Heinz Ivkovits

**BETWEEN FACEBOOK AND FAITH**

Searching for meaning and orientation

A look at some high impact issues that affect today’s youth – not only in Austria

*Research project in the context of READY*

Wien 2017
CONTENTS

Foreword 3
Generations Y and Z – How do teens tick? 4
I post therefore I am 11
And what about religion(s)? 15
Muslim religiosity and milieus in Austria 17
Is Facebook replacing God? 20
What drives (young) people to radicalisation? 21
Conclusions 29
A Topical Appeal 35
Glossary 36
References 39
This research work grew out of the Erasmus+ project READY (Religious Education and Diversity), which focuses on the education and continuous professional development of religion teachers and the development of Religious Education in the light of the demands and challenges of modern multi-faith and multicultural societies.

READY aims to discover two main areas: the existing approaches and concepts of RE in the partner countries and the extent to which the pupils participating in the respective RE lessons are empowered to deal with diversity in their daily life. It appears therefore necessary to gain a closer insight into the attitudes, ways of life and perspectives of these young people as well as the existential and ideological threats they are exposed to.

In this sense, the objectives of this small-scale research are to figure out what makes today’s youth tick by looking at some high impact issues that affect them – mainly in Austria but also worldwide.

This research understands itself as descriptive and reviewing, employing two methods:

- Meta-analysis: combining the results of multiple surveys and youth studies of the last two years in Europe and overseas, among them the survey "Generation What", in which the European Broadcasting Union has brought together 18 Members in 14 countries to give a voice to 18-34-year olds.
- Hermeneutics: evaluating various current publications on the subject areas the project focuses on.

The presented findings and conclusions shall both provide insights into the current lifestyles and living-conditions of today’s young people and encourage further discussion how all that can and must be linked with religious education in general and in school.

Vienna, May 2017
GENERATIONS Y AND Z – HOW DO TEENS TICK

WHAT THESE TERMS STAND FOR

‘Generation Y’ (those born after 1980, also known as Millennials, Generation Me and Echo Boomers) refers to a person reaching young adulthood around the year 2000. ‘Generation Z’ (born after 1995, also known as Post-Millennials, Centennials, the iGeneration, Founders, Plurals, or Digital Natives) is the demographic cohort following the Millennials.

Both generations have been raised in an era of economic and national insecurity. From 9/11, the bursting of the Internet bubble in the middle of the first decade of the century, the financial crisis leading to a sluggish economy, the massive migration from conflict zones in the last years resulting in the refugee-crisis (migrant immigration is especially intimidating in Austria), terror attacks, to Brexit and the elections in the US and most recently in Austria – all that has a fundamental effect on the outlook and attitude of the young generation.

They grew up watching their parents weather a severe recession, and, perhaps most importantly, they hit puberty at a time when technology and social media were transforming society. While prior generations had to learn to incorporate technology into their lives, these people were born into a digital world, which is expressed in an apparent fondness for and comfort with new technology. They have become the world’s first screenagers.

The term ‘Generation Z’ was officially launched in 2014 as part of a marketing presentation. These teens have at least subconsciously a different understanding of life. They are smart, ambitious, and extremely tolerant (except when it comes to parents who need tech support). They seek and accept less competition and are more caring with colleagues and mates. They also live a more health-conscious life (healthier food, less alcohol, more sports).

Generation Z’s college students prefer intrapersonal and independent learning over group work, they like their learning to be practical and hands-on. Partly due to a rise in the popularity of entrepreneurship, high schools and colleges across the globe (like the KPH Vienna/Krems) are including entrepreneurship in their curriculums and further education offers.

---

2 Hurrelmann, K. – Albrecht, E. (2014)
3 Scholz, C. (2014)
4 Screenagers. International Erasmus+ research project (2016): Using ICT, digital and social media in youth work (Digitale Medien in der österreichischen Jugendarbeit), WienXtra, Wien
5 Meet Generation Z: Forget Everything You Learned About Millennials by Sparks & honey
**General findings**

How do young people view their own generation? How do they assess their prospects? What do today’s teenagers think about the big questions of life? Are teens running the risk of considering life to be essentially about the acquisition of stuff? Are they just busy rushing from one experience to the next, chasing achievement or thrills? Or are they seeking some meaning beyond the material world?

Insights from the previously listed investigations and surveys form the basis for the following more detailed questions on the attitudes of young people in Europe. Some flashlights:

Confident – conformist – indifferent – self-centered

There is no clear description of all these young people as they live in different environments. A core point, however, is a strong ego-fixation. They have lost their faith in the ordering effect of institutions and arrange the world in line with their own needs. Their sober view of the world makes them ask, “What’s in it for me?” Parents complain that their kids are so conformist that they do nothing more to change the society.

Clearly, most teenagers live differently than their parents. But is this differentness the result of a conscious choice or does it result from the fact that young people grow up under different social conditions today? Is it difference or - as in the famous 1960s - opposition?

Despite a certain solidarity in generational policy questions, the youth is separated from older generations. Their ‘way of life’ is more experience-oriented and - in terms of education and work – with a clearer fixation about success than that of their parents.

What the present-day young have in common with their parents

A recent national study has identified four ideal types of young people in Austria, each of which is very different from their parents' lifestyle. Two of them are on the side of continuity, two on that of change:

- **‘Zeitgeist surfers’**: It is the largest group (four out of ten young people) and represents change. They emphasize their individuality and independence in comparison with their parents, but they do not reject their lifestyle. They simply live differently. They are the

---

product of a general social change. They adapt to the new, without consciously looking for change.

- **‘Contrast protagonists’**: ca. 22%. Their lifestyle is exactly the opposite of that of their parents. These adolescents often see their parents as conservative and narrow-minded. They present a (neo-)liberal, cosmopolitan, explicitly anti-conventional image of the world which they set against their parents’ conservatism.

- **‘Preserving stability’**: 1/5 of the Austrian youth. This type adopts the lifestyle of their own parents, which means continuity in a world whose pace of change worries them.

- **‘Adaptive’**: 14%. This type sees itself in a tradition line with the lifestyle of their parents - not copying but advancing it in line with the prevailing Zeitgeist.

First conclusion to draw:

**This youth is neither just conservative nor progressive, but a little bit of everything.**

---

**Let’s go into detail**

**‘Snowflakes’ - The kids are not all right**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When looking at your future, you would say you are?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 - 31 % (rather) Pessimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 - 10 % (rather) Optimistic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compared to your life, you feel like your children’s future is going to be?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 % Better, overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 % Worse, overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 % Similar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The term ‘**Generation Snowflake**’ emerged a few years ago on American campuses as a means of criticising the hypersensitivity of a younger generation, where it was tangled up in the debate over ‘safe spaces’ and ‘no platforming’. Very recently, the Collins English Dictionary added “snowflake generation” to its words-of-the-year list; Macmillan Dictionary defines it as “young people regarded as being over-sensitive and unable to cope with criticism or robust debate”, being less resilient and more prone to taking offence than previous generations, together with an aggressive, sloganeering refusal to engage with the feelings of vulnerability of others. A University of Michigan meta-study synthesising the data of 72 studies sees empathy among college students collapsing by 40 per cent between 1979 and 2009.⁸

Recent statistics show that every 5th student in Austrian schools is bullied once a month. A small hit here, an evil rumor there, or insults over social networks.

---

⁷ Generation What
⁸ [http://ns.umich.edu/new/releases/7724-empathy-college-students-don-t-have-as-much-as-they-used-to](http://ns.umich.edu/new/releases/7724-empathy-college-students-don-t-have-as-much-as-they-used-to) (accessed 7.12.16)
Mobbing amongst school kids

What has happened?

Being a teenager today is a draining full-time job that includes doing schoolwork, managing social-media identity and fretting about career, climate change, sexism, racism – you name it. The pressure to permanently act and respond, the expectation to look attractive, succeed at school, be popular, get a job and a home, together with the increasing economisation and a systematically planned daily life right down to the tiniest details, eventually produce an ‘exhausted generation’.

The constraining force to be different from what you are is particularly conspicuous in a society of downward social mobility, in which the young are particularly exposed to a drop in social status. Oliver Nachtwey has coined the ‘escalator metaphor’\(^9\). It means that you can only hold your position through the permanent run against the direction of the moving steps. If you only stand still for a short time, you will plunge downwards unbraked.

