Does Religious Education contribute to social cohesion?

Empirical research and conceptual perspectives.

Manfred L. Pirner

Friedrich-Alexander-University

Erlangen-Nürnberg, GERMANY

FRIEDRICH-ALEXANDER
UNIVERSITÄT
ERLANGEN-NÜRNBERG
PHILOSOPHISCHE FAKULTÄT
UND FACHBEREICH THEOLOGIE

Research Unit
for Public Religion
and Education

RUPRE

Forschungsstelle
für Öffentliche
Religionspädagogik

Does Religious Education contribute to social cohesion?
Empirical research and conceptual perspectives.

1. Social cohesion as a major problem of pluralistic Western societies

2. Does 'religion' contribute to social cohesion?

3. Does RE contribute to social cohesion?

4. Overlapping consensus and public theology: a conceptual model

5. Conclusion: some suggestions for RE practice

1. Social cohesion as a major problem of pluralistic Western societies

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung

ENGLISH BEKANNTMACHUNGEN ÜBERSICHT PRESSE DATENSCHUTZ GEBÄRDENSPRACHE

Bildung   Forschung   Europa und die Welt   Ü

🏠 | Aktuelles ▾ | Presse ▾ | Pressemitteilungen

28.09.2018 | PRESSEMITTEILUNG: 093/2018

„Institut für gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt" startet

Karliczek: „Den Zusammenhalt unserer Gesellschaft stärken"

Institute for social cohesion is about to start
Karliczek (German Federal Minister of Education and Research):
"Promoting cohesion of our society"

Some major reasons

- globalization (social divide, migration)
- digitalization (digital divide, filter bubbles, hate speech)
- pluralization (religions, world views, cultures)
- polarization (economically, culturally)
- increasing complexity (feeling of excessive demand and of being overpowered)

  >> populism as 'bad didactics' =
      oversimplification and anti-intellectualism

What is "social cohesion"?

How much cohesion or integration is desirable?

Three dimensions of social cohesion

(Bertelsmann Foundation, 2012):

1. People feel emotionally attached to their community.

2. People interact with each other.

3. People participate in political and social processes and take responsibility for the common good.

What is "social cohesion"?

How much cohesion or integration is desirable?

Armin Nassehi, professor of sociology:

„Integration does **not** mean to adjust to general norms and values.

It means the simultaneous co-existence of diverse life forms while recognizing strangeness and distance."

What is "social cohesion"?

How much cohesion or integration is desirable?

Major aim of RE:

Promote students' ability to

value and constructively deal

with pluralism/diversity/differences

(„Pluralitätsfähigkeit",

„Differenzkompetenz")

Religiöse Orientierung gewinnen

Evangelischer Religionsunterricht als Beitrag zu einer pluralitätsfähigen Schule

Eine Denkschrift des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland

EKD

What is "social cohesion"?

How much cohesion or integration is desirable?

"Gaining religious orientation.

Protestant RE as contribution to a school that is competent in dealing with pluralism

An official statement by the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany"

(2014)

Religiöse Orientierung gewinnen

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EKD

What is social cohesion?

How much cohesion or integration is desirable?

pluralism/diversity <> heterogeneity/inequality/injustice

↓ ↓

accept/appreciate/shape <> overcome/fight

Justice as a precondition for cohesion!

Justice as issue of Religious Education!

Heterogeneity as „central category of a timely religious education"

(Claudia Gärtner 2015, Bernhard Grümme 2017)

A little bit of theory

(Voluntary) civic associations serve as sources of meaning and social engagement – which are necessary for a vibrant democratic life. (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000)

Associated life contributes to the "social capital" = "any facet of social relations that serve to enable members of society to work together to accomplish collective goals" (Smidt, p. 2).

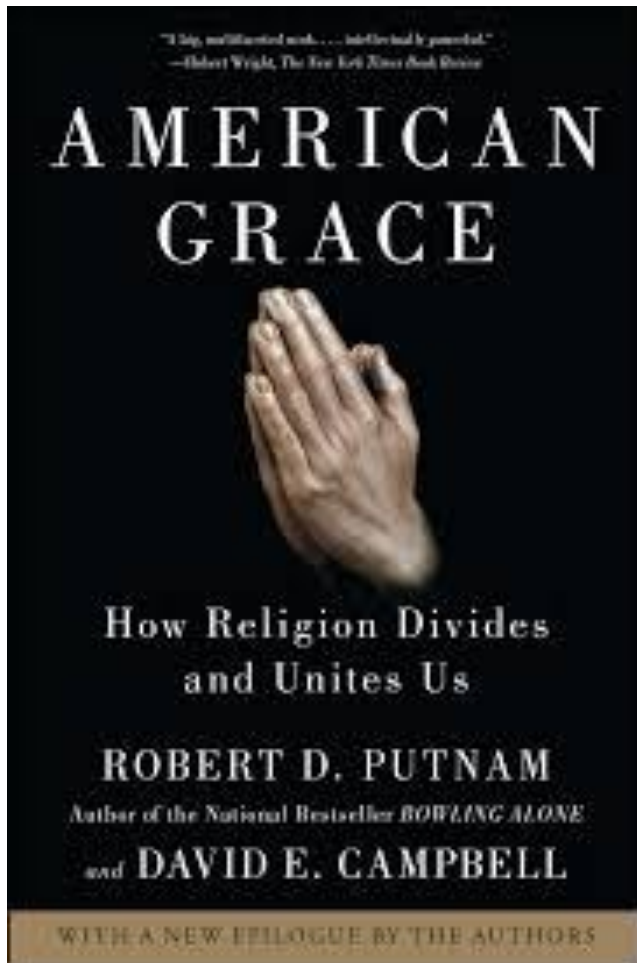*bonding* social capital = relationships within a community
bridging social capital = relationships beyond one's community
For democratic societies both are vital !
Social trust is the basic element

