





Religion and Education as Resources for Young Refugees. Results from an Empirical Mixed-Methods Study

Manfred L. Pirner & Julia Bradtke



http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







Research-stimulating observations

In Germany, in public discourse the religiosity of immigrants seems to be **overestimated and underestimated at the same time.**

Religiosity is **overestimated** as a fear-generating core characteristic of refugees ("Muslims are flooding and alienating our country!" – "Most asylum seekers are religious extremists!")

Religiosity is **underestimated** in its positive effect on life coping and integration.

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







Research-stimulating observations

There is vast research deficit!

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







Research question

What role does the religiosity of young refugees play for their **life coping** and their **integration**, and how does their religiosity **change** in their new life context in Germany?

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







Research steps

- Research-oriented university seminar students interviewed twenty young refugees (2016)
- (Cross-sectional) Empirical study sponsored by the Staedtler Foundation with 45 young refugees (2018/19)
- In application process: longitudinal study with 200 young refugees

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







Research steps

- Research-oriented university seminar students interviewed twenty young refugees
- (Cross-sectional) Empirical study sponsored by the Staedtler Foundation with 45 young refugees
- In application process: longitudinal study with 200 young refugees

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/



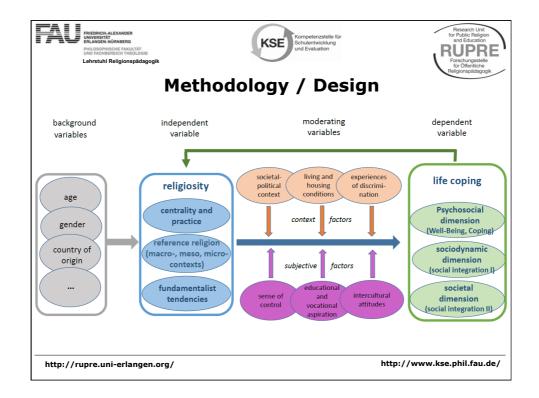




Theoretical concepts

- Religiosity (primarily according to Huber, 2008)
 multidimensional relation to "religion" (knowledge,
 belief, practice, experience, community);
 "centrality" for the individual
- Life coping ("Lebensbewältigung" according to Böhnisch, 2016)
 a) personal-psychodynamic, b) sociodynamic-interactive, c) societal, with reference to social structures
- **Social integration** ("Sozialintegration", according to Esser, 2000); culturation, placement, interaction, identification (overlaps with a) and b) of life coping)

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/









Methodology

- Semi-structured guided interview
- Questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions (mixed-methods)
- Development of questionnaire in cooperation with the Leibniz-Institute for Educational Trajectories (LIfBi), Bamberg (project ReGES: Refugees in the German Educational System)
- Duration of interviews: between 30 and 120 minutes
- Evaluation with SPSS and qualitative content analysis (sensu Mayring)
- Theme-centred methodical triangulation

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







Sample

- Random sample in the metropolitan areas of Nuremberg, Leipzig and Berlin
- Diverse ways of sampling: schools, asylum seeker hostels, intercultural cafeterias and clubs, gate keepers, snow ball principle
- Focus: age 14 to 24; eight major refugee countries

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

Country of origin	23 Syria, 12 Afghanistan, 5 Irak, 2 Eritrea, 2 Libya, 1 Iran
Religion	32 Muslim, 8 Christian, 2 Yasidi, 3 others
Gender	35 male, 10 femal
Age	between 13 and 24 years; average: 17.6
Current school attendance	27 Mittelschule (lower secondary), 13 Berufsschule (vocation school), 8 high school, 6 German language course, 1 Realschu (middle secondary), 1 Gesamtschule (general secondary) (on 4 are part of a special integration class)
Duration of stay in Germany	between 11 and 45 months
Reason of migration	43 refugees; 2 came "for other reasons"







Structure of questionnaire

Section A: General personal data

· Age, gender, origin, time of escape, religion

Section B: Questions on religion and religiosity

- Religion(s) in country of origin
- · Meaning of religion in your own life
- · Faith and life coping
- Religious socialization and education
- · Centrality of religiosity scale
- · Attitude toward religious diversity

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







Structure of questionnaire

Section C: Questions on education and school experience

- School education in country of origin and at present (performance, experiences)
- · Career wish
- · Education and job of parents
- · Estimation of job chances
- Experiences with relgious education (in country of origin and Germany)
- · Experiences with teachers' attitude towards religion

Section D: Questions on social integration

- · Contacts and feeling of belonging
- Experiences of discrimination
- · Cultural differences: perception of gender roles
- · Perspectives for the future

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/





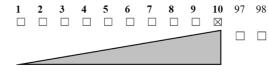


Preliminary results

1. For most respondents religion is very important and is perceived as a resource for life coping.

B3-2-1. Wie wichtig ist Religion in Ihrem Leben?

Stellen Sie sich vor, es gibt eine Linie von 1 (ganz unwichtig) bis 10 (ganz wichtig), welche Zahl würden sie wählen?