Legions of anonymous young people find themselves consigned to living marginalised lives. The term ‘precariat’\(^11\) conveys the precarious status of vulnerable young people as citizens with only few rights. We can notice rapidly degrading qualities of urban life, foreclosures, the persistence of predatory practices in urban housing markets, reductions in services, and above all, a lack of viable employment. Precarious also means time contracts and internships – in other words: It seems less realistic to go after a dream job today:

I cannot plan my future; I can only hope to get a job again. Therefore, I’ll do a job I do not like, but it pays better and I will be in less debt.

Acceleration and angst

Take our universities as an example. A major problem constitutes the new study architecture: A rigid system without many options. While being concerned with how matters will stand after the studies, students are expected to complete semesters abroad, rush from EC to EC, upgrade their CVs and earn their bachelor’s degree in six semesters. They cannot imagine what a

---

\(^9\) OECD Report April 2017
\(^10\) Nachtwey, O. (2016)
\(^11\) Standing, G. (2011)
university once used to be. How exploratory education can be, and that universities were drivers for emancipation.

Most students are opposed to university policy concerns, because their own progress takes precedence over anything else. Thus, an increased future pessimism and fears of failing to work professionally meet the feeling of powerlessness and often certain systemic constraints. Hartmut Rosa calls this experience ‘aimless acceleration’.

Egocentric attitudes are a bad breeding ground for solidarity and commitment. And yet, is has always been students and young people who take voluntary initiative. Without them, e.g. the refugee aid around the Train of Hope would not have been possible in Austria. In 2013, 40 per cent of the 14-24-year-olds worked voluntarily, 35 per cent of them in associations and organisations.12

David Harvey, in his study Rebel cities, observes that alienated urban youth are being transformed into an “idle youth lost in the sheer boredom of increasing unemployment and neglect in the soulless suburbs that eventually become sites of boiling unrest”13 (e.g. France 2005, England 2011). These riots need to be set within the wider context of youth protest, including the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, Los Indignados and Pussy Riot.

Therefore, we are confronted with a broad psychological problem: a spectrum of angst that plagues our teens. Anxiety and depression – in other words, distressed young people – are on the rise. German studies show that one out of four of the 16–29-year-olds is diagnosed with at least one mental illness.14

From self-realisation to self-optimisation

16-29-year-olds are very concrete in labelling their own generation. The most frequent adjectives they use are ‘unsettled’ (72%), ‘adjusted’ (58%) and ‘unplanned’ (56%). Self-realisation, solidarity, prosperity, all that was yesterday. Today, it is self-optimisation, which includes maximum commitment. Prevailing motivation is a common culture and common values. These people demand constant feedback, their goal is personal development and personal progress, and they are constantly building their own career. Exploited people have become driven ones, who have no time to enjoy what they have. Because they always go on and on.15

Next conclusion: Less worldview - catchier statements

---

12 Jugendmonitor Survey of the Austrian Ministry for Families und Youth
13 Harvey, D. (2013)
16 Helene Hegemann: German writer, director, and actress; Interview in the music magazine ‘Spex’
Values

People distinguish between norms and values. The first constitute concrete situation-based rules of action, whereas the latter describe a general guidance about what is right / desirable. Values are often understood as a kind of ‘railing on which you can rest’ but which you may soon abandon again (no long-term integration). One learns from experience whether values serve a good purpose or are already obsolete. Institutions act as places for temporary ‘identity verification’.

What are the core values of the young generation?
- Autonomy – freedom to do ‘one’s thing’
- Non-conformism, competition – but no claim to change the world
- Social justice – equal chances for everyone, but first for me
- Everything is interlinked with everything and is constantly checked for its usability

My screen is my life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Could you be happy without a mobile phone?</th>
<th>Could you be happy without Internet?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62 % Yes</td>
<td>52 % Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 % No</td>
<td>48 % No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is hard for many adults to understand how much of our teenagers’ emotional life is lived within the small screens on their phones or tablets. A remarkable number has already developed what is called *Nomophobia*, a kind of phobia of being out of mobile phone contact. In their daily activities they live a virtual life alongside their real one. As this virtual reality constitutes an integral part of their everyday life, young people often fail to recognise the differences between actual and virtual reality. There is no firm line between their real and online worlds, according to research conducted at the Universities of California and Texas in 2015.19

At the same time, however, the Internet and their mobiles represent an escape from everyday life, a means of discovering many and different new ‘lives’. Every experience is documented online for hours:

---

17 Shell Jugendstudie (2015), Hamburg
18 Generation What
19 TIME November 7, 2016
We’re all like little volcanoes. We’re getting this constant pressure, from our phones, from our relationships, from the way things are today.²⁰

This ‘hyper-connectedness’ can be found everywhere – cities and rural areas alike. A lot of kids are simply overexposed. As parents have come to mimic their kids’ behaviour, they have learned to use their phones in the way the teens do: ignoring people, answering calls during the meals, you name it.

My body is my billboard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you got any tattoos?</th>
<th>²¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8% Yes, several</td>
<td>36% Not yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8% Yes, one</td>
<td>48% No, and I never will</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the late 1990s, the body has become a kind of billboard for self-expression. It was the time when tattoos and piercings went mainstream. As research suggests, the anxiety caused by school pressure and technology together with online bullying is affecting younger and younger kids. They are looking at other people’s lives on Instagram and feel self-loathing.

We refer to this phenomenon as ‘Facebook depression’, a term coined by psychologists in 2011, where browsing other people’s Facebook profiles brings on a feeling of dejection about the pathetic state of one’s own life. Thus, self-harm appears to be a key symptom of such mental-health difficulties and is tied to how we see the human body:

A lot of value is put on our physical beauty now. All our friends are Photoshopping their own photos - it’s hard to escape that need to be perfect.²²

Research warns that serious cases of self-harm among young people have jumped by 14% in the last three years, with 19,000 children and young people treated in hospital in England and Wales in the last 12 months.²³ The fact that these children choose to harm themselves rather than others is a sign that they feel plenty of shame about their fears already, for which they blame themselves. Often, children report that they could not talk to their parents because their parents were too busy.

However, it is not just teenagers who define and present themselves through their bodies. Parents present their (unprotected) children in seemingly nice and harmless video clips by putting their kids’ lives on YouTube. Vlogging – the frequently recording and uploading of personal videos - has become a big business with family vlogging in particular.²⁴ The more fun families seem to have in their homes, the more viewers and the more money they get. Popular clans attract sponsors, advertising and often a lot of free stuff to play with on camera.

---

²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ Generation What
²² Faith-Ann Bishop, 20, in TIME November 7, 2016
²³ The Guardian, December 9, 2016
²⁴ TIME May 25, 2017
Do you trust the media?25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important sources of information for young people in Austria (percentage):26

![Source of Information Pie Chart]

**Question of credibility**

Remarkable differences arise when the frequency of media use is compared with the assessment of their credibility. Young people consider the traditional media such as radio (32%), television (29%) and websites of classical media (23%) to be ‘very credible’. On the other hand, only 10 per cent rate social networks as ‘very credible’. A similar picture concerns the popular video portal YouTube: Only 9 per cent rate this as ‘very credible’. In addition, 60 per cent of the youngsters indicate that they believe that much of the news on current issues in social networks is untrue.

Teenagers trust images more than the written or spoken word. Approximately 71 per cent of respondents even claim to be able to recognize processed images. On the other hand, young people hardly consider the fact that pictures and captions as such prove nothing at all. They may be taken out of context and lie right, left and centre.

In general, aesthetics plays an important role in assessing whether a message is held true or false. Thus, for example, a professionally designed video is attributed a higher truth content than a shaky cell phone recording.

This reveals the resulting dilemma: Although young people attribute only low credibility to social networks, they remain their most important source of information. In the information flow of the Internet, young people have difficulties distinguishing true from false messages. 86 per cent questioned at least sometimes do not know whether the information they are

---

25 Generation What
26 SaferInternet.at (2017): Rumors on the net - How do young people assess information from the Internet? Study on how Austrian children and adolescents deal with rumors on the net
confronted with is correct or wrong. Therefore, it is not surprising that 61 per cent rate the assessment of information on the Internet as a major challenge.\textsuperscript{27}

In the context of Internet safety, educators notice great carelessness on the side of young people. A cross-country study by Microsoft, which deals with the risk situations adolescents may face on the Internet, shows that

- 50 per cent of German-speaking people are affected by unwanted contacts, Internet trolls or harassment
- 40 per cent of those affected do not know how to solve the problem

**Facebook society - Like an open book**

Does what we share define who we are? Our so-called ‘Facebook society’\textsuperscript{28} can be described in terms of the practice of self-presentation and the perception of the world by social media. 1.7 billion people romp around on Facebook. Our social life has drastically changed with the advances Facebook has provided us. We can now connect with more people than ever without having to be physically with them. The social network becomes an archive of social relationships that can be reactivated and intensified at any time.\textsuperscript{29}

What is the charm of publicising one’s private life, thus exposing oneself boundlessly? Maybe an escape from what happens to you. Not narcissism, but the insufferableness of the present. Anyone who communicates on Facebook delegates their own experience to others. Time forms flow into one another, the present merges with past and future.