Key findings from empirical studies

Putnam & Campbell, 2010:

Ambivalent role of religion in the US:
divisive and bridging

Key findings from empirical studies
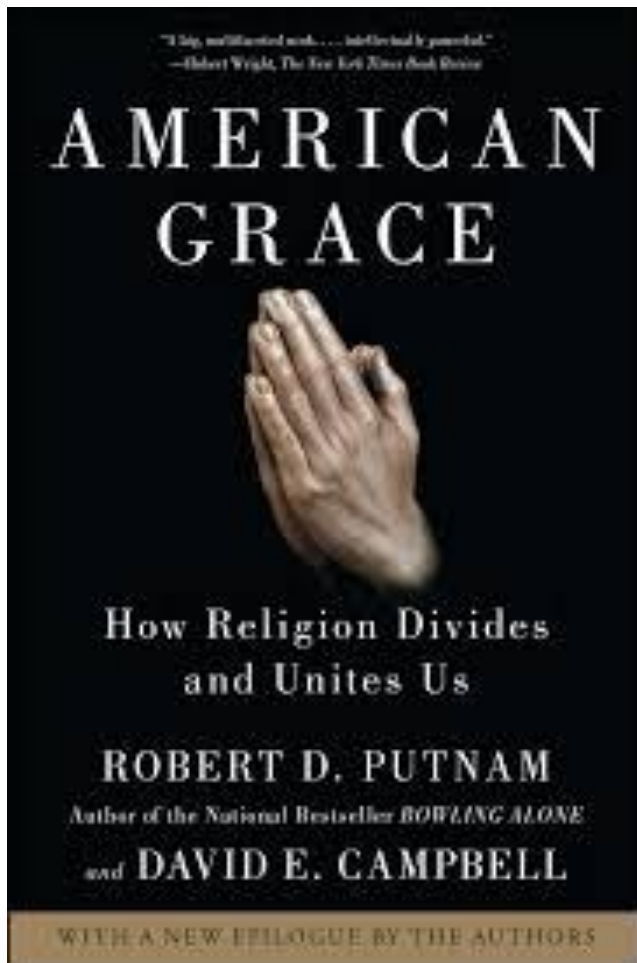
72 % of US-Americans say the country is divided along religious lines

93 % … along racial lines
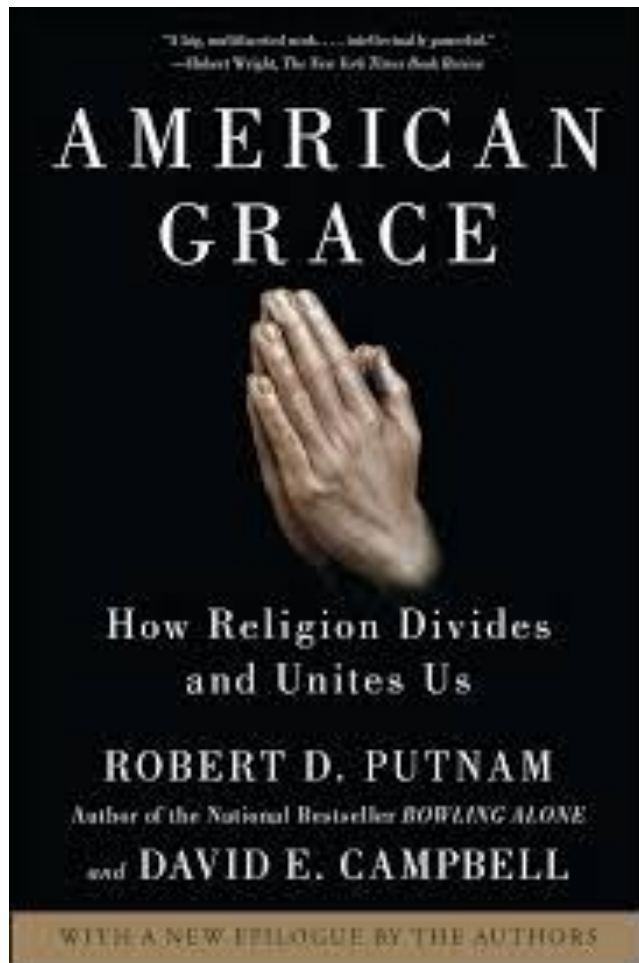96 % … along economic lines
97 % … along political lines

