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Religious quest orientation and anti-gay sentiment: Nuancing the relationship of negative attitudes towards homosexuality amongst Muslim and Christian youngsters.

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Paradox



Love YOUR
neighbor
as yourself.
MATTHEW 22:39





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Measuring religiosity

- **Religious identification**
- **Religious behavior**
- **Self-rated religiosity**
- **Religious orientations (intrinsic, extrinsic, fundamentalism, quest, ...)**



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Religion & anti-gay sentiment

<i>Religiosity Type</i>	<i>No. of Effect Sizes</i>	<i>Sum of Sample Sizes</i>	<i>d.</i>
Fundamentalism	17	5,237	-.995 ^b
Frequency of attendance	31	35,917	-.686 ^c
Christian orthodoxy	13	3,820	-.610 ^c
Self-rating of religiosity	17	4,979	-.486 ^d
Quest orientation	10	3,078	.483 ^d
Intrinsic orientation	12	2,880	-.482 ^d
Extrinsic orientation	10	2,713	-.074 ^e



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Quest orientation & anti-gay sentiments

Limitations of previous research:

- Small college or university samples in North America
 - Less educated? Outside North America?
- Partial correlations
- Only amongst Christian students
 - Other religions? Muslims?



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Our study

Central research question:

How are self-rated religiosity, religious behavior, religious quest orientation, and authoritarianism related to anti-gay sentiment among Christian and Muslim youngsters (aged 14-23) in Flanders



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Data & method

Data – youth research platform

- Gathered in 2013 in 87 schools in Flanders and Brussels (Dutch-speaking schools)
- 4618 youngsters (higher secondary education aged 14-23 years old)
- Religious identification:
 - 41% Christian (n=1904),
 - 20% as Muslim (n=930)
 - 37% as non-believers
 - 2% as belonging to another religion (e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism, New age, etc.)

=> For our analysis we only use the Christian and Muslim sample

Variable*	Christians		Muslims	
	M (SD)	Frequency	M (SD)	Frequency
Gender (female)		53.33%		49.26%
Age	16.76 (1.43)		17.50 (1.70)	
Educational track				
General		50.30%		26.38%
Technical		29.72%		34.68%
Vocational		19.98%		38.94%
At least one of the parents is highly educated (tertiary education)		68.70%		34.82%
Dutch language use	/		1.13 (1.18)	
Ethnicity				
Turkish		/		28.85%
Moroccan		/		51.22%
Other		/		19.93%
Regularly goes to church (Christians) or Strictly following religious prescriptions (Muslims)		10.33%		53.77%
Religious quest orientation ^a	49.11 (22.72)		33.22 (23.96)	
Self-reported religiosity ^a	4.31 (2.68)		8.93 (1.73)	
Authoritarianism ^a	42.94 (19.55)		48.25 (22.62)	
Attitude towards homosexuality ^a	21.55 (19.75)		46.30 (25.13)	
N		1904		930

Table 2. Multilevel analysis of demographic and religious variables on negative attitudes towards homosexuality amongst Christian youngsters

	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Gender (female)		-0.34***	-0.32***	-0.33***	-0.33***	-0.33***
Age		-0.00	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01
Educational track (ref. General)						
Technical		0.11***	0.10**	0.10***	0.10***	0.09***
Vocational		0.20***	0.18***	0.16***	0.16***	0.14***
At least one of the parents is highly educated (tertiary education)		0.04	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.04
Authoritarianism			0.17***	0.16***	0.15***	0.15***
Self-rated religiosity				0.19***	0.12***	0.14***
Regularly goes to church					0.17***	0.16***
Religious quest orientation						-0.09***
ICC	16.1%	10.3%	9.0%	6.1%	5.8%	5.5%
Student-level R ²	0.7%	11.7%	14.1%	16.5%	19.0%	19.6%
School-level R ²	3.9%	47.3%	55.8%	71.6%	74.2%	75.6%
Total R ²		17.5%	20.8%	25.3%	27.9%	28.6%

Cell entries are standardized beta coefficients; * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 3. Multilevel analysis of demographic and religious variables on negative attitudes towards homosexuality amongst Muslim youngsters

	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Gender (female)		-0.29***	-0.28***	-0.29***	-0.29***	-0.29***
Age		-0.03	-0.04	-0.04	-0.05	-0.05
Educational track (ref. General)						
Technical		0.16***	0.16***	0.13**	0.12**	0.12**
Vocational		0.17***	0.17***	0.14**	0.14**	0.14**
At least one parent highly educated		-0.03	-0.03	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05
Dutch language use		-0.08*	-0.08	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05
Ethnicity (ref. Turkish)						
Moroccan		-0.18***	-0.18***	-0.18***	-0.18***	-0.18***
Other		-0.22***	-0.22***	-0.17***	-0.16***	-0.16***
Authoritarianism			0.07	0.07*	0.08*	0.08*
Self-rated religiosity				0.20***	0.16***	0.14***
Strictly follows religious prescriptions					0.11**	0.10*
Religious quest orientation						-0.08*
ICC	7.6%	4.6%	4.5%	4.2%	3.7%	4.0%
Student-level R ²		14.8%	15.1%	18.5%	19.0%	19.7%
School-level R ²		49.9%	51.7%	56.1%	62.5%	58.9%
Total R ²		17.5%	17.9%	21.3%	22.3%	22.6%



Conclusion

- Muslim youngsters report more prejudice against homosexuality than Christian youngsters
- Factors that predict anti-gay sentiment are similar for Christians and Muslims
 - gender, low educational tracks, high self-rated religiosity, authoritarianism and quest orientation



Conclusion

- What do our findings mean in the context of a highly secularised Western country?
 - Classical secularization thesis
 - Religions will disappear with increasing education and modernization
 - Religious Immigrants will eventually assimilate to secular way of life
 - Two problems:
 - Only north western European phenomena
 - Insulting to religious people, religion is seen as completely incompatible with secularist ideals

=> Key question: How can we promote a tolerant and respectful attitude towards homosexuals and other minority groups in a way that does not stigmatize religious people.



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Conclusion

- Habermas post-secularist perspective
 - Accept that religions are here to stay
 - Secularists and religious people need to tolerate each other
 - This requires a shared and complementary learning process
 - Secularist side: refrain from overdrawing scientific knowledge
 - Religious side: develop reflexive religion



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Conclusion

- A religious quest orientation gives hope for the development of tolerance from within a religion which does not require the abolishment of the religious identity to be in congruence with secular values.
- The crucial question for future research then becomes how can a religious quest orientation be cultivated?



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Conclusion