- More than half chose "10" (mean value: 8.4)
- For 82%, their religion helps them when dealing with life problems

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







Asif, 20 years old, Muslim from Syria

"[...], when I was on the Mediterranean, I always used to pray that I will not fall into the water or that nothing will get broken so that we will all die or so. Therefore it was so important that all people simply prayed that we simply retain peace and calmness and arrive in Greece and get to Germany."



http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







Hazem, 20 years old, Muslim from Syria

"When there is no religion, there is not hope any more ... I mean, if you don't have hope, you need not get out of bed in the morning and you need not live any more. [...] If I hadn't had hope I wouldn't have come to Germany. I would have stayed in Syria and risked dying."



http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







- 2. Faith and religious practice have **changed** for most of the respondents since their arrival in Europe.
- For 12 respondents their faith has become **stronger**.
- For 7 respondents their faith has become weaker.
- For 11 respondents their faith has become **different**.

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







Tamina, 14 years old, Muslima from Afghanistan

"I think it [my religious faith] becomes stronger, because I have been talking more about it. Before, of course, in a country like Afghanistan, we are all Muslims and don't talk so much about it, we understand anyway. But here, everybody asks questions about clothes or our religion [...] so we talk about it. And what I don't understand, I ask my parents."



http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







Amir, 15 years old, Christlich-orthodox, from Syria

"Simply because here you see people without religion, you talk less about religion, and then the interest in it is gone. [...] Before, I used to go to church every day, and now once a month. This is, because I do other activities at the week end and that I have to study a lot."



http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







- 3. The attitude towards other religions or worldviews is widely characterized by ignorance dependent on the country of origin
- 20 respondents knew nothing or little about other religions, before they came to Germany.
- They didn't learn about other religions in their religious education at school.
- They had no or only seldom contact with people of other religions in their home countries.

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







4. Tolerance for other religions and secular worldviews varies. It is tied to a) the country of origin and may be promoted b) by one's own religious tradition as well as c) by the new context.

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







Asif, 20 years old, Muslim from Syria

"Well, in my religion for example, the Islam says that you have to accept the other religions and other people, regardless which religion they have. The main thing is respect. [...]

There are some students in my class, if we were in Syria, I think I would not react as I am reacting here now. Perhaps in Syria I would be against it, because it would be more new that somebody comes and says he wants to have a free opinion and he does not believe in God and [...] but here, for example, I had to work on myself so that I could accept other opinions."

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







- 5. It seems especially hard for several respondents to understand or non-religious attitudes.
- What do you think: Can you be a morally good and happy person without having a religion?

Yes: 22 No: 10

Uncertain: 13

- 13 respondents indicate that they don't think it's good to have no religion
- 25 respondents have non-religious friends

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







5. It seems especially hard for several respondents to understand or non-religious attitudes.

Several respondents told us that through personal positiv contact with non-religious people they have learnt that you can be a responsible and morally good person without religion (especially in the Leipzig area!).

For some this experience questions their own identity as a religious person and causes inner conflicts.

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







Tamina, 14 years old, Muslima from Afghanistan

"I have here also seen that they are Christians and do not believe in God, but they have good life and are good to other people, because they have good heart."



http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







6. Mosque or church communities are an important support for more than half of the respondents.

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







7. A clear majority of the respondents already feel quite well integrated. However, about half of them have experienced discrimination.

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







- 8. At school religion is experienced as underrepresented.
- Only 4 respondents attend (Protestant) Religious Education classes
- 25 respondents attend the secular subject of "Ethics"
- 27 respondents indicate that in their schools teachers do not talk about religion
- However: only 12 of them would like to talk more about religion in their classes; 29 would not like that

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







Hazem, 20 years old, Muslim from Syria likes the subject of Ethics, because they have talked about the theodicy problem (why there is pain in the world).

Tamina, 14 years old, Muslima from Afghanistan Also likes Ethics, because there she learns something about other religions. But she finds it hard to understand everything.



http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







Several respondents

- · don't want to talk about religion "all the time"
- don't want to be identified only as "religious" (to be 'othered')
- feel that their teachers are unsecure and not very competent when it comes to religion



http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







- 9. Many respondents have high aspirations for the future and are quite aware of the high significance of school education for these.
- 22 respondents want to stay in Germany
- 11 want to leave Germany again at some time
- · The others are uncertain

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/







Amir, 15 years old, Christian-orthodox, from Syria

"I would stay here for good, but if the war in Syria ended, I would return, if the situation is as good as for instance in 2010. At that time it was a good country."



http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/







Religion and Education as Resources for Young Refugees. Results from an Empirical Mixed-Methods Study

Publication of a pre-test study with literature review (in German)

Pirner, M. L. (2017): Religion als Ressource und Risiko. In: Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik 16 (2017), H.1, 153–180

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/

http://www.kse.phil.fau.de/









Thanks for your attention!

http://rupre.uni-erlangen.org/