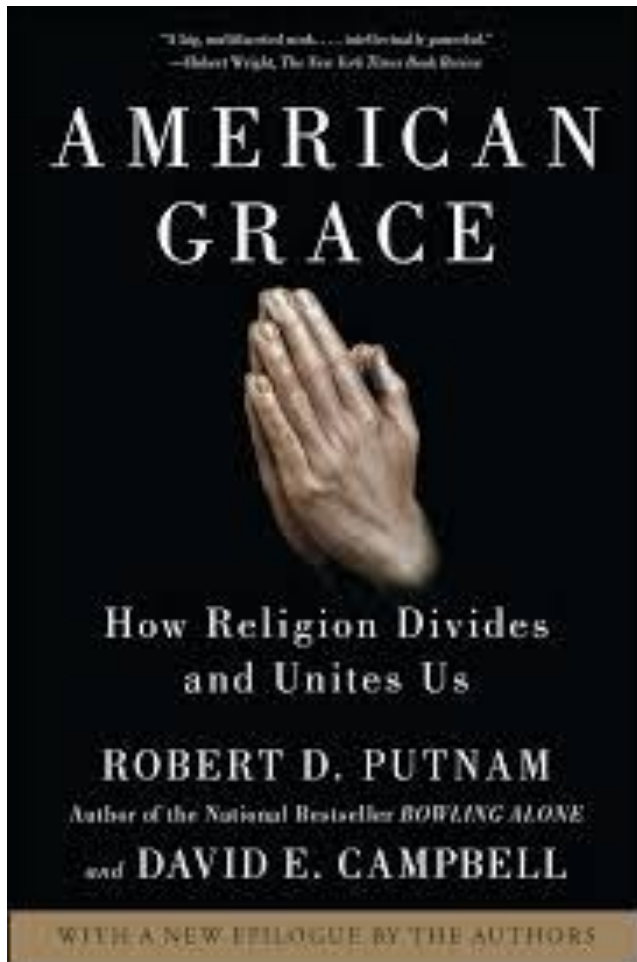Putnam & Campbell, 2010, p. 516

Key findings from empirical studies

The "Aunt Susan" principle

Between 87 to 93 % believe that people of other religions can go to heaven.

Putnam & Campbell, 2010, p. 535

Key findings from empirical studies

"How has America solved the puzzle of religious pluralism – the coexistence of religious diversity and devotion? …
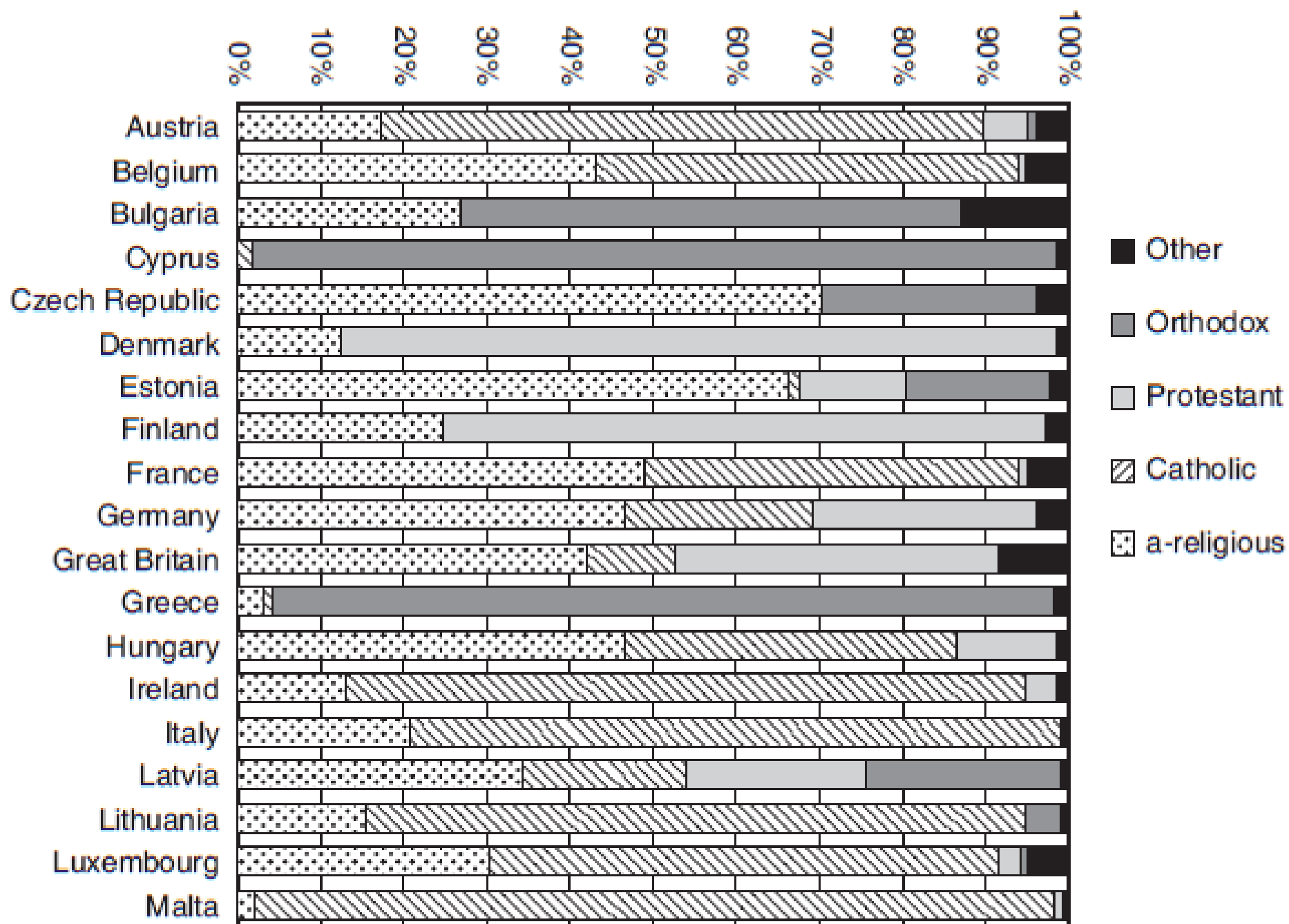By creating a web of interlocking personal relationships among people of many different faiths."

