution to Society”.

The Recognition of Basic Needs

Perceptions that basic needs of the in-group were not adequately recognized could primarily be related to developments affecting the security of Muslims. Main sources of this were perceptions of an increasing hostility towards Muslims overall revealed in public debates on Islam and Muslims and the recent, racially motivated murders of ten people by an extremist right-wing group more specifically. A deep sense of insecurity was raised by seven and a more vague feeling of discomfort among two subjects in the Islamist group when discussing potential security threats the perceived increase in anti-Muslim racism entailed for Muslims at large, which contrasted with three subjects in the Control expressing concerns. In addition to the immediate threat posed by right-wing extremists, the German state failed terribly in dealing with the clearance of these murders, with suspicions initially focussing on the family and friends of the victims and then the Turkish Mafia while right-wing groups were not investigated at all (Adler, 2012). The deep disappointment with the German state in this matter was largely shared by both groups, but only three subjects in the Islamist group also suspected the German state as a whole to be indifferent towards murders against Muslims. Different from the socio-economic realm, the identification with the in-group of Muslims assumed a more global dimension when addressing cultural RD. Hence, when asked whether they felt that the most basic needs of Muslims were respected, four out of the eleven

subjects reported how the global “Ummah¹³” was seen to be exposed to extreme suffering by “the West”, which either directly caused this suffering in Iraq, Afghanistan or Palestine.

TABLE III: Cultural RD – Predicted and Actual Outcomes

	<u>Interviews</u>	<u>Cultural RD</u>	<u>Predicted Outcome</u>	<u>Actual Outcome</u>	<u>Score</u>
Political Islamism DV = 1	A 1	Low	Low	High	--
	A 2	High	High	Very high	+
	A 3	High	High	High	++
	A 4	Very high	High	High	+
	A 5	Very high	Very high	Very high	++
	A 6	Very high	Very high	Very high	++
	A 7	High	High	High	++
	A 8	High	High	Very high	+
	A 9	High	High	Very high	+
	A 10	Very high	Very high	High	+
	A 11	Very high	Very high	Very high	++
	A 12	Very high	Very high	High	+
No Islamism DV = 0	B 1	Very high	Very high	Very low	--
	B 2	Very low	Very low	Very low	++
	B 3	High	High	Low	-
	B 4	High	High	Low	-
	B 5	Low	Low	Very low	+
	B 6	Low	Low	Very low	+
	B 7	Low	Low	Very low	+
	B 8	High	High	Very low	--

Legend for values on DV (Islamism)

- Very High Presence of an all-encompassing ideology diametrically opposed to *all* the values constitutive for a liberal democratic state + political actions + a high degree of commitment.
- High Presence of an all-encompassing ideology diametrically opposed to *three out of the four* values constitutive for a liberal democratic state + political actions + medium or high degree of commitment.
- Low Presence of attitudes that overlap with Islamist ideology. Low degree of radicalization + no action
- Very low Principle approval of the values constitutive for a liberal democratic state + no action.

Germany is increasingly implied in the construction of a hostile Other due to its military involvement in Afghanistan as part of the “International Security Assistance Force” (ISAF) (Steinberg, 2009) and three subject in the Islamist group also referred to Germany as an aggressor against the Ummah. According to **A9**,

“Our identification was with the Muslim world at large – especially Palestine as part of the Muslim land. When it came to the situation of the Ummah, speeches were always highly emotional! [...] It must have been around that time when 9/11 happened and Germany joined in that it was more and more seen as a source of our suffering. Suddenly you start researching and find a whole lot of links backing up that argument. Germany fighting Muslims in Afghanistan, Germany financing Israel, German soldiers in Uzbekistan and so on..”

Among the Control group, reference to the suffering of the global Ummah was made by one subject (**B3**) only who, himself a Palestinian born in a Jordanian refugee camp, said that Western support for Israeli crimes was an immediate attack on him. A final source of deeply felt discontent, even immediate attack, clusters around the caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed. References were made explicitly to those published in the Danish daily newspaper “Jyllands Posten” in 2005, the film “Innocence of Muslims” originating in the US in 2012 and caricatures and caricatures shown by the German right-wing party “Pro Germany” during demonstrations. Again, the Islamist group showed a considerable higher concern with the dissemination of such images: while six reported strong discontent, two felt extremely offended by the production and dissemination of the images. As illustrated by **A11**, the overriding idea was that in Germany it is “*totally fine to insult the Prophet Muhammed Peace and Blessings be upon him*”. Because of the admiration of as well as the deep identification with the Prophet as a main guide for everyday life, the dissemination of the caricatures were perceived as a direct attack on the in-group, even the person in question. For instance, **A8** said:

“We try to follow the Prophet as closely as possible. We try to walk, dress and think like him. We feel his pain and admire every single detail of his being. Also, we are not allowed to imagine his face. Can you imagine how the defamations insult us?”