Interestingly, the opposite to this openness - hiding one’s face or body parts - has also become a phenomenon. Thus, the transcendence of one’s personality is communicated, allowing for more creativity and shelter against unwanted observers.\textsuperscript{30} People who cannot make meaningful relationships often seek the anonymity of a group or subculture, where they can feel strong and act accordingly. Through hiding and, finally, masking (clowns) one hopes not to be held responsible (hooligans).

But does that help? Large corporations have been collecting our personal data for years. They make us transparent and manipulate us. How does this work?

**The truth is somewhere out there**

Let’s suppose that provided reasons and causes tell us that something has happened, producing this or that effect. If you are well versed in the subtleties of the issue, you’ll know what is realistic and true and what not. But if you are an ordinary citizen, you might not know whether the printed ‘facts’ is the truth: you would just believe what sounds truest to you. Or you might believe that relevant differences were hidden or forged.\textsuperscript{31} People tend to share content that gets the most extreme reactions – a terrifying but untrue story will be shared more widely than

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{28}Simanowski, R. (2016)

\textsuperscript{29}Brodning, I. (2014)

\textsuperscript{30}Ernst, C. (2015)

\textsuperscript{31}TIME October 17,2016
a mildly alarming but accurate one. All that matters is whether the information fits in your narrative.

It is a problem of quantity and quality: there is simply too much information available, which means that distortions are almost inevitable. Media give voice to millions of ordinary citizens but also allows bogus information to seep into our consciousness. Phony conspiracy theories often mix with accurate journalism and history. Thus, an ecosystem is created in which the truth value of an information does not matter anymore.

Instead of institutions, people look to their social networks for information. Even if it is only one’s own opinion, it appears there as a fact, which makes these media a sphere where obscure theories and assertions thrive best. Passed from Facebook to Facebook, retweeted by thousands of (anonymous) accounts, ideas spread quickly without verification or context. In this way, social media confirm what we already know or believe to know. Thus, cheap showmanship replaces the elaborate search for truth, resentments suppress research, sharing comes before verifying.

Buzzfeed, a popular online source covering digital media and technology, published the frightening results of an analysis of the election stories generating the most engagement — Likes, shares and comments — on Facebook in the final three months of the recent presidential elections in America:\footnote{BuzzFeedNews (https://www.buzzfeed.com/craigsilverman/viral-fake-election-news-outperformed-real-news-on-facebook?utm_term=.fgm9Mq11j9#.dbkBbRPPoB, accessed November 20, 2016)}

![Total Facebook Engagements for Top 20 Election Stories](image)

**Bubbles – living in one’s own world**

Through information systems, others are trying to control our attention and influence our emotions, opinions, decisions and behaviour. The Internet constantly provides us with recommendation platforms that suggest what we should do. These platforms evaluate our personal data. They palm us off with decisions which we then believe we have made ourselves.

Around each of us a personal filter bubble is built (Big Nudging). Nudging is the attempt to influence behaviour to ‘help’ people do the ‘right thing’ - not by convincing them through information and arguments, but by manipulating them, as if giving them a kind of nudge in the right direction. We are thus given ideas that determine our lives.
Parallel realities

Psychologists and social scientists have shown that when confronted with diverse information choices, we dart for information that confirms our ideas, and we shun what does not. We all share what we find with our like-minded friends and networks, creating closed-off circles online. 85 per cent of retweet interactions, for instance, take place among Twitter users with similar ideological positions. Twitter communication takes place in echo chambers, where users listen to, follow, like and re-tweet like-minded political points of view. Thus, for each user their own truth is carved.

The limit is exceeded when it is no longer possible to change one's own reference system - one cannot take another perspective. Then you remain consistent and enclosed by your own point of view and you are no longer accessible for arguments from outside. You now live in a 'parallel reality'.

Feelings replacing facts

Wilhelm Reich has shown how Hitler’s authoritarianism operated upon emotions and avoided relevant arguments as much as possible. Today, feelings, beliefs and irrationality have again replaced arguments, proofs and knowledge. If someone wants to dominate the headlines, they must present short and concise messages - best in form of scandalous provocations.

Paul Krugman called our times "post-truth", a term Oxford Dictionaries has declared to be its international word of the year 2016. Farhad Manjoo said we live in a "post-fact society", others even speak of a ‘counter-fact’ age (Patrick Frottier). The latest Orwellian doublespeak is that even lies are no longer lies – they are 'Alternative Facts.'

Twitter’s brevity of 140 characters is ideally suited for a type of politics that does not rely on arguments, but on emotions of outrage, scapegoating, hatred and attack, because its ephemerality, brevity and speed support spectacles and sensationalism.

Media scientist Norbert Bolz states in the context of the rhetoric of hatred: "The controversy in the feuilletons against the post-factual does not take us any further, since it is caught up in the myth of the unquestionable facts."

Facts are denied because they make people unsafe as they can no longer understand and classify them and they contradict their traditional images. On the other hand, facts alone do not help if people keep putting a slant on the world based on their respective ideological positions.

33 Information, ideas, or beliefs are amplified or reinforced by transmission and repetition inside an ‘enclosed’ system, where different or competing views are censored, disallowed, or otherwise underrepresented
Facts (= data) are in themselves relatively worthless. We need people who interpret them. Therefore, it is decisive to filter out the open and hidden ideologies, interests and purposes that determine the respective interpretations. Approaching the ideal of rationality calls for publicness and demands the public discussion of truth claims. Without that we are continuously building a world that supports only our own opinion.

AND WHAT ABOUT RELIGION(s)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Could you be happy without any religious belief?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84 % Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 % No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you trust religious organisations? 38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54 % Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 % - 12 % More or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 % Totally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The topic of ‘religion’ as such is of hardly any impact. However, regardless of their denominational/religious/non-denominational affiliation, young people are deeply interested in fundamental questions of life. What they do acknowledge is religion as providing meaning and orientation, together with its contribution to a peaceful coexistence in our society. This concerns basic questions: What do I think is true? How do I want to live my life?

Yet, there are no majority decisions on such questions no one has the final say.

Believing or belonging?

We find significant differences between West- and East Germany, as well as between Christian and Muslim youth:

- 34% of young people in Western Germany consider their belief in god as important for living their lives – 19% in the East
- 76% of Muslim youth see their belief in god as an ‘important guideline for their life’ - 45% of Catholics, 37% of Protestants

Christian youth often explain their belief as a ‘trust in a higher power’, as something individual that is not automatically connected with a certain institution or religion. Muslim youth are less religiously individualistic but feel more strongly affiliated to their religious community and the teachings about believing in god and the ethics of life. They do not so much distinguish between personal faith and denominational affiliation as young Christians obviously do.

Christian and non-denominational youth are more concerned with the typical ‘where from/where to’ questions, whereas Muslims focus more on ethical questions about justice and the good and correct ways of living their lives.

38 Generation What
Non-denominational young people accept that religions can provide sense and orientation and therefore are interested in discussions about faith in RE or Ethics classes; at the same time, however, they consider believing in ‘supernatural things’ which you cannot see or measure as something ‘exotic’. They strongly doubt the existence of a god and the truthfulness of religious books like the Bible or the Qur’an and have significant reservations against denominational affiliations.

Affiliation is mostly determined by their families of origin. Parents who openly express and practice some form of spiritual commitment expose and model to their children a lifestyle beyond the mere material. Parents who ridicule or talk down their child’s religious commitment or quest to find answers to the big questions are a significant discouragement to young people. Thus, young people from families where faith and religion are considered irrelevant predominantly stay non-denominational.

Summing up, we can deduce a triplicate notion of faith:

Coping with difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some of your closest friends...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69% Are from a different school education than yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56% Are from a different social background than yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53% Are much older or much younger than you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51% Are from a different sexual orientation than yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48% Are from a different religion than yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45% Are from a different ethnic group than yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42% Are from a different culture than yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9% None of the above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Immigration makes for richer cultures

| 71% I agree |
| 29% I disagree |

Growing up and living together in heterogeneous groups with people of different cultural and religious backgrounds is basically seen as an effective protection against the social devaluation of other people. Almost all young people interviewed have friends from different religions. They treat each other with mutual tolerance regarding the practise of religion and one’s personal lifestyle. However, the variety of cultural, religious or social backgrounds is accepted only if one’s life is not disturbed by them.