Putnam & Campbell, 2010, p. 550

Key findings from empirical studies

How about Europe?

Pickel & Schnabel, 2018
Data from European Social Survey (ESS) 2014 and
International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2008
(see also Traunmüller, 2014)

Key findings from empirical studies

Value orientation

- All denominations are negatively associated with stimulation, self-direction, universalism – and not significantly associated with benevolence!

- Religiousness is highly and positively associated with tradition, conformity and a preference for security

Common good only for insiders?

Key findings from empirical studies

Societal and generalized trust

- Catholics and respondents from other religions reveal less societal trust compared to non-affiliated respondents (similar findings: Tausch, 2017)

- Protestants and orthodox respondents do not differ from non-affiliated respondents

- Individual religious practices have no significant impact, while taking part in community activities increases trust clearly.

- Trust is higher in countries with clear religious majorities (mainly Scandinavian countries)

Key findings from empirical studies

Additional evidence from Germany
German Protestant Church Member Survey 2012
(Pickel, 2015)

- Protestants rate significantly higher concerning engagement in community activities and voluntary work compared to non-affiliated respondents

- They show a higher amount of social, generalized trust (50%) in comparison to non-affiliated respondents (30 %)

Key findings from empirical studies
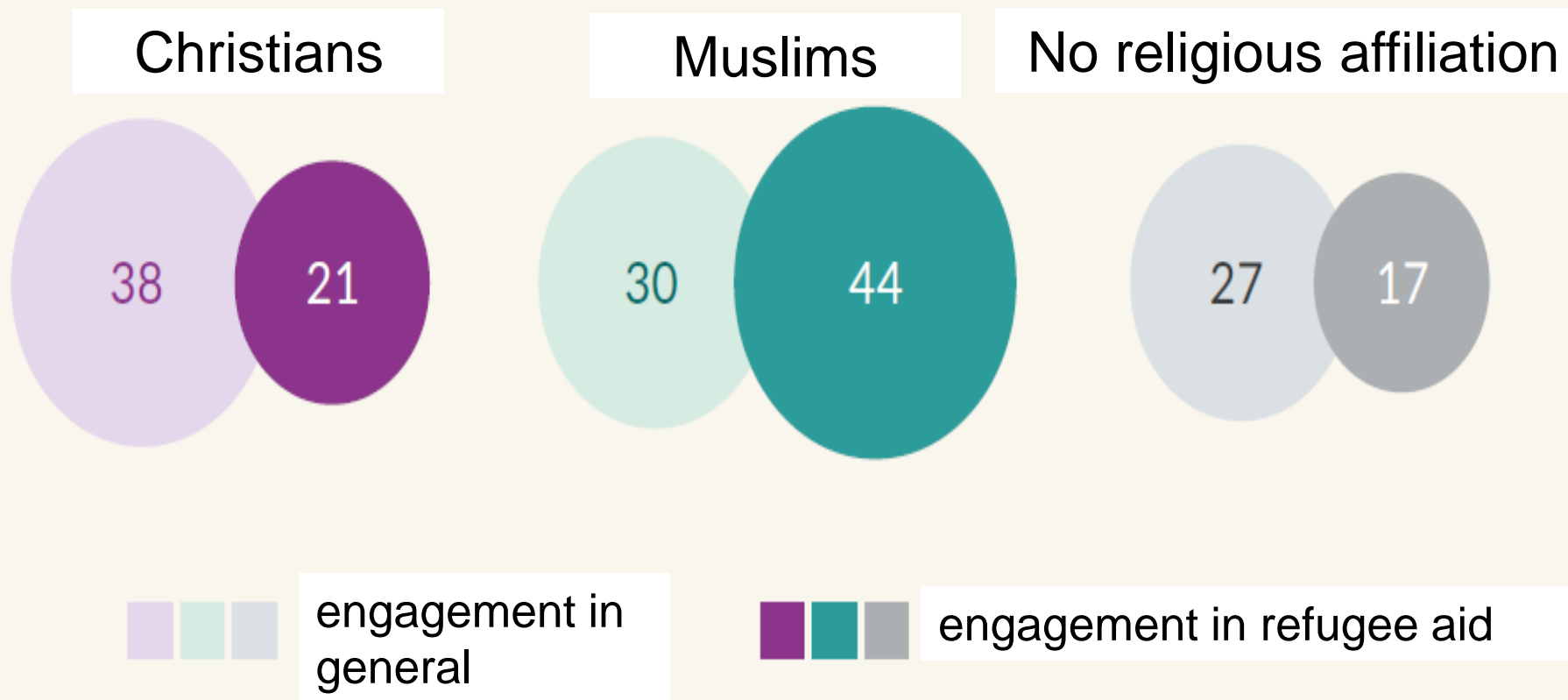
Additional evidence from Germany
Refugee aid
Han-Broich, 2012; Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017; Riegel, 2017

- A large quantum of voluntary work related to refugees takes place in the context of religious communities

- For many volunteers in refugees work their religious belief is one significant motivation (among others)

Voluntary engagement in general and in refugee aid X religious affiliation

(in %)

Christians

Muslims

No religious affiliation

38 21

30 44

27 17

engagement in general

engagement in refugee aid

BertelsmannStiftung

Signposts –
Policy and practice
for teaching
about religions and
non-religious world
views in intercultural
education

- published 2014
- edited by the European Wergeland Centre (EWC) on education for democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural awareness, and the Council of Europe (CoE)
- authored by Robert Jackson

Results from the international REDCo Research Project
(Religion in Education. A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European Countries, 2005-2009)

- Students wish for peaceful coexistence across differences, and **believe this to be possible**.