In social psychology a phenomenon where a person closely observes and follows the actions of some desired Other to the extent that this other person literally becomes a part of the self-concept is referred to as the “spy-glass effect” (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007) – an effect that may explain the nature of the offence felt. In the Control, **B1** felt very offended, seeing in the dissemination “a try to ridicule Orientals” and **B3** saying it “is completely tasteless to make such kind of jokes”, but the extent of aggression and blame on the German society was absent.

Respect for Autonomy

The perception that the autonomy of Muslims was not sufficiently recognized resulted from negative reactions towards religiously bound practices and life-styles on behalf of the mainstream society. Eight in the Islamist and half of the Control diagnosed a general rejection of religion as something supposedly inferior or backward. Exemplary expressions are of this were the highly normatively charged headscarf debate, insulting reactions towards the wearing of a longer beard and a devaluation of religious prayer at the workplace. Equally, **A10** frames the decision to wear the headscarf as a liberation, referring to the forced taking off of the headscarf in Turkey (the country of her parent’s origin) under

Kemal Attatürk. As she is the first in her family to “rediscover the pure Islam”, the wearing of the headscarf is an expression of self-determination. For **A2**, the greatest problems stemmed from the asserted hesitance of German schools to accommodate for religiously prescribed necessities. Among those are the celebration of Islamic festivities and the separation between boys and girls during physical education. Despite ongoing functions as an Imam and religious teacher in Cologne, the lack of such schools in Germany made A2 move to The Netherlands and to enrol his children there.

Acknowledgement of Contribution to Society

The third pillar of cultural RD as defined by my theory focusses on the degree to which subjects feel the contributions by their in-group to the overall society are acknowledged. Comparing the outcomes of the Islamist and Control group, a qualitative difference in these perceptions comes to the fore. While eight out of twelve subjects overall reported a strong or very strong sense that their in-group’s contribution was not acknowledged adequately, only two out of eight subjects in the Control voiced a concern. Especially noticeable was the difference with respect to a lacking appreciation of the Islamic heritage in Europe, where subjects in the Islamist group were much more informed than their counterpart. With varying degrees of specific historical knowledge, there was a wide-spread understanding that the Prophet Mohammed had initiated an epoch of flourishing Islamic culture. During the interviews, A1, A2, A3, A9 and A10 referred to historical facts such as cultural achievements during Islamic rule in southern Europe (especially in Spain). Next to Western European ignorance in terms of their own genesis, subjects regretted the fact that they were treated as full citizens only when it comes to paying taxes, but not so much when it comes to their rights of political participation. In contrast to the section above, the perception of lacking recognition for their in-group’s contribution through hard work was articulated by two out of eight subjects in the Control and only one subject in the Islamist group.

To sum up, cultural RD is a significant causal factor explaining radicalization towards Islamism on its own and relatively stronger in comparison with socio-economic RD theory. The lack of recognition for basic needs, a disrespect for the autonomy of Muslims and, to a lesser extent, the perceived lack of recognition for the contribution of Muslims to the greater German community seem to create a desire for a positive identity at critical stages of the radicalization journey towards political Islamism.

Interaction, Alternative Explanations and Beyond - A Closer Look at the Findings

Having established the greater explanatory power of cultural RD (H1) in comparison with socio-economic RD (H2), it is now time to take a critical look at these findings in order to address possible interaction effects and alternative explanations. As to the first, the data reveal that a combination of cultural and socio-economic RD does neither increase the likelihood of becoming an Islamist, nor does it seem to impact the relative degree of radicalization. While theoretically a combination of both IVs could potentially explain how a “high” degree of cultural RD and a “high” degree of socio-economic RD sums up the grievances to ultimately result in “very high” degrees of Islamism, no such pattern can be deduced from the data. Informed by the most important works outlined in the literature review above, alternative explanations invoke structural conditions, the seducing ability of social networks and micro-level explanations. According to structural explanations, radicalization towards Islamism can be conceptualized as a search for a positive in-group identity and meaning (Kepel, 2004; Meng, 2004). Among second and third generation

immigrants, the lack of identification with the majority society on the one hand and the own, more traditional, family structures on the other creates a “dual sense of non-belonging” (Roy, 2004). Yet, because an equal number of individuals with migration background were in their 2nd or 3rd generation of migration in both groups, migration background on its own does not capture any variation. Rather than offering competing explanations, structural approaches can be seen to operate on a higher level of generality, while socio-economic and especially cultural RD specify why an identification with the majority society is not a viable option.