In Austria, diversity within schools is growing steadily. The share of pupils who in the school year 2015/16 reported a colloquial language other than German was 23.8 per cent; a total of 262,777 students. In Vienna, the share is 49.7 per cent – almost every second pupil! Bosnian,
Croatian, Serbian and Turkish are still leading languages. Students with an Arabic colloquial language recorded the highest growth.

In this way, linguistic diversity of the local schools is also constantly increasing. Ten years ago the share was 15.6 per cent:

![Graph showing linguistic diversity growth over years]

**MUSLIM RELIGIOSITY AND MILIEUS IN AUSTRIA**

In recent years, the number of Muslims in Austria has increased steadily. The Islamic religious community in Austria estimates the number of Muslims living here to be around 600,000. Most of them are from Turkey. With 409 Islamic societies and associations the Muslim community is characterized by a diverse association landscape.

We can distinguish five forms of Muslim religious practice in every-day life:

1. Preserving: 14.1%
2. Pragmatic: 29.5%
3. Open: 14.8%
4. Cultural: 26.6%
5. Loose rest-religiosity: 15%

---


41 Survey 2015 (J. Kolb, Institute for Islamic Studies, University of Vienna)
Preserving
Accepting the Five Pillars which constitute their daily routines (‘24 hour Muslims’) – ‘Allah shall be satisfied with me’; religion based on rules; exclusivist understanding (Islam as the only true religion); those who do not practise are no Muslims; hardly any contact with other religions; critical perception of Christian faith practice in Austria; withdrawal from society.

Pragmatic
Adapted to societal conditions or the respective context; accomplishing the ritual prayers; physical health, professional needs important; compromises concerning clothes, food.

Open
Strong piety (humbleness, seeking sense, spiritual support in one’s life); “being a Muslim is part of my identity”; “without religion I’d have no way, I wouldn’t know the sense of life”; often reticent on rituals (“I pray when I have the feeling I have to pray now”); open towards a pleasure-oriented lifestyle; having relationships without being married; multi-religious acquaintances.

Cultural
Religion less important; being a Muslim considered to have cultural relevance – often in combination with migrant background; no spiritual importance; no religious affiliation outside one’s family but more religious within the family (e.g. raising children); orientation towards cultural traditions; importance of specific holidays, times; multi-religious friendships.

Loose
Unaffiliated; no religious rules and regulations; little religious/theological knowledge; however, certain religious contents remain vivid – see themselves not as atheists but as Muslims without practical correspondence (‘Baptismal certificate Muslims’); critical of Muslim institutions or Islam as such (‘Islam does not belong to the western world’); are normally not perceived as Muslims at all.

According to this study, Islamic youth can be characterised by

Religious bricolage
- Denomination & religious schools of law are anachronistic, not appropriate nowadays
- Religious knowledge is getting lost
- Religious categories overlaid by cultural, ethnic, national classifications
- Falling back on sources, traditions from different religions

Tendencies of visualisation
- Smartphone Apps reminding of prayer times
- Online search engines\(^2\) to search for answers (religious concerns and questions) – without recourse to Imams, RE teachers – often rather conservative answers

Religion on the move
- Gradual process of one’s religious life
- Importance of religion as per one’s stage of life
- Rather lax handling of religious regulations among young people
  During family formation partly religionizing – returning to one’s ethnic/cultural/religious origins

\(^2\) E.g. http://www.islamuslim.de
Haram, brother

Muslim subculture teens have a new youth word: "Haram!" You can hear it on YouTube, Instagram and in the classrooms. *Haram* is an Arabic adjective and describes all that is prohibited under Sharia law - in contrast to *halal* (allowed). Whoever does what is defined as haram, commits a sin.

‘Haram’ has now found its way into the language of the youth, which means that pubescent male youths with migrant background decide what sin is. In their eyes, quite a lot seems to be ‘haram’ nowadays. For example, when girls show too much skin, wear a V-neck or apply too much makeup. These guys impose bans in the name of Islam and restrict the life of their female environment.

Everything these young people know about Islam they have memorized. That is the way in which Islamic Religious Education works in quite a lot of Austrian schools: learning to memorize. In a few cases, even only in Arabic. Students who do not speak Arabic do not understand what they are saying. But even if they learn the Surahs in a language they understand, they do not always discuss what they mean - pupils often only repeat what they have learned without reflecting. Thus, they search for the remaining information about Islam indiscriminately on the Internet or inform themselves in their cliques or circle of friends.

However, if you understand the sexism of this ‘*Generation haram*’43 as a religious-cultural problem only, you disregard the fact that young men with migrant background have the worst prospects on the labour market and are trying to cover up their minority complexes with macho behaviour.

How much Europe does Islam need?

Among Muslims, especially those who have recently arrived, we often notice a great disparity between theoretical consent to a European, value-based legal concept and its practical significance for their life.

A survey conducted by the Austrian Academy of Sciences in late 201644 among Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis showed that refugees largely see democracy as the best form of government. At the same time, however, more than a third believe that religious precepts are above the law. Four out of ten respondents consider the equality of men and women as unnecessary, 81 per cent argue for the observance of religious dress codes in the public sphere, and 37 per cent want separate gymnastics and swimming lessons for boys and girls as well as the reduction of female employment in general.

Therefore, how much Europe does Islam in fact need?

43 http://www.dasbiber.at/content/generation-haram (accessed January 10, 2017)
44 Die Presse January 23, 2017
IS FACEBOOK REPLACING GOD AND RELIGION? 45

Instead of God watching your every move, you now have your friends doing that via services such as Facebook.

With social networking, there is intense social pressure from your friends to act within certain norms. And punishment is carried out by publicizing your transgressions beyond just your friends. 46

Religion is attractive to many people because of the connections and sense of community it establishes around a common interest. Social networking certainly provides competition to this aspect of worship by providing a vehicle for those seeking community through other interests. Australian researcher David Kinnaman 47 suggests the changes in personal spirituality could be due to the new relational dynamics created by web 2.0. technology.

The French marketing consultant Gregory Pouy argues, “We are not going to church as much as we used to, we are not concerned with family as we were before, and we are living in huge cities that make us all anonymous. But the truth is that people want to be part of something – and in part, they are seeking this in brands.” 48

A 2010 study of Duke University and NYU, entitled “Brands: The Opiate of the Nonreligious Masses?”, supported the theory that “brands and religiosity may serve as substitutes for one another because both allow individuals to express their feelings of self-worth”. 49

Talking to God may be losing out to Facebook

Youths who use social media are 50 to 80 per cent more likely to develop a ‘pick-and-choose’ approach to organise their faith—regardless of what their religious tradition teaches— and are flexible about varied religious beliefs and practices than those who do not use social media, according to a Baylor University study. "On Facebook, there is no expectation that one's 'likes' be logically consistent and hidebound by tradition," concludes Baylor sociology researcher Paul K. McClure. "Religion, thus, does not consist of timeless truths . . . Instead, the Facebook effect is that all spiritual options become commodities and resources that individuals can tailor to meet their needs." 50

Those who spend time on sites like Facebook are inclined to think it's perfectly acceptable to experiment with other religions and see no necessity to remain committed to the teachings of a singular tradition.

In this way, young people today may distinguish themselves from generations before not only in their use of technology, but in how they think of religion.

45 Schulz, P. – Breutel, B. (2014)
48 http://www.businessgrow.com/2013/05/30/digital-revolution-brings-us-back-to-basics (accessed 20.10.16)
49 http://web-docs.stern.nyu.edu/pa/erdem_brand_religion.pdf (accessed 20.10.16)
50 McClure, P. (2016)
**WHAT DRIVES (YOUNG) PEOPLE TO RADICALISATION?**

Every day, thresholds are crossed, thresholds of shame, respect, truthfulness. The reasons for this are manifold, among them a growing uncertainty caused by radicalisation and expressed in the desire to reduce complexity.

We can distinguish three basic levels:
- Psychological: suffered resentments and offences
- Sociological: search for identity and belonging
- Ideological: religion and world views

No scientific theory or method is capable of reliably explaining or predicting radicalisation processes. Neither macro-theories, which establish connections between terrorism and several suspected features, characteristics, and causes, nor micro-behavior as an attempt to make individual predictions, can alone sufficiently illustrate the phenomenon of radicalisation and extremism. However, through the insights provided by different disciplines, such as political science, sociology or psychology, we get important analytical ‘building blocks’, each of which represents a part of the ‘truth’.