- For students peaceful coexistence depends on knowledge about each other's religions and world views and **sharing common interests as well as doing things together**.

- Students who learn about religious diversity in school are **more willing to have conversations about religions/beliefs with students of other backgrounds** than those who do not.

- Students **wish to avoid confict**: some of the religiously committed students feel vulnerable.

- Students want learning to take place in a **safe classroom environment** where there are agreed procedures for expression and discussion.

Results from the international REDCo Research Project (2005-2009)

On teachers:

- The personality and professionalism of the teacher is highly important

- especially their ***subject knowledge***: this can play a significant role in classroom interaction on religion and values. Well-informed teachers are better able to deal with student interventions

- Despite some students' stated wish to avoid confict, an overview of REDCo research argues that ***"conflict" can be used constructively in teaching and learning***.

- A key factor in the quality of dialogue is the ***relationship between the teacher and the students*** as shaped in previous work (mutual trust and respect, long-term interpersonal tensions and problems, the teacher's commitments, etc.)

- Discussions worked best when the teacher presented a topic as an ***open question***, rather than taking a particular stand.

- **Ground rules** are extremely important and should be developed together with the students.

Results from other European research

- Sweden: teachers try to avoid dialogue by students concerning beliefs and values since they cannot guarantee a respectful classroom atmosphere (Osbeck, 2009).

- Norway and England: intentions of dialogue about beliefs and values in the classroom can turn into disrespectful discussions with a degree of victimisation of religious minorities (Lied, 2011; Moulin, 2011).

- Bavaria, Germany: representative survey among the Bavarian population from 2017 (Pirner, 2019)

  - 46 % of all (65 % of very religious respondents) endorse strongly or rather strongly that RE helps students to understand other religions and worldviews (endorse partly: 32 %).
  - 46 % of all (70 % of very religious respondents) endorse strongly or rather strongly that RE contributes to tolerance and mutual understanding (endorse partly: 34 %)

Preliminary conclusion: 5 selected aspects

- Despite the contribution of religion(s) to social cohesion there seems to be a *lack of bridging social capital* (interaction and exchange with people with other religious or non-religious orientation).

- The question of a *common ground, ground rules and common criteria* for (critical) inter-worldview dialogue seems to be neglected.

- Concepts and views of interreligious dialogue and learning often seem too harmonistic; the positive potentials of *conflict and dispute are under-valued (democracy needs civilised quarrel!).*

- Research and RE practice seem to concentrate on inter-religious (or inter-worldview) learning, but not so much *on (joint or specific) contributions of religions to the common good* (students: "common interests", "doing things together").

- It remains conceptually unclear how to deal with the *double secularit*y – positional secularism of people and concepts / non-positional secularity of the state and its democratic and human rights values?

"How can *citizens* who remain *deeply divided* on religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines still maintain a just and stable democratic society?"

(John Rawls, Political Liberalism, 1993)

public reason
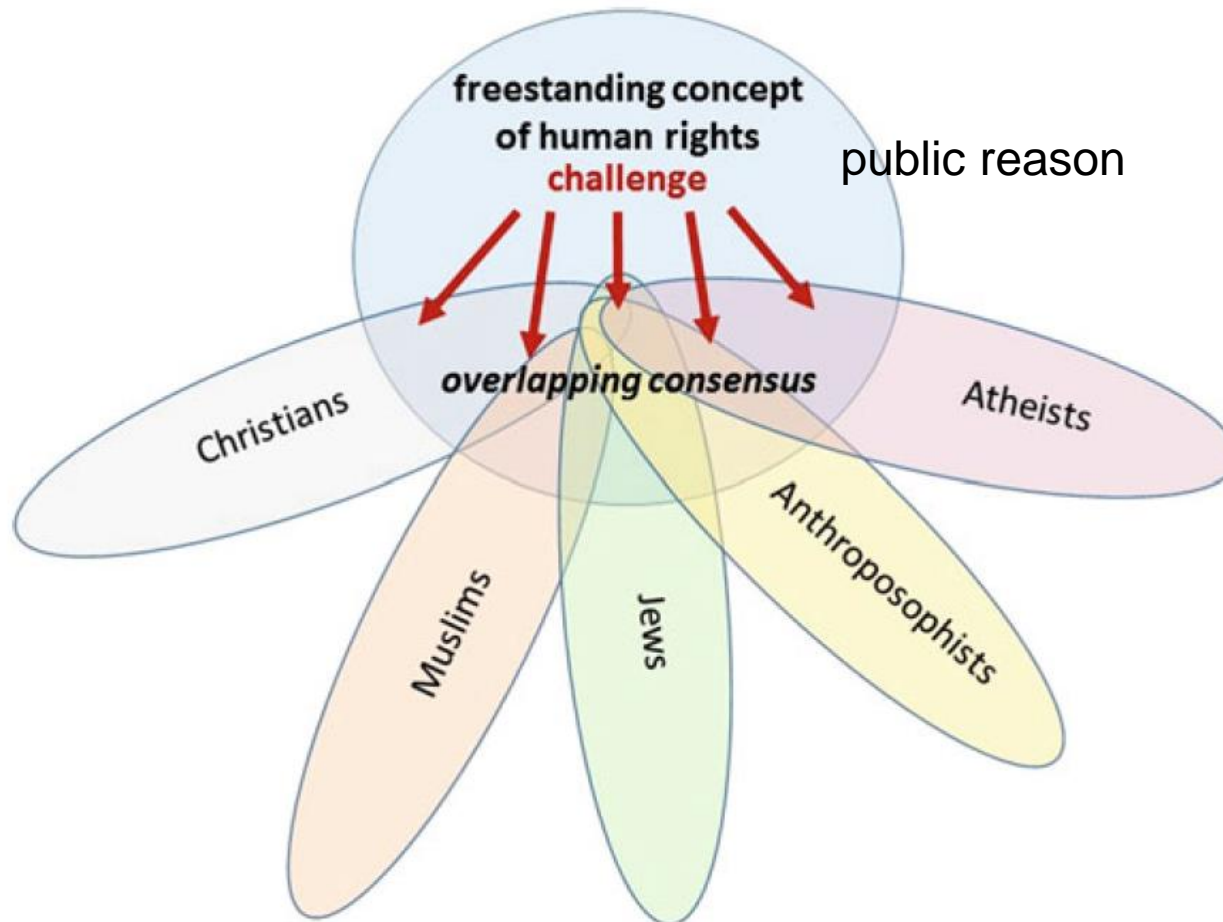
Figure developed according to Rawls, 1993/2005; 1999