Social movement theory (SMT) highlights how social networks can be a determinant factor in the rise of Islamism. Since I have not controlled for the entering point of Muslims into Islamist groups, the importance social networks, frame alignment and recruitment cannot be examined on the present data and thus not be rejected. Theoretically, the presence of social networks and charismatic leaders acting as recruiters could provide an explanation for cases where relative deprivation is absent all together (e.g. A1). Yet, two observations question the pervasiveness of such explanations with regard to my data. First of all, several subjects in the Control group indicated their knowledge of Islamist preachers and mosques, two among them also mentioned the presence of Islamism among people they knew directly. If one takes the omnipresence of Islamist content on the internet into the picture, it seems that Islamist networks and recruiters are very much accessible for a large share in both groups and therefore cannot wholly explain radicalization of a minority. Secondly, in line with a finding by Viola Neu (Neu, 2011), the present analysis made clear how several subjects in the Control group share the presence of cognitive frames that were similar to those of the Islamists. Yet, social movement theory is not equipped to explain why some radicalise further up to the point where they act upon these frames while others do not. Further research needs to determine to what extent frame-alignment and recruitment efforts are variables that mediate the effect of cultural RD on political Islamism. Yet, as mediating variables no biases will be induced by not controlling for them more comprehensively.

On an individual level of analysis, it is noticeable how the present findings are in line with a study by Pfeiffer, who found that a traditional-authoritarian socialization substantially increases the likelihood of becoming Islamist because a traditional conception of the male role as the head of the family and violence as an educational tool can be expected to lead to the adoption of specific images of masculinity that legitimize violence (Pfeiffer, 2010). The problematic argumentative leap from traditional family values alone to Islamism in Pfeiffer’s study can be overcome by cultural RD theory. It is the connection between an authoritarian socialization and an increasing likelihood to perceive a strong attack on the in-group’s self-worth that provides new explanatory content to Pfeiffer’s empirical findings. An additional variable that came to mind during the interviewing was the role of personality traits. One subject (A9) explicitly mentioned that certain people within his group were looking for excitement. Moreover, a tendency for sensation seeking could interact with Lützinger’s conflictual socialization. Next to explaining a part of political Islamism on their own, these variables might also account for the degrees in magnitude which cultural RD failed to predict.

A final question needs to address whether political Islamism could cause socio-economic and/or cultural relative deprivation. In fact, such a connection cannot be ruled out altogether, since political Islamist leaders invoke the presumed injustice and suffering in their propaganda and hence being part of an Islamist group will most likely also heighten a sense for relative deprivation generally. However, prevailing theoretical arguments as well as hints to the causal mechanism outlined in the present study minimize such time-causality

concerns. Following Roy, but also Sageman and Wiktorowicz notion of a personal crisis preceding radicalization, the denial of access to a German identity should *precede* the identity search. As I hypothesise, experiences of cultural RD are an important component of that crisis. Yet again, more research is needed to increase our confidence in this mechanism.

V. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

A variety of theoretical works exist that seek to grasp the causes of political Islamism in Western Europe. Yet, existing approaches are not able to fully explain the phenomenon since they are theoretically limited and because conclusions are most often not based on primary data. To the author's knowledge, the present study is the first to systematically test the links between socio-economic as well as cultural relative deprivation on radicalization processes. In order to ground the results in empirical knowledge, a series of twenty in-depth interviews were conducted. The results obtained from a structured, focused comparison between an Islamist and a Control group indicate that cultural relative deprivation is a strong predictor of radicalization towards political Islamism. Moreover, cultural RD achieves to explain variation in the dependent variable much better than socio-economic RD. Potential data bias, the small sample size, the failure to explain two outliers, omission to control for all possibly relevant variables and the fact that a reverse causality cannot be completely ruled out strongly suggest treating these findings with caution. Yet, confidence in the results stems from four main sources: First of all, they have been arrived at by a careful application of Mill's "Method of Difference" which allows for rigorous scientific comparison. Secondly, cultural RD not only succeeded to explain variation in dichotomous terms but was also able to explain the degree of political Islamism to a considerable extent. Thirdly, the results resonate well with existing theoretical accounts on radicalization, particularly the concepts of "personal crisis" and "cognitive opening" from social movement theory as well as Roy's hypothesised denial of integration into the mainstream society's collective identity. In addition, it supports the empirical finding that Islamism correlates highly with traditional-authoritarian socialization. Finally, the interviews indicated the presence of steps hypothesised by the causal argument underlying cultural RD.

Now, what does the finding that political Islamism in Western Europe is in large part caused by a search for recognition, orientation and a positive social identity mean? In terms of future research, more work is needed to examine each of the causal steps connecting the independent and dependent variable in more depth. Which individual level factors explain the different subjective perceptions exactly? What are the kinds of experiences that increase perceptions of cultural RD more specifically? What deters subjects to radicalise even where cultural RD is experienced? Which impact do group dynamics have on this process? Some important variables suggested by the present paper include opportunities for the formation of a positive self-image provided by the social environment, the interaction between traditional-authoritarian socialization with concepts of honour and humiliation, the development of critical thinking abilities and finally the relationship between cultural RD as cognitive opening and frame-alignment with radicalized social movements. Part of the difficulties in answering such questions for radicalization processes among Muslims in Western Europe stem from the restricted access to Islamist groups, the identification of suitable control groups – e.g. individuals who are exposed to the same influences but do not radicalise, ethical considerations and the geographic boundedness of most studies. Yet, pursuing the path of participant observation and qualitative interviewing of Islamists, former Islamists and subjects in their immediate social environment seems suitable. While difficult

to realize, a research design comparing Islamists and Control groups in several Western European countries promises to be of extraordinary value.

In terms of policy, two major implications follow from the here presented findings: the need to de-construct discriminatory cultural structures within Western European societies and the need to systematically further the recognition of Muslim identities institutionally. Both may be broken down into a range of more specific policies. First of all, it is crucial to realize the interdependence between a perceived lack of collective recognition on the one, and the denial of that recognition on the other hand. There is a discrepancy in Western European countries between the proclaimed values of freedom, democracy and equality of opportunity on the one hand and the wide-spread presence of a contemporary cultural fundamentalism and xenophobia towards Muslims on the other. The interviews revealed how Muslims face a politicization of their ethnic, cultural and especially religious identities where – in a context of asymmetrical power resources – they are increasingly constructed as the culturally inferior and potentially threatening “Other”. The narrow security focus of most existing studies amplifies this perception of threat. Hence, preventing the emergence of Islamism should start here, with the generation of a more differentiated view on Islamic culture and religion in academic studies, government reports, the media and - perhaps most crucially - in schools. This includes a representation of the diversity of Muslim life in Western Europe, knowledge about moderate, liberal or reform-oriented Muslim scholars as well as a better understanding of Islamic history and culture in different countries in the world. Moreover, a differentiated view on Islam also entails to avoid the essentialist discourse advocated by Bernard Lewis (Lewis, 1990) or Samuel Huntington’s „Clash of Civilizations“ (Huntington, 1996) by all means and to recognize how attitudes and behaviours are the product of complex interactions among a variety of fluctuating influences. Even where attitudes such as homophobia are justified in Islamic terms, their origin might in fact have more to do with traditional-authoritarian socialization.

Crucially, Muslim’s desire for social recognition implies acknowledging the meaning that religion may have for their self-identity. If subjects who care deeply about their religious convictions get the feeling that their religion is fundamentally put into question, the likely reaction is defence and counter-attack. Hence, it will be especially important for politicians, social workers, school teachers and state officials on all levels to reflect upon the nature of their potential scepticism towards Islam and religion in general. Where conflicts with certain positions of Muslims arise in personal or public discourse, the focus should always be on concrete situations, actions or attitudes rather than Islam as a whole. Integrating Muslims into these institutions on the other hand would allow for role-models to emerge. Lastly, public institutions should continuously enhance independent and critical thinking abilities of individuals on all sides. Ultimately, it is the ability to reflect on an existing diversity of norms, values and life-styles which allows the subject to resist notions of an exclusive access to truth and thus makes for the most effective prevention of political extremism.

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