The renowned terrorist researcher Peter Neumann names the following recurring components and risk factors:\(^{51}\)

For some people, every critical discussion about religion is understood as an attack on it. They create a bogeyman and argue with victim roles as well as conspiracy theories. God or the leader of a group are highly stylized as surrogate fathers, giving orientation and support. The individual does not need to take responsibility; others say what is to be done and when.

In such contexts, the function of religion in radicalisation processes is almost identical to that of other ‘protest ideologies’: it articulates frustration and urge, directs it into a political or / and religious project, and offers incentives to engage in it.\(^{52}\)

The problem is not a specific religion, but the problematic aspects it may have.\(^{53}\)

Nevertheless, religion and ideology are only part of the explanation. Equally important are emotional needs, such as the search for identity, community, meaning, fame, adventure.

---

\(^{51}\) Neumann, P. (2016)

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Kepel, G. (1993)
Framing growing uncertainty and complexity

There is a significant mood of insecurity, fear of the unknown, fear of losing what one has. In such situations, people are looking for ‘security anchors’. They were formerly found in ideological systems such as communism or fascism. Today, we are experiencing a certain de-ideologisation. Many people are now openly concerned with power, power multiplication, power generation, rather not in the sense of saving the world, but in the sense of the mere concept of power.

Simple language and simple words are important for our brain. There, interpretive ‘frames’ are created which then are activated and strengthened by speech. Frames are linguistic interpretive patterns, which also evoke an interpretive framework in the human brain. We always think and see things within a defined field and skip others. The frame surrounding an issue can change the reader’s perception without having to alter the actual facts. In the context of politics or mass-media communication, a frame encourages certain interpretations and discards others. For political purposes, framing often presents facts in such a way that implicates a problem that needs a solution.54 In the past American election campaign Trump presented a lot of very concrete frames, while Clinton could frame only a few issues.

Personal experiences

From that campaign, we have learned that the discontent of working-class white Americans over how elites (whoever this term might apply to in the respective context - obviously, the polemical concept of elites has largely decoupled from its socio-political significance) dismissed them with scorn and treated them with condescension, gave them the feeling of being left behind. Many who once felt part of a comfortably secure higher middle class now feel like a hamster in a running wheel, having to run faster and faster just to remain in the same place (which, of course, does not only apply to America). The election result may thus be read as the revenge of ‘the forgotten men and women’ of America.

Personal experiences of violence, migration and gender attributions lead to a tendency towards the glorification of violence. Homogeneous circles of friends promote radicalisation further.

Self-confident people can cope best with this new uncertainty. The others, the offended, resentful and embittered, find new certainty in self-righteousness, self-optimising, creating a sense of ‘being us’ and thinking in ‘black-and-white’ terms, absolutizing positions and goals, together with a withdrawal into a kind of ‘gated communities’ that only considers what suits their own worldview.55 Authoritarianism makes use of the friend-enemy scheme. To one group all good characteristics are ascribed and they are loved, and to the other group all negative characteristics are ascribed and they are hated.56

As described, social media particularly make it possible to mainly receive those messages and discuss with those people who confirm one’s own point of view. Twitter communication, for instance, takes place in echo chambers, where users listen to, follow, like and re-tweet like-

54 Wehling, E. (2016)
55 Cf. ‘Cocooning’: the intensive exchange of messages among intimate and homogeneous peers
minded political points of view. Subscribers then think, "I've read that so many times, it can’t be a fake, there must be something to it."

*Age of anger – from fears to hatred*

Periods of instability mean a loss of confidence in politics and institutions. Access to housing and work, questions of distribution and solidarity in economy and society, identity issues and deficits in the right to participate evoke real fears that are justified but also perceived fears. All this makes people afraid because they feel to be the victims of unconceivable developments, which push them around while every orientation seems to have been lost. The conventional sense-making systems have crumbled; people no longer know which rules still apply. The German psychologist Ernst Lantermann sees the reasons for the growing radicalisation in the West in the requirements of modern society, which offer little support, demand a high degree of self-responsibility and lead thereby to permanent and comprehensive uncertainty. The feeling of social impotence, solitude and the loss of norms result in persistence, anger and aggressiveness. To produce the current attitudes of human hostility, however, individual worries must be transformed into collective concerns. Individual socioeconomic worries are populistically taken up by groups and translated into a feeling of collective deprivation.

Whoever takes refuge in radical attitudes and activities - xenophobes, fitness professionals, self-tracking enthusiasts, militant animal rights activists or radical anti-abortionists - create their own world in which they know exactly what is right and wrong and on which side one must stand.

Norbert Bolz calls this a new cultural revolution, an age of a ‘New Orality’, in which snottiness and affect dominate. “Online you no longer criticize. Online you hate.” Many people say the words free speech are now being used as a cover for spreading hate – in America and elsewhere. Others argue that people react violently to mere words.

Sartre once said that "hell is the others". Lantermann impressively demonstrates that “fanatic are not always only the others, but more and more often we ourselves”. Haven’t today the others been replaced by us clicking the Like-button on Facebook?

*Creation of scapegoats*

We are no longer sending scapegoats to the desert today as people used to do in the times of the Old Testament (Leviticus). We are the desert now. Simplification is booming. Those who are convinced to be the only ones possessing the absolute truth and the right to construct enemy images pose the greatest danger. And these images justify their assumed monopoly of the use of violence, murder, rape and looting.

---

58 Lantermann, E.D. (2016)
60 Cf. Han, B.C. (*2016*)
Franz Neumann, a German-Jewish political scientist, argued already a while ago that situations of anxiety would come along with the hatred of identified enemies. The fear of social degradation, cultural alienation, or a decreasing say in political matters and denationalization, together with a damaged self-esteem, produce hatred, resentment and dread which are then concentrated on certain persons who are denounced as devilish conspirators.

We must distinguish between ‘dynamic emotions’ - such as anger - and rage and hatred. Whoever is angry, believes that the world can be changed. Who hates, does not believe so (any more) and wants to destroy. However, hatred does not suddenly break out; it is prepared and shaped. Hate needs patterns of perception, images, and concepts in which the victims are prepared and tailor-made. These templates originate in publications, films, lyrics and pictures, especially on the Web, wherever people are forced into collectives and labelled ‘criminal’, ‘perverse’, ‘sick’, ‘dangerous’. It affects an ever-growing spectrum: Muslims, the political left, the EU, women, refugees, migrants, gays, lesbians, bisexuals or transgender people.

The German sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer sees an effective mechanism in such situations: Each society creates its marginalised groups to stabilize itself. Scapegoats and enemy images are located both in the upper (establishment, jet set, intellectuals) and lower classes (‘parasites’, immigrants, terrorists). The marginalization of others mostly involves their exclusion.

All these resentments have existed before, but there were also taboos in the public consensus which guaranteed the corresponding limits of articulation. Now this is suddenly publicly tolerated or even taken up. The vast absence of controlling ethical filters promotes radicalisation and disinhibition. As a society, we are very strong in forming opinion but have become very weak in discussing it. The elimination of a common information level thus paves the way for polarisation.

The loud and extreme - longing for a strong leader

People increasingly tend to focus on the loud, dramatic, extreme actors: those who roar on the street or attack others. And on those who sound most convincing, maybe just because they are the loudest. And those ‘loudspeakers’ filter and comment on the world for them. In our digital media system loudmouths are rewarded with more attention. Whoever posts hard gets more Likes. And if you get many Likes, the social media give you greater visibility.

Today, fears and anger are channeled by increasingly authoritarian leaders, who on the one hand pretend to have matters firmly under control, but on the other hand convey the impression to be one of us.

Thus, the number of advocates, who strive for a somewhat ‘modified’ form of democracy (‘illiberal democracy’) has steadily increased. The term indicates that in many places the rule of law, respect for minorities, freedom of the press and other such traditions are being ignored or abused. Take Donald Trump, for example. His populist, aggressive, attack-oriented, offensive,
proletarian language and style make him appear as a *great little man*, who is on the top, but at the same time ‘just one of the folks’ – both a superman and an average person.64

The underlying idea is that of a noble savage who is culturally unaffected by any higher wisdom. A people beyond any culture (in the sense of a class struggle) needs a leader who recognises the secret will of the people and implements it. The people and its leader unite in a mystical way.