Further developed and supplemented by
Jürgen Habermas (2008; 2017)

Complementary learning processes of religious and secular citizens

(see Pirner, 2016; 2018a; 2018b)

public theology

as religion-internal concept compatible with the idea of an overlapping consensus
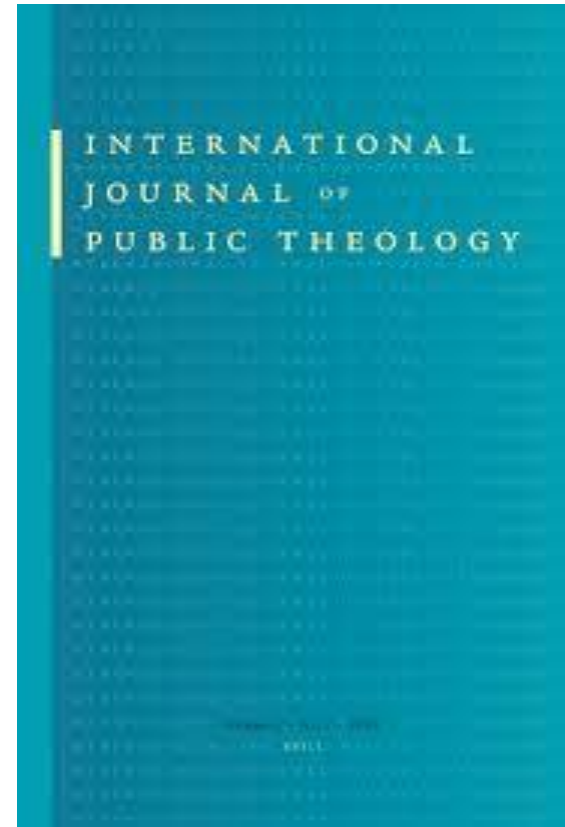
What is public theology?

- recognises religious and worldview pluralism
- affirms the restricted role of its own religious perspectives among others
- aims to make contributions from its own tradition as a benefit for all (for the common good)
- in a language that is understandable beyond its own religious community and with reference to common values

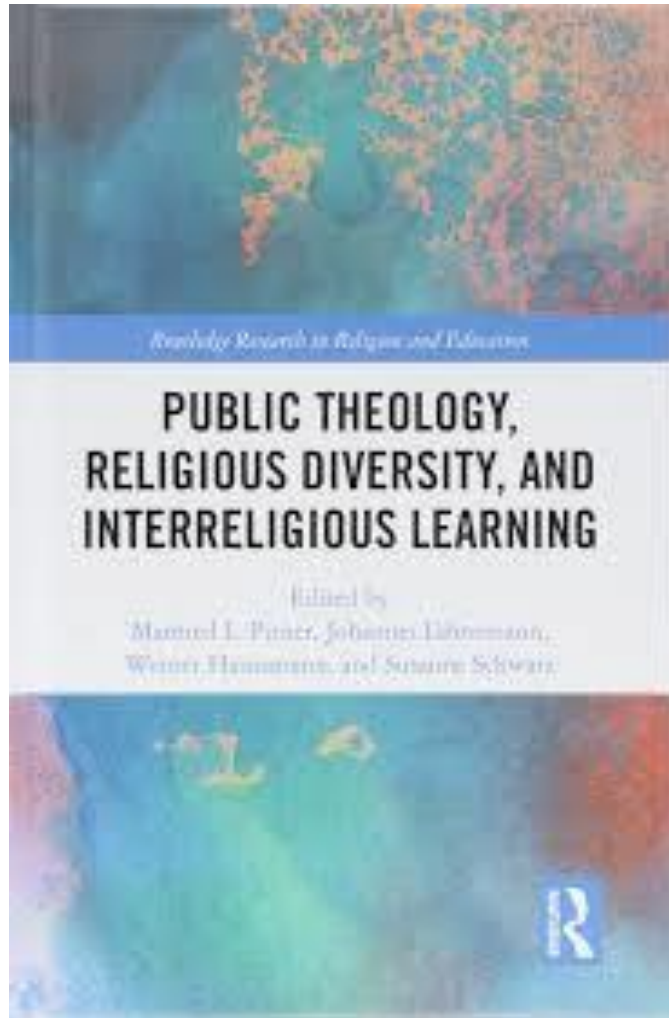**>> pub. theol. generates/supports bridging social capital**