Some people even go a step further. They vote for authoritarian leaders in terms of a leader ("Führer") principle. The great little man is finally to be revealed as the saviour (Adorno). As claimed by a recent survey among Austrians of all age groups65, the longing for a ‘strong leader’ (meaning: political leadership) has constantly increased. This wish is particularly pronounced among *apprentices* (in Austria 15-18-year olds). 47 per cent (2015) of them want such a strong personality:

One explanation could be that apprentices seldom seem to count as human beings but as an anonymous person who has a standardised task to fulfil. The key is the lack of recognition for those who feel lowest in the professional hierarchy and do not just want to get ‘prepared’ for their future jobs. If we constantly signal people that we do not appreciate them, we should not be surprised when they develop a strong hatred of elites and long for someone who regulates things in their sense.

**Real men and their ‘toxic masculinity’**

The experience of a mismatch between personal expectations and the unresponsive reality of slow change produces a toxic mix of envy, humiliation and powerlessness. And it leads to (gender) rebellion and aggression.

Radicalisation is essentially male. Relevant masculinity revolves around strength, maintaining a family and heterosexuality. The male warrior, who fights and does not show emotions, is presented as the ideal human being that should be imitated. Feminist circles call this *toxic masculinity*. It refers to the socially-constructed attitudes that describe the masculine gender role as violent, unemotional, sexually aggressive, and so forth.

---


In the context of male refugees, for example, people have produced an unbalanced image of male sexuality as an untamable force, which – like inside a pressure cooker - constantly runs the risk of exploding. It is then explained by testosterone, culture, religion, etc. But these pictures are one-sided, because the wishes and perceptions of the male refugees are very different.

And there are also the obsolete stereotypes. Boys learn early to suppress feelings like anxiety, sadness and disappointment. They believe they must function, be superior, uncompromising and potent. In addition, the image of a real man is associated with heroism and combativeness.

Another aspect: men must more and more share the cake with women. This affects money, but also power, jobs, fame and recognition. There are many men on the margins of society - left behind by globalisation, without training and future perspectives - who feel shaken off. If someone’s identity crumbles, for example, because they lose their job, a large part of one’s reality breaks away.

In such a situation, men are pushing forward the gender distinction. If you feel you belong to the social losers, there is often nothing left but the status of sex: ‘I am a man after all’.

In Donald Trump’s world, for example, survival, toughness, strength, and the willingness to fight, lead and compete are moral norms. His toxic masculinity — "his macho-isms, his penchant for dividing the world into winners and losers, his lack of empathy for anyone but himself" — was preventing "especially the white men who make up a majority of Mr Trump’s base" from expressing their emotions.  

As we can see, supposed or actual sexism and racism are often driven by social conditions that do not always have to do with ethnicity, gender and race. They rather serve as ‘steam outlets’. There are the ‘evil ones’, who can be encountered with aggression, which in turn leads to an individual relief, as delusion always offers complexity reduction.

What to do? We must show boys and men how to assume multi-layered identity expressions and move away from the purely power-thinking that has been taught to them. If boys learn early to meet their needs and are thus enabled to lead a more multifaceted life, it will ultimately contribute to their equality. Protection against male insecurity would rise if they obtained a self-contained, calm form of male identity, which does not have to constantly be on the lookout whether it is challenged by anyone.

Radicalisation with only a few clicks

How do youths radicalise in social networks? New media act as a major war center for radical groups such as the ISIS. Those who do not apprehend the theological roots of discourse and its imagery on the net will hardly understand the young people and their motivation to become part of the game. There the deeds of the Jihadists are always legitimised with the Qur’an, and

67 Cf. Research of VORTEX: a joint project of the Institute of Oriental Studies (University of Vienna, Austria) and the LibForAll-Foundation (Winston-Salem, USA, Jakarta, Indonesia et al.), funded by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior
this in very long debates. An important foundation of the ISIS rule is the spirituality of its supporters, which also manifests itself in their media strategy on the Internet.

We find religious codes - often in the form of short videos - with which the most abominable acts are justified. These presentations function like RE lessons, often in the form of a theatrical theology. What is shown there represents lived religiosity for these people. Pushing homosexuals from a roof, for example, is interpreted as a religious educational measure in the videos.

**Radicalised young Muslims**

In Austria, we find an increasing number of young Muslims who belong to this society but carry values and ideologies that are very problematic. Many are on a kind of ‘quest for identity’. These people often come from patriarchal structures with problematic gender roles. They understand religion as a taboo that must not be criticized and believe in a patriarchal image of God that works with hell and punishment. This is often the product of processes in the peer groups and the social media, sometimes also as part of their family education. This is the group from which Islamists recruit their followers.

A study on behalf of the City of Vienna shows that among Muslim teenagers, 27 per cent are latently at risk of radicalisation. Many youths make racist or anti-Semitic remarks. The author of the study, Kenan Güngör, finds two areas of concern among the investigated group, which traditionally comes from a socially weaker class: on the one hand, strong ethnic discrimination, homophobia and anti-Semitism; on the other hand, a religious affiliation that seems to produce a different susceptibility to racism and radicalism.

But it is not just Muslims. Radicalised young people often come from traumatized environments: homes where there are hardly any rules, no boundaries, no structures, no respect for each other. The IS offers all this.

Social workers describe that scene as follows:

---

68 E.g. the chat forum on Telegram
70 Güngör, K. (2016): A study within the Open Youth Work of Vienna
71 Der FALTER 43/2016, 40-42
Types of Jihadists who are currently imprisoned in Austria:72

Emigrants, persons in hopeless living situations, persons fighting abroad, marginalized youths, preachers and ideologues, war veterans and war-traumatised persons, former subjects under Jihadist rule, criminal opportunists and would-be assassins.

The Female Jihad - Radicalised women as ‘foreign fighters’

The analysis of the existing information does not show a general type of women Jihadist. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that recurring patterns of behaviour and motifs are recognizable. Thus, three typical profiles could be worked out for the women analysed.73

These, however, are not general profiles to which any woman known in the Jihadist environment can be attributed. There are mixed shapes of the profiles and for each woman proportions of the other profiles can also apply:

Type 1
Less pronounced understanding of the traditional Muslim female role. The focus of their efforts is on self-realisation through Jihad, which is also characterized by vanity and egocentrism.

Type 2
Adolescents and young adults; phase of identity search, together with rebellion against family and society. They idealize their engagement in Jihad.

Type 3
These women are concerned with the dissemination and defense of the true Islam, or with the support of those who pursue this goal. They are self-confident and active but they do not want to be in the foreground as a person. They see themselves as models and understand their actions as a missionary act.

One of the reasons for the unhindered growth of radicalisation of young people in general and the constant recruitment of terrorists lies in the lack of substantive discussions. For example, that the assassination of Shite clergymen cannot be justified theologically. What we therefore need are more convincing and authentic ‘counter narratives’.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that you cannot ‘cure’ someone who hates or rejects others through facts. Especially, as we must admit that people put a slant on what is going on from their respective ideologies.

72 Hofinger, V. – Schmidinger, T. (2017): Deradikalisierung im Gefängnis, Institute for the Sociology of Law and Criminology, University of Vienna
73 Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (2011): Frauen in islamistisch-terroristischen Strukturen in Deutschland, Köln
Ultimately, however, we must accept that several Jihadists and their followers are quite different from us, more religious and mystical. Many are literally afraid of going to hell. We can smile at this, but that does not improve anything.

The other side of the coin: In 2016, for example, the "Documentation Center for Muslims in Austria" documented for the first time in a report incidents of racism directed against Muslims. 95% of the 156 documented cases were directed against Muslim women.

---

**CONCLUSIONS**

**Pluralism and identity**

‘Clash of Cultures’ (Huntington) is not an analysis but a partisan position. It assumes that the acute divisions run along religions and ethnic groups. In fact, they go through different attitudes that are manifested in all religions and cultures (‘intra-pluralism’). What separates us is the way we live our cultures. How we inhabit our identity. How we live our religion. The demarcation line runs along the question: pluralism or not pluralism?

Pluralism is not a collection of different cultures and religions. No addition of something new to the existing: the Turks and Afghans to the Austrians; the Muslims to the Christians. Pluralism is not an external relationship.

Every identity stands alongside other identities. Every religion exists among other religions. Or next to atheism. My purpose in life is just one option among others. The key question is: do we live our religion plural - in the knowledge that it is only one possibility among others? Do we inhabit our identity as an option alongside others or as a complete identity? We should not ask: Who are you? But: How do you stand by what you are? What do you think of being an Austrian, a Christian, a Turk, a Muslim? How do you live your Christianity, your Islam, or your atheism?

The knowledge of the other, of the other possibilities, is not purely rational. It is an 'emotional' knowledge, an 'affect logic'. That is why this knowledge is transported mainly through images and emotions.\(^\text{74}\)

Solutions are not only to be found within religious, cultural or national alliances, but with like-minded people from other cultures, ethnic groups and religions. For anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and the persecution of Christians are based on the same mindset, even if their hatred is differentiated and projected onto different groups.

---

\(^{74}\) Charim, I. (2015)
Reflective teachers form reflective citizens

Our task as teachers is to first become conscious of these facts ourselves. And then to communicate this accordingly to our pupils and to reflect on and deal with the consequences together. This calls for reflexive teachers, who can practise these abilities with their pupils and do it in every school subject. However, Religious Education - in whatever form - is an excellent place because of the given content.

At school, kids must learn that the plurality of life forms and worlds should not be perceived as a threat but as a gain. In the classrooms, we therefore must practice listening to each other as well as dealing with complexity and arguments. And we must accept that there are ideological questions which cannot finally be resolved.

There is a lack of willingness to compromise and to recognise one’s counterpart as a person with justified claims. We must not forget that the individual is not a representative of the collective. In an open society, I do not have to like the others but to leave them as they are. Reconciling even if there is only a minimum of commonalities must be practiced again, because democracy consists of the processes of joint discussion, mutual listening and compromises.

One can see differences as an invigorating possibility for a conversation; or perceive them as a fundamental separation and seek the conflict. This asks for mutual curiosity instead of mutual contempt and requires the cultivation of one’s own judgment, as well as the willingness to ‘think in the place of the other’ (Kant); in other words, to examine one’s own perspective through that of others.

Annedore Prengel75 developed the approach of a Pedagogy of Diversity, which assumes that people in their diversity are not subordinate to one another, but equated. She speaks of ‘egalitarian difference’.

People are looking for words - spoken or written - that once again give a clear plea for a liberal and plural society; which provide arguments for one’s own critical thinking and counter-acting. We must enable and support this.

Current events have shown that it is time to work even harder to live values and pluralism and to start conversations and overcome fear. “This is easy to do when there is no opposition. But when we face a counter-narrative, it becomes much more important.”76 We need different narratives, perspectives, perceptions.

We must practise parrhesia and recognise truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (Michel Foucault); to enter into a pact with the truth, to spell it out. We must broaden our imaginative spaces against the dogma of the only true and pure. We need to help children and youths recapture spaces of imagination and tell stories of successful dissident life in happiness.

75 Prengel, A.: (†2006)
76 Qasim Rashid, in TIME November 21, 2016
The search for truth and our need for certainty do not seem to be well tolerated. However, this changes clearly when truth search is decoupled from the search for final justifications. We can have absolute true beliefs, but we can never be absolutely sure that they are true. There are no truth guarantees. Even our best knowledge always remains more or less reasonable ‘assumption knowledge’!

**I may be wrong and you may be right, and by an effort, we may get nearer to the truth.**

*Karl Popper*

---

**Different kind of education**

We need more education - but what kind of? For example, one that enables us to understand backgrounds and, if necessary, criticise or reject them. We need knowledge about how our society works, about relationships and how to explain things alternatively. We must develop analytical skills to look behind the facades and to gain a subtle perception of ruling inhumanity and suffering.

Education must empower learners to question fundamental issues and think in alternatives. Not through small-scale adaptations or adjustments, but through the search for new alternatives. For this, it takes knowledge and insight which interests determine what is going on and that social conditions are changeable. We need skills which take us far beyond anything we have done before.

We must provide holistic education that appreciates interdisciplinary perspectives and leaves room for creativity and self-initiative.

**Our teaching and training must lead to a critical, discerning, transcending, humanistic, resistant education!**

Good education helps young people not only to prepare for their careers, but also supports their civic education. Citizenship through education must include the ability to assess conflict situations and to act responsibly. Democracy does not end at the ballot box; it just begins there.

**Media competence**

The German educationalist Baacke (+ 1999) described four dimensions of media competence: (1) knowing about different media and how to use them, (2) reflecting the role of media in society, (3) designing media, and (4) critical thinking. In school practice, we mainly focus on the first and sometimes also on the third. Due to the described current developments in this field, however, we urgently must make sure that both pupils and teachers acquire the second and the fourth competence as well.

---

Here are three guidelines to follow:
1. Make sure teachers are trained on the matter
2. Prioritise the basics that all students need to know. What three skills for evaluating information should be required for any pupil and student graduating in the 21st century?
3. Teach students about where all information comes from

What can we do to teach students to spot Fake News stories and know when they're getting duped? To help pupils to separate fact from fiction, there are simple questions that kids can ask when evaluating the reliability of a web source. Here are three proposals:
1. How believable is this story to me?
2. What do I know about its source?
3. Can I spot any loaded words in the piece I am reading?

But it is definitely more than technological expertise young people need:

In the context of the debate about digitalisation in school and education we must not forget that learning as such is a social process. Learning environments, personal contact, motivation through a teacher and the feeling of belonging to a place of learning are psychologically seen much more important than a top-class digital equipment. What really influences teaching and learning is the social contact between committed and experienced teachers and learners - not the technology that is used.

We therefore must show our students what is happening to us when memory is outsourced. If education is to shape my personality, then knowledge as part of this education will leave its impact on me. Whoever outsources knowledge - analog archives, digital clouds - empties themselves. Living knowledge, however, can be updated at any time in a conversation or social situation. If we only rely on the algorithms of Google, we will have less and less in our heads.

It is solid knowledge that can protect us from fake news. Digital competence does not replace the critical discussion; it is in many cases the cause of deliberately scattered fakes. We know very little about the algorithms that filter information, whether the so-called Likes are awarded by people or bots, whether messages are digitally falsified or manipulated. Therefore, the human factor becomes relevant again; people who can deal with such questions because they have reflected, researched and read a lot.

Those who know nothing produce untenable assertion-babbling, rely on affects and emotions, and become helpless against fake news because without knowledge nothing can be checked and the events on the networks can no longer be adequately assessed.

It is important to understand how journalism, advertising, PR work. People need some basic scepticism: Can this really function like this? In addition, children and young people must be made aware that their own Facebook Timeline is only a part of the reality.
Dealing with radical tendencies

It is a centuries-old debate: Can ideas be so repugnant and dangerous that they should not be allowed to be uttered in public? Do certain words amount to attacks and therefore justify violence in return? Or must all communication endure the speech they hate most, even when the point of the speech is to make others angry? However, we are exposed to a new situation now. Instead of verbal altercation, we experience political and ideological violence on a level we have not seen before.

People on the so-called left and right alike tend to deal in absolutes. They are so angry that they willingly search for excuses to relieve a lot of their pent-up aggression.

Consequently, building upon the findings on the radicalisation of young people, we must explore how the development of enemy images and extremist careers with at-risk youths can be prevented and their dangerous inclinations be defused. You cannot rationally argue with extremists. These people must be emotionally enthralled, e.g. by talking about personal experiences. Thus, no constructed narratives, but authentic reports.

Religious Education

Religions are still important actors in the competition of ideas, and for many they are identity-building. Therefore, the subject of religion and religions must be addressed both in school and in the social discourse. However, what we need here is a religious Pedagogy of Diversity which critically questions religious education in the sense of intersectionality whether differences of origin, sex, social status, degree of disability, sexual orientation, etc., are adequately perceived.

We must confront our students with samples from the respective Sacred Scriptures that affect and open them to others. RE must enable young people to listen and react to other people. This opening of resonance rooms is not to be confused with the acquisition of competences.

Being competent is not the same as listening and answering. Resonance is an active reference to one’s classmates and fellow beings or to content. Students must realise that the content of a lesson is related to their life, that it reveals new perspectives and helps them to get out of the rutted tracks of their habitual thinking.\(^\text{78}\)

---

\(^{78}\) Cf. Rosa, H. – Endres, W. (\(^{2}\)2016)
The traditional view of RE must be advanced in the sense of replacing ‘ideological enclosure’ with ‘ideological exploration’ and providing pupils not just with ‘multi-faith religious education’ but with ‘inter-faith religious education’.\(^7^9\)

Furthermore, in addition to the specific subject matter and content, RE must ethically and morally reflect the social phenomena described above and, based on the respective doctrine, show action perspectives.