public theology

an international, interdenominational and even inter-religious concept

4. Overlapping consensus and public theology: a conceptual model

PUBLIC THEOLOGY, RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY, AND INTERRELIGIOUS LEARNING

2018

PUBLIC THEOLOGY PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND EDUCATION
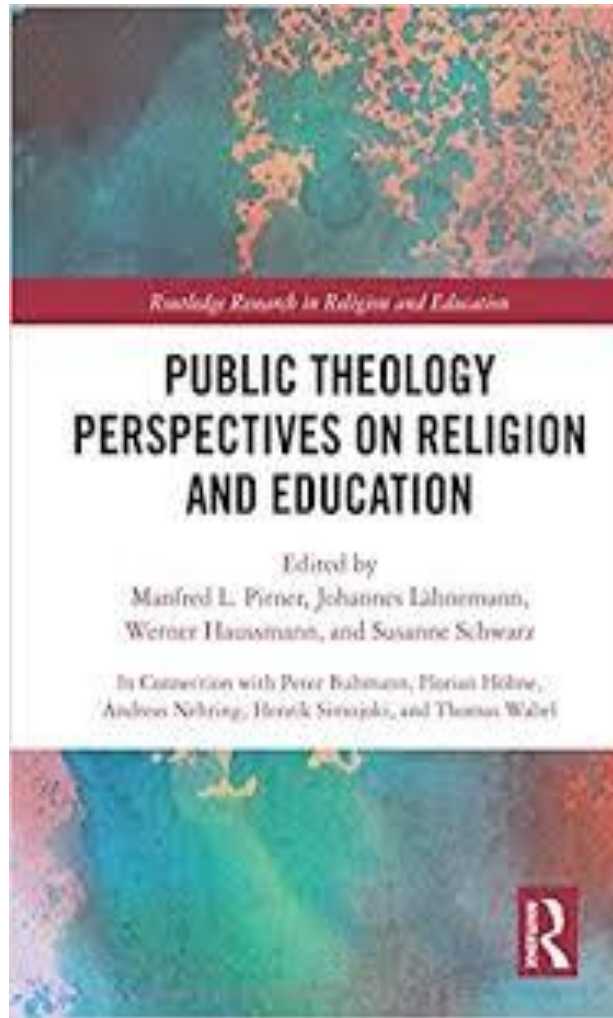
2019

Special Issue of the International Journal of Public Theology, 11(3): **PublicTheology Religion(s) Education**

2017

Examples of Christian public theology

Christian understanding of **social cohesion** as theologically based

- in the teachings of "love our neighbour" (Luke 10:27),

- the understanding of every human being as a creation by God in His image (Gen 1+2) and

- aspects of Christian community life (e.g. 1 Cor.)

Example of Christian public theology

Christian foundations of **human dignity and human rights**

- the understanding of every human being as a creation by God in His image (Gen 1+2)

- social law in ancient Israel

- prophecy of social justice in the Hebrew Bible

Example: Islamic RE in the Geschwister-Scholl Secondary School in Nuremberg

Reference to public theology and human rights, especially children's rights, as a key element of RE

- for the promotion of the bridging social capital of religion(s)

- as a common ground, offering basic criteria for a critical discussion of worldview and ethical issues

- as a procedural framework guaranteeing a "safe place" for productive conflict and dispute (Learning how to quarrel! Promoting a culture of religious debate!)

- as pointing to challenging issues around the "common good" and issues of justice to which contributions are needed from all worldview and religious resources

- as representing and taking seriously the double secularity in pluralistic democratic societies.

Reference to public theolooy and human rights, especially children's rights, as a key element of RE

for promoting a school culture based on human rights and especially children's rights

that values cultural as well as religious diversity

and strengthens the rights and responsibilities of the students

"Public Religious Pedagogy"
(Öffentliche Religionspädagogik)

=

Religious Education taking its public / political responsibility seriously

Religious Education based on public theology / public theologies as a THIRD WAY between

(in Irish terms)

"Denominational Religious Education (DRE), which focuses on learning how to live according to religious guidelines, and Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, which promotes learning about religions"

(Department of Education and Skills, 2012, quoted from Cullen, 2016)

WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS?

The Human Rights Friendly Schools approach encourages and supports the development of a global culture of human rights by empowering young people, teachers and the wider school community to create human rights friendly school communities across the world. Participating schools work towards developing a whole-school approach to human rights education, integrating human rights values and principles into key areas of school life. Human Rights Friendly Schools reach beyond the classroom and out into the community to change the way people think about, and actively participate to address, human rights issues. It is founded on the belief that by increasing knowledge and changing behaviours and attitudes in entire communities, a global culture of human rights becomes possible.