---

\(^7^9\) Cf. Grimmit, M. (2006)
Sir Thomas More is called on to address an anti-immigration riot on the streets of London. He delivers a gripping speech to the aggressive mob, who are baying for so-called ‘strangers’ to be banished:

You'll put down strangers,
Kill them, cut their throats, possess their houses,
And lead the majesty of law in lyam,
To slip him like a hound. Say now the king,
As he is clement, if th' offender mourn,
Should so much come to short of your great trespass
As but to banish you: whither would you go? What country, by the nature of your error,
Should give you harbor? Go you to France or Flanders, to any German province, to Spain or Portugal, Nay, any where that not adheres to England:

Why, you must needs be strangers. Would you be pleased
To find a nation of such barbarous temper,
That, breaking out in hideous violence,
Wbet their detested knives against your throats,
Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God
Owed not nor made not you, nor that the claimants
Were not all appropriate to your comforts,
But chartered unto them? What would you think to be thus used?

This is the strangers case;
And this your mountanish inhumanity.

Ihr wollt die Fremden niedermachen, sie töten, Kehlen schlitzen, ihre Häuser nehmen, die Rechtshoheit kurz an der Leine führen als Bluthund, den ihr, wie’s passt, loshetzt. Sagt nun, gesetzt, der König, der gern Milde zeigt, wo man bereut, hät derart große Nachsicht mit eurem üblen Übergriff, dass er euch nur verbannt: wohin denn gingt ihr dann? Sagt, welches Land – im Ansehn eurer Schandtat – böt euch denn Schutz? Ob Frankreich oder Flanders, ob Deutschland, Spanien, Portugal, ach, in jedwedem Land, das nicht grad England ist: dort wärt ihr selbst die Fremden. Würd’s euch gefallen, wenn ihr dort auf ein Volk träft, so barbarisch, dass es wild ausbricht in Gewalt und Hass, euch keinen Platz gönt auf der weiten Welt, in eure Hälse tief die Messer taucht, euch tritt wie Hunde, so, als hät euch Gott nicht grad wie sie geschaffen, als wärn Erd und Himmel nicht auch zu euch zum Wohl gemacht, nein, nur für sie bestimmt? Was dächtet ihr, wenn man mit euch so umging?

So geht’s den Fremden, und so berghoch ragt eure Inhumanität.

---

80 A scene written by Shakespeare, which has been used in a play (SIR THOMAS MORE) by an Elizabethan contemporary. Shakespeare’s additions include 147 lines in the middle of the action. What started out around 1604 reads today - against the backdrop of the so-called refugee crisis - like a blazing plea for a dignified coexistence.

81 Günther 27-29
Glossary

Differences
This view on diversity is normally rather critically connoted and has been described in different theories. In these concepts, differences which, due to social power constellations, constitute inequalities between individual people or social groups, are reconstructed. The individual differences can be summarized in larger differential lines:

- Body-oriented: sex, age, sexual orientation, etc.
- (Social) spatially oriented: nation/state, ethnicity/origin, culture, etc.
- Economically oriented: class, property etc.

Diversity
In contrast to heterogeneity, the concept of diversity is rather positively connoted. It expresses that diversity does not primarily produce difficulties, but above all, opportunities. It refers to ethnic and cultural diversity as well as diversity in view of professions, age, gender and family. The perspective of diversity directs the viewer to the differences that pupils bring into a classroom and tries to deal constructively with these differences within teaching plans. The understanding of diversity should lead schoolchildren to deal appreciably and constructively with different cultures and religions and with individual characteristics, attitudes and attitudes (cf. Walgenbach).

Faith
James Fowler does not define faith through a specific religion but describes it as a way of relating to the universal and creating meaning. The theory can be applied not only to those in traditional faiths, but those who follow alternative spiritualities or secular worldviews as well.

Heterogeneity
The term simply describes the fact that human beings differ in many respects from one another. Often, this concept is negatively connoted: people connect it with confusion, difficulties and problems to deal with in everyday life. In sociology, "heterogeneous" may refer to a society or group that includes individuals of differing ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, sexes, or ages (cf. Walgenbach).

Identity or identities
We follow Stuart Hall’s view\(^2\) that identities are constantly changing and therefore for many people their identities are in a constant process of transformation, as they make new allegiances and are subject to pressures, challenges and changes in how they see themselves and their world. Identity is not simply given or fixed, “it is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of being”. Hall suggests that identity is something that is never complete, and that it is more helpful to think about ‘identification’ as a process rather than ‘identity’ as a fixed state. ‘Who we are’ is strongly determined by feeling an affinity with ‘people like us’ or people with whom we share ideas, values, beliefs or experiences.

Intersectionality
The theory suggests that various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, age, nationality and other sectarian axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. As a rule, it infers that exclusion and discrimination are not

---

2 Hall, S. (1990)
attributable to a single difference, but rather to a whole bundle of different characteristics, which mutually influence each other, overlap and intensify their effect (cf. Walgenbach).

**Othering**

Following Michel Foucault, othering is strongly connected with power and knowledge. When we ‘other’ another group, we point out their perceived weaknesses to make ourselves look stronger or better. It implies a hierarchy, and it serves to keep power where it already lies. Othering is the process of casting a group, an individual or an object into the role of ‘not one of us’ to establish one’s own identity, neglecting that every person is a complex bundle of emotions, ideas, motivations, reflexes, priorities, and many other subtle aspects. Whether the ‘Other’ is a racial or a religious group, a gender group, a sexual minority or a nation, this process denies the ‘Other’ the defining characteristics of the ‘Same’. The practice of ‘Othering’ may lead to the exclusion of persons who do not fit the norm of the social group, which is a version of the Self. In an educational context, we must be aware of the basic consideration: Who is ‘We’ and who is the ‘Other’ within a school, classroom or community? In other words: Who stands for the ‘norm’, ‘status quo’?

**Plurality - Pluralism**

Plurality refers to both the religious/cultural plurality and to the plurality of modernity itself. The latter expression describes the range of life-styles, cultural and political stances and so on which form the social context within which religious plurality is situated. Plurality therefore denotes a diversity of views and stands rather than a single approach or method of interpretation.

Pluralism refers to the various values, attitudes, ethical implications and so on which arise in response to plurality. Religious pluralism is an attitude or policy regarding the diversity of religious belief systems co-existing in society. It does not mean the disinterested-benevolent acceptance of the other, but the active confrontation with the other based on respect for the otherness of the other.

**Radicalisation**

We define radicalisation as a process whereby one moves to support or adopt radical means to address a specific problem or goal. A radical means is a means that moves one toward fulfilling his or her focal goal while simultaneously undermining other goals and concerns.

**Religiosity**

Religiosity, in its broadest sense, is a comprehensive sociological term used to refer to the numerous aspects of religious activity, dedication, and belief (religious doctrine). In its narrowest sense, religiosity deals more with how religious a person is, and less with how a person is religious (in practicing certain rituals, retelling certain stories, revering certain symbols, or accepting certain doctrines about deities and afterlife).

Ulrich Hemel defines religiosity as ‘die jedem Menschen potentiell mögliche, individuelle Ausprägung eines Welt- und Selbstverständnisses unter Verwendung religiöser Kategorien, die meist im Kontext der umgebenden religiösen Kultur stehen’ (The potentially possible individual expression of a world- and self-understanding, using religious categories, which are usually embedded in the context of the surrounding religious culture). This also allows someone to say ‘I am not religious’.

---


85 cf. Kruglanski-Webber ZIS 9/2014

Spirituality

Spirituality is a broad concept with room for many perspectives. Therefore, it means something different to everyone. In general, it includes a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves, often oriented at ‘the image of God’ exemplified by the Torah, Christ, Buddha, Muhammad and others. It typically involves a search for meaning in life. For some, it is about participating in organised religion: going to church, synagogue, mosque, and so on. For others, it’s more personal—some people get in touch with their spiritual side through private prayer, yoga, meditation, quiet reflection, or even long walks.

Today the emphasis is on subjective experience of a sacred dimension and the ‘deepest values and meanings by which people live’, usually in a context separate from organised religious institutions. Young people understand spirituality mostly as a matter of intimate faith; however, it seems that they are lacking words to express their own spirituality or faith.

Johann Figl defines spirituality as “Existenzvollzug mit Transzendenzbezug” (performing one’s existence in recognition of transcendence).


Harvey, D. (2013): Rebel cities: from the right to the city to the urban revolution, London


Kast, V. (2017): Wi(e)der Angst und Hass. Das Fremde als Herausforderung zur Entwicklung, Ostfildern


McClure, P. (2016): Faith and Facebook in a Pluralsitic Age: The Effects of Social Networking Sites on the Religious Beliefs of Emerging Adults, in: Sociological Perspectives; published online May 10


Scholz, C. (2014): Generation Z: Wie sie tickt, was sie verändert und warum sie uns alle ansteckt, Weinheim


Wehling, E. (2016): Politisches Framing, Köln