UNESCO Associated Schools Network

Home   About the network   Membership   Worldwide action

UNESCO Schools 4 Climate

UNESCO Associated Schools 4 Clima...

and the manual activity done through painting which may perhaps help us in our future.

Full Documentary

Find out all International **DAYS**

Essential Reading

"World new map"

© Rafat Alkhateeb / Cartoon Movement

Racism does not need racists

The UNESCO Courier

CRC HOME
FOR YOUTH

CRC TURNS 20

PEOPLE AND PARTNERS

STORIES

TAKE ACTION

**THE CONVENTION ON
THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

Schools and teachers

**What can schools and teachers do to advance the principles set forth by the
Convention on the Rights of the Child?**

- Teach children about their rights. People who know their rights are better able to
  claim them. When you guide children toward understanding their rights, it's important
  that you help build and maintain respect for their parents.

- Provide a broad, relevant and inclusive curriculum. Promote a curriculum that aspires
  to equip children with numeracy and literacy, as well as knowledge in science, the
  humanities, sport and the arts. Provide opportunities for play consistent with the right
  to optimal development.

"class council"

Jetzt Kinderrechteschule werden!

Auszeichnung

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www.kinderrechteschulen.de

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Eine Tagung zum 30-jährigen Jubiläum der UN-Kinderrechtskonvention

3. – 4. Oktober 2019 in Nürnberg

INHALTLICHE SCHWERPUNKTE   TAGUNGSPROGRAMM   REGISTRIERUNG   KONTAKT
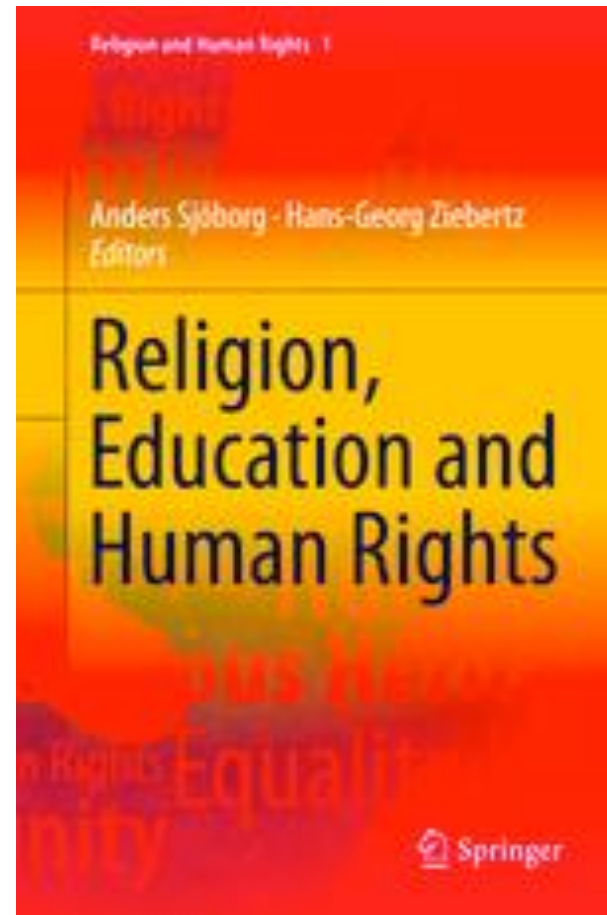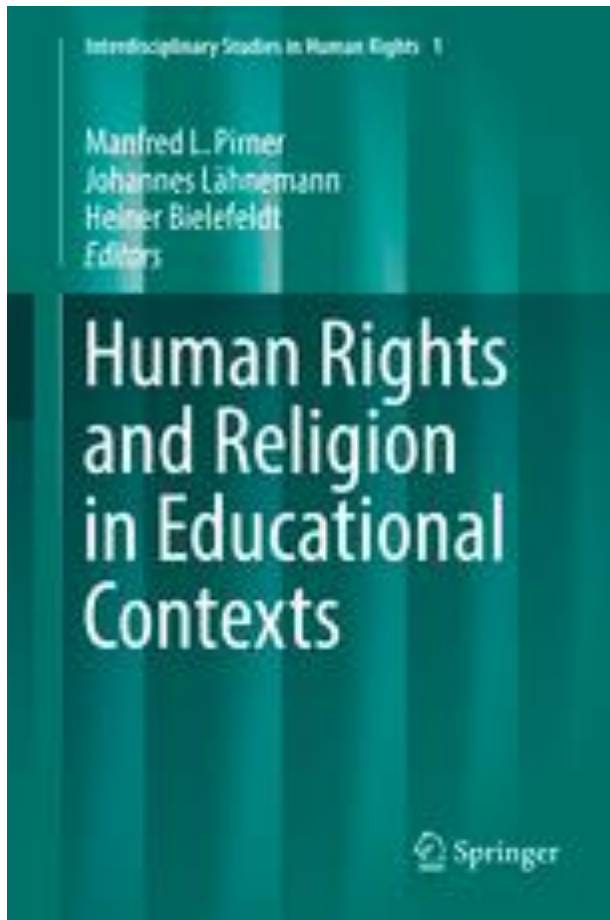
www.kinderrechte-tagung.fau.de

Human Rights of Children and Youth in the Context of Schools

A Conference on the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

www.kinderrechte-tagung.fau.de

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION !