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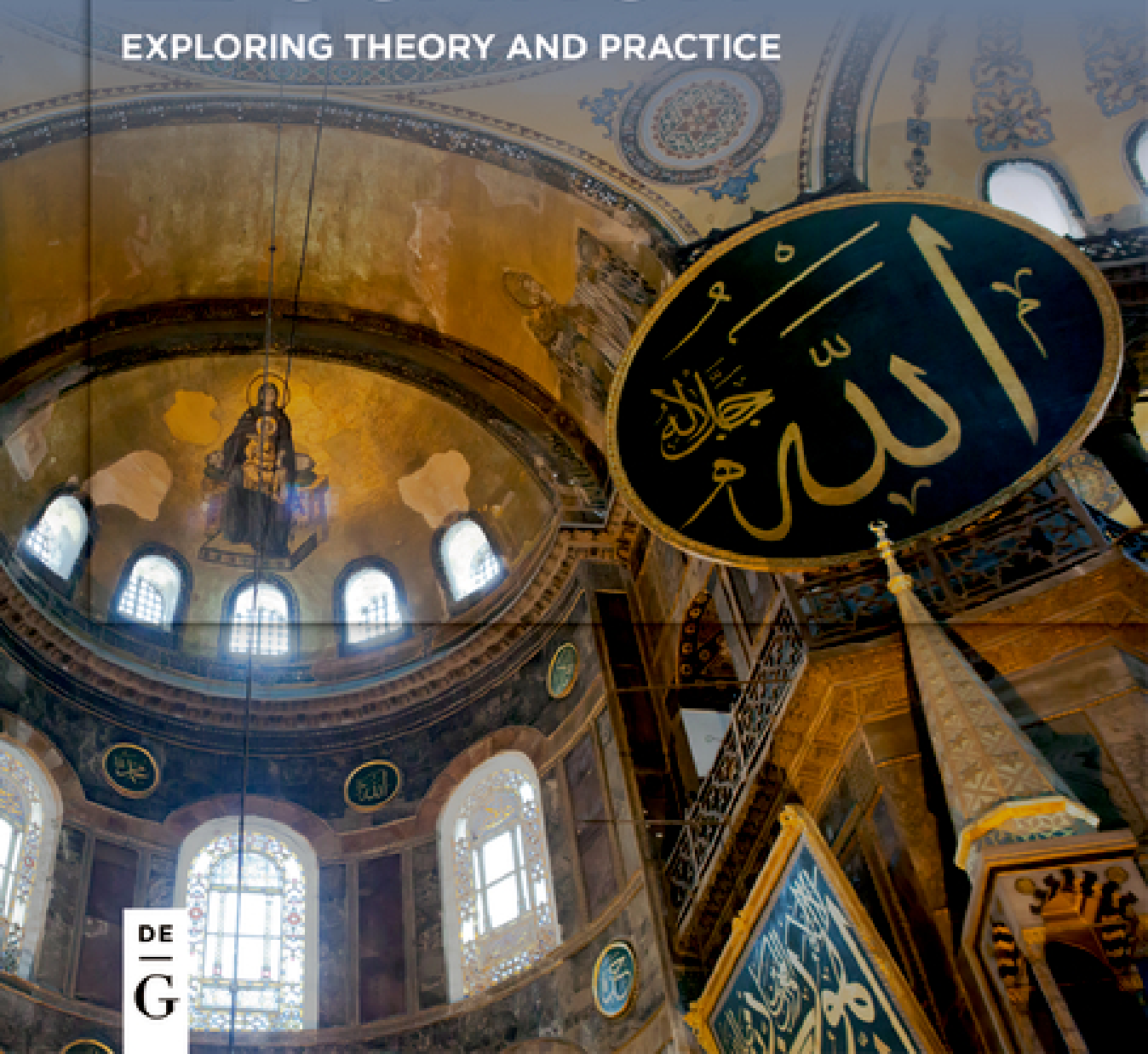
CONFLICTS IN INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION

EXPLORING THEORY AND PRACTICE



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Synopsis and Stimuli

Foreword

In recent years, in the education and training of Catholic and Islamic religion teachers at the University of Innsbruck we have devoted ourselves intensively to the fundamentals of interreligious religious education or the evidence-based analysis of interreligious educational processes. The insights we have so far gained from our practical experience show that the context of interreligious education and interreligious dialogue includes conflict potential. For a variety of reasons, even though the macrolevel dynamics of conflict are typically discussed in current research, rather than specific (inter)religious phenomena, conflict in the area of interreligious education is seldom thematised.

Two reasons for this tendency to ignore the potential for conflict appear to be especially relevant. On the one hand, there is something elusive about conflict. When a conflict begins, one can only guess at the risk involved, the outcome cannot be calculated, and the possibilities of controlling it are limited. These factors cause reservation, uncertainty and hesitancy to openly address conflict. But there is the fear of losing power. Empirical analyses show that implicit rules or normative ascriptions also play a role here, such as the notions of political correctness, various conflicts of interest, personal concepts, or political and social ideas. On the other hand, the reluctance to deal with conflicts in interreligious contexts also arises from the concern that these processes, which have taken a great deal of time and effort to develop, could be hampered by the thematisation of conflict. Failed interreligious initiatives often not only lead to failures in communication but also allow room for the latent suspicion to grow that religions cannot make any positive contribution to society because they are not capable of engaging in dialogue with each other. Even if these concerns are justified, the potential for conflict in the context of interreligious educational processes should not be blocked out if all sides are to benefit from these processes.

Given this background, exposing and analysing the 'conflict landscape' in educational and interaction processes is urgently necessary on the one hand and yet tricky on the other: vulnerability and uncertainty often emerge, the concepts in these fields are questioned, the 'old' patterns of action and communication are no longer self-evident, and there can be a feeling of helplessness. Nevertheless, we need to study conflicts in the context of education, especially interreligious education. The question whether we can take this risk of thematisation and processing of conflicts depends, however, above all on the subjective and collective valuation of conflicts: if, instead of seeing only the risky and possibly harmful side of conflict, we see it primarily as a field of experience that makes growth in learning and education possible, calmer and more risk-taking

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action will result. In particular, conflicts and the potential for conflict show that an intensive empirical study on this complex of themes constitutes the best basis for a sound understanding of the communication and conflict patterns of interreligious education, encounter, and dialogue.

Given this background, this volume is an important and necessary contribution to interreligious dialogue and to the development of interreligious educational processes. The respectful interreligious collaboration that continues to be experienced at the University of Innsbruck has encouraged us to research this important aspect in interreligious religious pedagogy and to make the results of this research available.

This study was first published in German in 2020 as *Konflikte und Konfliktpotentiale in interreligiösen Bildungsprozessen. Empirisch begleitete Grenzgänge zwischen Schule und Universität* by Kohlhammer in the series Studien zur Interreligiösen Religionspädagogik. Because the scientific analysis of tensions in interreligious work has until now remained largely ignored, our research and insights about conflicts in interreligious educational processes in theory and praxis should also be made available to an international audience as well by means of its translation into English. The translation and the publication have been financed by the research funds of Zekirija Sejdini that were granted to him in his position as Professor of Islam in Contemporary Society at the University of Vienna.

In addition to our gratitude to de Gruyter, which has made the publication of this volume possible, we would also like to thank Julia Eitzinger and Petra Juen, who did important work in the analysis and evaluation of the empirical data, as well as Clemens Danzl, Aykut Gelengec, Marina Moosbrugger und Hayriye Gül Sahan for the transcription and conducting the empirical surveys. Special thanks to Henry Jansen, for his translation of this work. He also translated the German quotes by the interviewees and the direct quotes from academic and scientific sources into English. We would like to emphasise the work of our co-author, Jonas Kolb, who carefully oversaw the translation and publication of this book. Last, but not least, we would also like to thank the students, religions teachers, and course teachers whom we interviewed for their time and willingness to share insights into their interreligious praxis experiences.

Innsbruck September 2021

Martina Kraml Zekirija Sejdini

Introduction

Interreligious collaboration is one of the most important accomplishments of recent years. Due to the increase in religious and worldview plurality in our society, interreligiosity has gained in importance in more and more areas. This naturally also concerns religious education, which plays a central role both with respect to interreligious education as well as in the development of the capacity for plurality. In the meantime, interreligious dialogue, interreligious education, or interreligious learning have become fixed parts of religious pedagogical or didactical research in the European context.

This volume will contribute to the debate on interreligious education, further training, and interreligious collaboration that is presently ongoing in religious education and didactics in German-speaking areas. It deals with conflicts and conflict potential that arises in interreligious educational settings – a theme that is often suppressed.

This study is devoted to both manifest and latent existing fields of tension. As a research group, in this book we present an empirical analysis that researches and reflects on the interreligious collaboration that has existed at the University of Innsbruck in the education of Catholic and Islamic religion teachers since 2013. The experiences and discoveries connected with this practical programme lie behind this book.

Our empirical analysis, however, does not only have significance for a context that is temporally and spatially limited. The interreligious settings, fields of tension, and processes we observed are connected via the praxis of education to local and situational empirical data. But the evaluation and interpretation of this material should offer recommendations and perspectives for all who are active in interreligious work in various educational contexts.

That we deal with the theme 'Conflicts and the Conflict potential in Interreligious Educational Settings' in this empirical research is both an innovation and a risk. It is innovative because, while much is indeed said today about interreligiosity, there is a lack of research – particularly empirical studies – on interreligious collaboration in the practice of religious education and didactics.

This book also constitutes a risk because conflicts, problems, fields of tension, differences of opinion, or disagreements arise in interreligious educational settings, but only seldom are they made the subject of research. Rather, there seems to be a kind of unease or hesitation – in many cases possibly also a fear – with respect to dealing with these questions. One can assume that such reservations often exist because conflicts that have arisen and the existing conflict potential are also misinterpreted as arguments against interreligious collab-

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oration and can be used against conducting interreligious encounters in educational settings.

To give in to this uncertainty and to ignore fields of tension does, however, present a great danger that we wanted to counter with this book. If the area of conflict is not addressed, analysed, exposed, and appropriate conclusions drawn from that, then interreligious collaboration in educational settings can easily fail. For that reason, we focused our empirical study deliberately on conflict and the conflict potential.

That this is the focus of our study is due not least of all to our personal perspectives. In our view, interreligious collaboration represents a promising area of religious education and didactics in present societies that are pluralistic with respect to religion and worldview. That is why we lay such stress on interreligious collaboration and encounters in various educational settings. For this reason, in this book, we explicitly discuss aspects, processes, and issues in the interreligious educational settings we observed that did not function smoothly. Different and conflicting views arose in which contrary aims were pursued or disagreements came to light. If we look explicitly and in detail at the 'pitfalls', hurdles, obstacles, and possible disagreements, we could contribute to strengthening and improving interreligious collaboration in educational contexts in the future.

Conflicts or the conflict potential that arises in interreligious settings are in many cases not easy to recognise. Existing disagreements and latent fields of tension do not always manifest themselves in the form of explicit differences of opinion. It is therefore essential to be more sensitive to conflicts and the elements of conflict. Here, reflexion on the state of research until the present is required; this reflexion should deal with the relation between conflict and religion.

The particularity and relevance of our study did not grow, however, simply out of the choice of theme. Two other aspects played a role here. First, empirical research represents an exception to the analysis of interreligious educational settings, encounters, and collaboration. This empirical study, which uses a qualitative method of interpretative social research, should therefore also contribute to grounding empirical research as a constitutive branch of research in interreligious religious education and didactics. It is only via such methodology that one can adequately reflect on educational settings, training processes, perspectives of the participating subjects and groups of actors, or emerging tension.

On the other hand, this study stands out because of the interdisciplinary perspective of the research. Our engagement with the empirical data was enriched by four different disciplines that we used as authors of this study. The empirical analyses combine perspectives from Roman Catholic and Islamic religious education, sociology of religion, and religious studies. This interweaving gives a multi-perspectival complexity to our findings.

This book is structured as follows. **Part I** discusses the state of research, theory, and method. Chapter **1** deals with the existing work on this research topic. On the one hand, we conduct a study of interreligious religious education, and on the other we look at on the relation between religion and conflict. In connection with that, chapter **2** discusses theoretical perspectives on the phenomena of identity and conflict and outlines what we understand by conflict, conflict potential, and the elements of conflict. Chapter **3** in turn looks at the research methodology and design of this empirical study.

In **Part II**, we present the empirical analyses of conflict and conflict potential that have emerged during the interreligious collaboration in the education of Islamic and Catholic religion teachers at the University of Innsbruck. A fundamental division of the areas of conflict will be undertaken between those that emerge in school setting (chapter **4**) and those that manifest themselves in the university setting (chapter **5**). In both settings, we first describe those conflicts and the groups of actors involved before presenting in detail the conflicts that emerged.

The concluding part, **Part III**, is a merging of the substance and conceptual lines in the tensions we observed. In chapter **6** we formulate some suggestions that the empirical findings yield for various interreligious educational settings. This study closes with a look at the future of interreligious religious education.

The State of Research, Theories, and Methods

1 The State of Research

1.1 On the Concept and Topic of Interreligiosity

1.1.1 Defining Interreligiosity

The increasing religious pluralisation of Austrian society as a consequence of the influx of so-called guest workers already led in the 1980s to intensified discussion on how to deal with non-Christian religions in religious education.[1] Religious pluralisation, however, at that time fell under the auspices of integration or assimilation education[2] or intercultural education.[3] As a result of the legal recognition of the Islamic Religious Community in Austria (Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich [IGGÖ]), the increasing social diversification and growing number of Muslims in Austria led to Islamic religious education being offered in compulsory schools since 1982/83.

Since the 1990s, particularly in the wake of the Yugoslav Wars, many Muslims fled Bosnia and Herzegovina and other Balkan states for Austria, which resulted in a new composition of people with a migration background living in that country. This composition changed again due to the various forced migrations after the end of the Cold War, which were caused by violent political, ethnic, or religiously motivated conflicts. In addition to those who fled from Bosnia and Herzegovina, a great many Muslims also migrated to Austria from Turkey, the Middle East, Arab countries, and North Africa.[4] These developments also brought a marked rise in Muslims among with a migration background living in Austria and a further differentiation among the Muslim population.[5]

The religious pluralisation of society led, however, not only to the expansion of the range of religious education; it also led to the consequence that didactic

1 Cf. *Hellmann, Christian*, Religiöse Bildung, Interreligiöses Lernen und interkulturelle Pädagogik. Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur religiösen und interkulturellen Erziehung in der Moderne. Frankfurt/Main 2000, 1 f.

2 Cf. *Dickopp, Karl-Heinz*, Erziehung ausländischer Kinder als pädagogische Herausforderung. Das Krefelder Modell. Düsseldorf 1982.

3 Cf. *Auernheimer, Georg*, Einführung in die interkulturelle Erziehung. Darmstadt 1990.

4 Cf. *Ornig, Nikola*, Die Zweite Generation und der Islam in Österreich. Eine Analyse von Chancen und Grenzen des Pluralismus von Religionen und Ethnien. Graz 2006, 165; *Heine, Susanne / Lohlker, Rüdiger / Potz, Richard*, Muslime in Österreich. Geschichte – Lebenswelt – Religion – Grundlagen für den Dialog. Innsbruck 2012, 70 f.

5 Cf. *Aslan, Ednan / Kolb, Jonas / Yildiz, Erol*, Muslimische Diversität. Ein Kompass zur religiösen Alltagspraxis in Österreich. Wiesbaden 2017, 33.

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forms, models, and conceptions in religious education were intensively discussed. In addition, in recent decades, the concept of interreligiosity began to move increasingly into the centre of discussion.[6] In connection with the growing religious pluralisation of West European society, some argued for the rejection of a monolithic understanding of religion in favour of an approach that is possibility-sensitive.[7] This was considered necessary so that approaches in religious education could adapt to trends in social development. Moreover, in current debates, the concepts of trialogical learning[8] and transreligiosity are also being discussed as concepts that allow an approach to religion that is contingency-sensitive.[9]

What interreligiosity means will be clarified in this chapter. For an initial approach to the fundamental meaning of the concept, we will first present a conceptual distinction between the terms multireligiosity and transreligiosity.

Interreligiosity and Multireligiosity

The work of Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Johannes A. van der Ven[10] can help clarify the distinction between the concepts 'interreligious' and 'multireligious'.[11] With

6 Cf. *Fritsch-Oppermann, Sybille C.*, Globalisierung als Bedingung interreligiösen Lernens. In: Schreiner, Peter / Sieg, Ursula / Elsenbast, Volker (eds), Handbuch interreligiöses Lernen. Gütersloh 2005, 18 – 27; *Nusser, Barbara*, Kebab und Folklore reichen nicht. Interkulturelle Pädagogik und interreligiöse Ansätze der Theologie und Religionspädagogik im Umgang mit den Herausforderungen der pluriformen Einwanderungsgesellschaft. Oldenburg 2005.

7 Cf. *Sejdini, Zekirija / Kraml, Martina / Scharer, Matthias*, Mensch werden. Grundlagen einer interreligiösen Religionspädagogik und -didaktik aus muslimisch-christlicher Perspektive. Stuttgart 2017, 113; *Kraml, Martina*, Religionspädagogik im Kontext der Rede von ‚transreligiös', ‚transversal' und ‚interreligiös'. In: Sejdini, Zekirija (ed), Islam in Europa. Begegnungen, Konflikte und Lösungen. Münster 2018, 175 – 194, here 182; *Kraml, Martina*, Anderes ist möglich. Eine theologiedidaktische Studie zu Kontingenz in Forschungsprozessen. Ostfildern 2019.

8 Cf. *Sajak, Clauß Peter* (ed), Trialogisch lernen. Bausteine für interkulturelle und interreligiöse Projektarbeit. Seelze 2010; *Langenhorst, Georg*, Trialogische Religionspädagogik. Interreligiöses Lernen zwischen Judentum, Christentum und Islam. Freiburg 2016.

9 Cf. *Sejdini / Kraml / Scharer*, Mensch werden, 121 – 123; *Kraml*, Religionspädagogik im Kontext der Rede von ‚transreligiös', ‚transversal' und ‚interreligiös', 183; *Yildiz, Erol*, Ideen zu einer transreligiösen Bildung: Kontrapunktische Betrachtungen. In: Kraml, Martina / Sejdini, Zekirija (eds), Interreligiöse Bildung zwischen Kontingenzbewusstsein und Wahrheitsansprüchen. Stuttgart 2021.

10 Cf. *Van der Ven, Johannes A. / Ziebertz, Hans-Georg*, Religionspädagogische Perspektiven zur interreligiösen Bildung. In: Ziebertz, Hans-Georg / Simon, Werner (eds), Bilanz der Religionspädagogik. Düsseldorf 1995, 259 – 273.

11 The term 'multireligious' is used in various distinct ways in theological literature. From both a religious community (e. g., Protestant and Catholic) perspective as well as a liturgical studies

respect to religious education, Ziebertz and Van der Ven differentiate between three models: the monoreligious, the interreligious, and the multireligious. With the monoreligious form of religious education, they are referring to classical denominational religious education, which is characterised by theological centrism. As a result, according to Ziebertz and Van der Ven, the religion of the denomination itself is often treated as a homogenous and, to all outward appearances, a clearly delineated block. This model therefore makes it quite difficult to come up with an approach to one's own religion that is possibility- and contingency-sensitive. From the authors' point of view, the monoreligious form of education has a tendency, moreover, to approach other types of faith or religions primarily from the inward-looking perspective of their own faith community, without taking the viewpoint of those other religions into account.[12]

Ziebertz and Van der Ven demarcate a multireligious model from the monoreligious one as more akin to religious studies. As far as religious education is concerned, according to them, the goal of such multireligious education is not the search for religious truth or religious knowledge from the participant perspective. Rather, the goal is to understand the differences and correspondences between various religions from the observer perspective. Accordingly, on the one hand, this model goes contrary to the conception of each religion as a monolithic block that defines a fixed entity with clear boundaries. On the other hand, however, the multireligious form of education is also characterised by a philosophical or psychological perspective that displays a tendency toward allegedly objective and abstract valuations. As a result, this model fails to do justice to

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one, adherents of different faith communities and religions are, for example, given the opportunity to speak alongside each other or in succession at multireligious celebrations, without engaging in any form of communal prayer. While communal prayer that uses the same wording – which can be classified as interreligious – is not considered possible, praying in multireligious fashion beside one another or simply in the presence of others can be endorsed (cf. *EKD–Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* [ed], Klarheit und gute Nachbarschaft. Christen und Muslime in Deutschland. Hannover 2006, 115; *DBK–Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz* [ed], Leitlinien für das Gebet bei Treffen von Christen, Juden und Muslimen. Eine Handreichung der deutschen Bischöfe. Bonn ^{2}2008, 33). From the perspective of religious education again, the expression 'multireligious' has a somewhat different meaning. Here, a multireligious form of education is, on the one hand, characterised by the adherents of different faiths taking part in the learning processes while, on the other hand, 'learning about religion' is more akin to non-denominational religious studies and excludes the dimension of religious experiences (cf. *Danzl, Clemens*, Interreligiös oder multireligiös? In: Kraml, Martina / Sejdini, Zekirija [eds], Interreligiöse Bildungsprozesse. Empirische Einblicke in Schul- und Hochschulkontexte. Stuttgart 2018, 35–47).

12 Cf. *Van der Ven / Ziebertz*, Religionspädagogische Perspektiven zur interreligiösen Bildung, 265.

central dimensions of religions – like spirituality or religious experience.[13] A multireligious model of religious education along these lines has been given form in Great Britain, for instance, in the non-denominational subject known as 'Religious Education'.[14]

Ziebertz and Van der Ven then distinguish the interreligious model as a third form in contrast to both of the above types. This model is characterised by active discussions about perspectives in the lessons themselves. In contrast to the monoreligious model, this third model thus follows the principle that the students learn about their own faith not only from the perspective of their own religion but also, so to speak, from the perspectives of other faith communities represented in the course. Consequently, the 'other religion is seen not only through one's own eyes but also through the eyes of others'[15]. In this model, the boundaries of a religion do not become blurred, as can be case sometimes in the religious studies model.[16] According to Ziebertz and Van der Ven, however, one's own religion and the other religions are not, as it were, entities to be rigidly defined as clearly demarcated from each other, as often happens in the monoreligious form of education.

Interreligiosity and/or Transreligiosity

The concepts 'interreligious', 'interreligiosity', or 'interreligious learning' are not, however, unanimously endorsed but are also viewed with scepticism or met with substantive objections from various sides. The reasons for this critical attitude to interreligiosity vary. On the one hand, various doubts are raised by religious institutions that, because of their institutional interests, warn against a mixing of religious traditions and do not welcome interreligious tendencies. On the other hand, the concept of interreligiosity is critiqued with regard to its content. One objection in particular is made to the prefix 'inter'. Because of the construction of the term, according to this criticism, interactions and relations between religions are described that, for their part, could be seen as self-contained and homogenous blocks. Such an understanding would contradict the above-men-

13 Cf. ibid., 264.

14 Cf. *Halstead, J. Mark*, Islamic Education in the United Kingdom. In: Aslan, Ednan (ed), Islamische Erziehung in Europa. Islamic Education in Europe. Vienna 2009, 179 – 202.

15 *Van der Ven / Ziebertz*, Religionspädagogische Perspektiven zur interreligiösen Bildung, 264.

16 On this, cf. also: *Jäggle, Martin*, Religionen in der Schule – interreligiöser Ansatz oder Religionsunterricht für alle? In: Ucar, Bülent / Blasberg-Kuhnke, Martina / von Scheliha, Arnulf (eds), Religionen in der Schule und die Bedeutung des Islamischen Religionsunterrichts. Göttingen 2010, 179 – 188.

tioned fundamental idea of the debate on this, i. e., to point out the similarities and differences between religions and thus to indicate a possibility-sensitive approach.[17]

Instead of 'inter', the prefix 'trans' – following the debate on inter- or transculturality – is preferred.[18] The term 'transreligiosity' is said to offer the possibility of focusing on the similarities and lines of connection that place religions in relation to each other and exploring them.[19] But this does not require taking an essentialist point of view in which the religion being discussed appears to be a monolithic block. Rather, a transreligious understanding allows the tendency of religions to change and their porous boundaries to be viewed impartially and as possibility-sensitive.[20] The concept 'transreligious' can also be interpreted in the sense of something that goes beyond existing religions and leaves them behind.[21] But a conception of the transreligious is still presupposed, and a systematic elaboration and formulation is needed before the concept can serve as an analytical reference point for empirical research.

Within the framework of this present study, we will use the concept 'interreligious'. We will thus turn to the development of an interreligious religious education because, in our view, it can do the most justice to changing social challenges and the increasing religious pluralism. Moreover, we are also of the opinion that there is a fundamental openness to interreligious tendencies in

17 Cf. *Sejdini / Kraml / Scharer*, Mensch werden, 121.

18 According to Wolfgang Welsch, transculturality stands diametrically opposed to an essentialist understanding of culture (for a critical approach to essentialism, cf. *Fuchs, Stephen*, Against Essentialism. A Theory of Culture and Society. Harvard 2001) and pursues instead an approach that is open to alternatives and is contingency-sensitive. In Welsch's view, this does more justice to the external interconnectedness, the internal hybrid character, and the dynamic changes of 'a culture' (cf. *Welsch, Wolfgang*, Was ist eigentlich Transkulturalität? In: Kimmich, Dorothee / Schahadat, Schamma (eds), Kulturen in Bewegung. Beiträge zur Theorie und Praxis der Transkulturalität. Bielefeld 2012, 25 – 40). Again, the concept of 'interculturality', cannot satisfy the developmental phenomena of culture because here, in Welsch's view, this concept presupposes interactions between two or more comparatively closed cultural systems (cf. also on this, *Langenohl, Andreas*, Inter- und Transkulturalität. In: Leggewie, Claus / Meyer, Erik (eds), Global Pop. Das Buch zur Weltmusik. Stuttgart 2017, 54 – 59).

19 Cf. *Faber, Roland*, Der transreligiöse Diskurs. Zu einer Theologie transformativer Prozesse. In: polylog (2003) 1, 65 – 94; *Baier, Karl*, Transreligiöse Theorie und existentiale Interpretation. In: Interdisziplinäre Phänomenologie (2005) 1, 65 – 86; *Yildiz*, Ideen zu einer transreligiösen Bildung.

20 Cf. *Sejdini / Kraml / Scharer*, Mensch werden, 122; *Kraml*, Religionspädagogik im Kontext der Rede von ‚transreligiös', ‚transversal' und ‚interreligiös', 187.

21 Cf. *Baier*, Transreligiöse Theorie und existentiale Interpretation.

Christianity and Islam in the sense that those religions have already fundamentally established and aspired to interreligiosity.[22]

We will not use the concept 'transreligious' within the framework of our analysis, however, because this term has not been sufficiently examined and elaborated in the research to date. But we do avail ourselves of a few aspects from debates connected with the term and do not view religions as self-contained, clearly demarcated entities that interact with each other. We view religions as non-monolithic, unclearly defined entities that are characterised by blurred boundaries, demarcations that are not always clear, and disputed content; they display similarities, interrelationships, and transversal lines of connection.

1.1.2 The State of Research in Interreligious Religious Education

Interreligiosity is a recent area of research that has undergone rapidly increasing interest in recent decades. The thematic fields that have been researched are interreligious dialogue,[23] the religious pluralism of modern societies,[24] and interreligious education.[25] This study is situated in the latter – interreligious education – and empirically analyses interreligious collaboration in training religion teach-

22 Cf. Sejdini / Kraml / Scharer, Mensch werden.

23 Cf. among others, *Falaturi, Abdoldjavad*, Der Islam im Dialog: Aufsätze. Cologne [4]1992; *Neuser, Bernd* (ed), Dialog im Wandel. Der christlich-islamische Dialog. Anfänge – Krisen – neue Wege. Neukirchen-Vluyn [3]2007; *Cornille, Catherine*, The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue. New York 2008; *Sejdini, Zekirija*, Interreligiöser Dialog aus muslimischer Perspektive. In: Gmainer-Pranzl, Franz / Ingruber, Astrid / Ladstätter, Markus (eds), "... mit Klugheit und Liebe" (Nostra aetate 2). Dokumentation der Tagungen zur Förderung des interreligiösen Dialogs 2012 – 2015 (St. Virgil, Salzburg). Linz 2017, 241 – 251.

24 Cf. among others, *Strutzenberger-Reiter, Edda*, Religion in der Schulentwicklung. Eine empirische Studie. Stuttgart 2016; *Klutz, Philipp*, Religionsunterricht vor den Herausforderungen religiöser Pluralität. Eine qualitativ-empirische Studie in Wien. Münster 2015; *Grümme, Bernhard*, Heterogenität in der Religionspädagogik. Grundlagen und konkrete Bausteine. Freiburg 2017; *Stockinger, Helena*, Umgang mit religiöser Differenz im Kindergarten. Eine ethnographische Studie an Einrichtungen in katholischer und islamischer Trägerschaft. Münster 2017.

25 Cf. among others, *Leimgruber, Stephan*, Interreligiöses Lernen. Munich 2007; *Behr, Harry Harun*, Yusuf oder Joseph? Eine Probe dialogischer Didaktik in der Lehrerbildung. In: Van der Velden, Frank (ed), Die heiligen Schriften des anderen im Unterricht. Bibel und Koran im christlichen und islamischen Religionsunterricht einsetzen. Göttingen 2011, 221 – 242; *Behr, Harry Harun*, Mit dem Vaterunser in den Islamunterricht. In: Van der Velden (ed), Die heiligen Schriften des anderen im Unterricht, 83 – 101; *Schweitzer, Friedrich*, Interreligiöse Bildung. Religiöse Vielfalt als religionspädagogische Herausforderung und Chance. Gütersloh 2014; *Kraml / Sejdini* (eds), Interreligiöse Bildungsprozesse.

ers as offered at the University of Innsbruck since 2013; it is concerned with the practical implementation of this and focuses in particular on conflicts and tensions that emerge. An analysis of the literature published until now on the theme of interreligious religious education is necessary at this point to situate both the collaboration that occurs and this empirical research accordingly.

In the sections below we will elaborate on the state of research in the field by means of selected publications. We will present these publications in line with the following related fields:

- characteristics of interreligious learning
- fields of application and models of interreligious learning
- empirical studies on the perception of religious difference
- interreligious projects from educational praxis

Characteristics of Interreligious Learning

Interreligious learning is a constitutive element of interreligious education.[26] The fundamental substantive purpose of interreligious learning has already been extensively worked out by Folkert Rickers, a religious educationist. Rickers understands interreligious education primarily as 'learning through encounter' be-

26 In general, a distinction is made between three different understandings of education: a material, a formal, and a categorial. In the material theory of education, knowledge alone functions as the absolute standard. Didactically speaking, one conveys as much material as possible. How such conveying occurs is secondary. According to this way of thinking, to be 'educated' means mastering large amounts of material (cf. *Jank, Werner / Meyer, Hilbert*, Didaktische Modelle. Berlin [10]2011, 209 f.). A formal understanding of education is characterised, in turn, by a focus on the mastery of general methods, which are considered more suitable for the development of the students than simply knowledge of content. Education is thus not approached as the acquisition of knowledge but as the self-education of adolescents (cf. *Stübig, Frauke / Stübig, Heinz*, Kategoriale Bildung und Kompetenzorientierung. Ist Wolfgang Klafkis Theorie noch zeitgemäß? In: Laging, Ralf / Kuhn, Peter (eds), Bildungstheorie und Sportdidaktik. Ein Diskurs zwischen kategorialer und transformatorischer Bildung. Wiesbaden 2018, 29 – 48, here 31). The concept of categorial education has in the meantime been developed by Wolfgang Klafki by connecting the elements of the formal and material theories of education to each other in dialectical fashion. Didactically, content should be dealt with primarily in teaching-learning constellations that enable young people to develop fundamental forms and content of knowledge or understanding (cf. *Kron, Friedrich W.*, Grundwissen Didaktik. Munich [2]1994, 73). From this perspective, an educated person is one who acquires the intended knowledge and masters the methods of gaining knowledge.

tween adherents of different religions in school contexts.[27] According to Rickers, there are five characteristic aspects of interreligious learning.

Spatial conditions are the first aspect he mentions. Religious education in schools offers the most fitting setting, bringing with it the best conditions for interreligious learning. On the one hand, the long-term copresence in such a setting makes interactive encounters and a conversation on questions of faith between adherents of different religions possible. On the other hand, young people in religious education encounter each other in what is for them an ordinary situation that is natural (i.e., not artificial). The basic condition for interreligious learning occurring in religious education is of course that students from different religions participate in it.[28]

A second aspect of interreligious education is found, according to Rickers, in the fact that the material is interdisciplinary in nature, which extends to various educational fields and is not limited exclusively to religious education.[29] Rickers thus takes a different path from the differentiation proposed by Ziebertz and Van der Ven,[30] who speak of a separate format of interreligious education and distinguish it from both a monoreligious model and a multireligious model.

As a third characteristic, Rickers introduces the point that interreligious learning is to be understood as a process that the participating adherents of various religions go through on their own. What this requires is a practical encounter and an interactive exchange between participants.[31] Such independent learning and educational processes can by all means also open up new perspectives on one's own religious heritage. In line with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of 'Third Space',[32] interreligious learning can be interpreted in such a way that such educational processes open up spaces in which existing knowledge and perspectives on one own religion and that of others can be modified.

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27 Cf. *Rickers, Folkert*, Interreligiöses Lernen. In: Mette, Robert / Id. (eds), Lexikon der Religionspädagogik. Vol. 1: A–K. Neukirchen-Vluyn 2001, 874–881, here 875.

28 Cf. ibid.

29 Cf. ibid.

30 Cf. *Van der Ven / Ziebertz*, Religionspädagogische Perspektiven zur interreligiösen Bildung.

31 Cf. *Rickers*, Interreligiöses Lernen, 875.

32 Homi K. Bhabha views the Third Space as above all a place in which cultural differences can be produced and resolved. Third Spaces are thus not tied to a physical location or exist in real space. According to Bhabha, Third Spaces can arise wherever people with different cultural backgrounds and experiences encounter each other. What is central here is that what exists changes, and new content or cultural differences are created (cf. *Bhabha, Homi K.*, *The Location of Culture*. London 1994, 37).

Consequently, the basic form of interreligious learning, according to Rickers, is the so-called authentic encounter.[33] This fourth aspect of such educational processes is characterised by every religion being able to say and assert what it believes.[34]

As the concluding fifth aspect, Rickers mentions that, through this aspect of encounter in interreligious learning, young people can discover a more direct access to 'the world of ideas, experiences, and feelings'[35] of what is for them a strange religion than they can through the study of theological writings or sources.

Fields of Application and Models of Interreligious Learning

While the necessity and significance of interreligious learning in religious education does not encounter any fundamental resistance for the most part,[36] the question of what the concrete practice of interreligious educational processes should look like has not been clarified conclusively in any way. We will present some contributions below that have examined concrete applications. Some exemplary studies will be looked at that examine the interreligious religious education in elementary schools both in the university and within the framework of training teachers because our empirical analysis deals with these fields.[37]

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33 Cf. *Rickers*, Interreligiöses Lernen, 875.

34 Cf. *Rickers, Folkert*, Interreligiöses Lernen. Die religionspädagogische Herausforderung unserer Zeit. In: Id. / Gottwald, Eckart (eds), Vom religiösen zum interreligiösen Lernen. Wie Angehörige verschiedener Religionen und Konfessionen lernen. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen interreligiöser Verständigung. Neukirchen-Vluyn 1998, 119 – 139, here 126.

35 *Rickers*, Interreligiöses Lernen, 876.

36 Cf. *EKD–Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (ed), Religionsunterricht für muslimische Schülerinnen und Schüler (Nachdruck des Originals von 1999). In: Schreiner, Peter / Wulff, Karen (eds), Islamischer Religionsunterricht. Ein Lesebuch. Münster 2001, 57 – 60; *Schweitzer, Friedrich*, Kooperativer Religionsunterricht: Hindernis oder Voraussetzung interreligiösen Lernens? In: Gottwald, Eckart / Mette, Robert (eds), Religionsunterricht interreligiös. Hermeneutische und didaktische Erschließungen. Festschrift für Folkert Rickers. Neukirchen-Vluyn 2003, 97 – 108.

37 This is why we do not deal with secondary education. Some important studies, however, are those by Stephan Leimgruber, Andreas Obermann, and Reinhard Kirste, who have examined interreligious educational processes at this level of education (*Leimgruber,* Interreligiöses Lernen, 108 – 112; *Obermann, Andreas*, Religion unterrichten zwischen Kirchturm und Minarett. Entwürfe eines interreligiösen Religionsunterrichts an der Berufsschule. In: Schreiner / Sieg / Elsenbast (eds), Handbuch interreligiöses Lernen, 476 – 485; *Kirste, Reinhard*, Interreligiöses Lernen im Sekundarbereich (Sekundarstufe I und II). In: Schreiner / Sieg / Elsenbast (eds), Handbuch interreligiöses Lernen, 465 – 475).

Various international empirical investigations took up interreligious educational processes in primary schools in past decades. These studies made different estimations of what interreligious learning could contribute in elementary schools.[38] In addition to critical voices like that of Barbara Asbrand,[39] who doubts whether interreligious learning can be done well at the primary level, there are also studies that addressed interreligious models of education in, for instance, the Netherlands or in Great Britain that prove that interreligious learning processes can be realised at this level.[40]

Dietlind Fischer, a religious educationist, indicates four points that are crucial as central aspects of successful interreligious learning.

– First, children in elementary schools should be made religiously literate. What this means is that the students need to be slowly introduced to fundamental religious knowledge, religious rituals, and forms of faith and spirituality.[41] Consequently, children at this level should not be treated in any way as experts in their own religion.[42] Rather, one should keep in mind in this context – and Ulrike Lingen-Ali and Paul Mecheril in particular point to this – that children at the elementary school level should not be defined too strictly as having a particular religious affiliation by the teacher and

38 A strict comparison of the differing models of education in elementary schools would necessitate taking into account other parameters – such as the existence of a state church (in Great Britain) or a laic relation between state and religion (in the Netherlands). We will not attempt such a comparison. Instead, we will suffice with the indication that there are well-tested educational models with an interreligious orientation that differ from each other on the basis of their different constitutions and legal conditions.

39 *Asbrand, Barbara*, Zusammen Leben und Lernen im Religionsunterricht. Eine empirische Studie zur grundschulpädagogischen Konzeption eines interreligiösen Religionsunterrichts im Klassenverband der Grundschule. Frankfurt/Main 2000.

40 Cf. *Grimmitt, Michael / Grove, Julie / Hull, John / Spencer, Louise*, A Gift to the Child. Religious Education in the Primary School. London 1991; *Hull, John*, How can we make children sensitive to the values of other religions through religious education? In: Lähnemann, Johannes (ed), Das Projekt Weltethos in der Erziehung. Hamburg 1995, 301–314; *ten Broek, Bart*, Die interkulturelle und interreligiöse Juliana van Stolbergschule in Ede in den Niederlanden. In: Rickers, Folkert / Siedler, Dirk C. (eds), Interreligiöses Lernen in den Niederlanden. Ein Beitrag zur Vergleichenden Religionspädagogik. Berlin 2001, 11–19; *Dommel, Christa*, Interreligiöses Lernen im Elementarbereich: Kindertagesstätten und Kindergärten. In: Schreiner / Sieg / Elsenbast (eds), Handbuch interreligiöses Lernen, 434–452, here 445–451.

41 Cf. *Fischer, Dietlind*, Interreligiöses Lernen in der Grundschule. In: Schreiner / Sieg / Elsenbast (eds), Handbuch interreligiöses Lernen, 453–464, here 455.

42 Cf. ibid., 460.

'no religious identity in the sense of essential one [should be] attributed to them.'[43]

- In addition to religious literacy, familiarisation with the differences between religions is required. This should be done along the lines of the model of religious studies.[44]
- As a third aspect, Fischer concretises the content that is to be offered for interreligious learning in primary schools. She suggests the themes of religious celebrations, founders of religions, the patriarchal narratives of Abraham/Ibrahim, dying and death, the exploration of sacred sites, sacred scriptures, and creation myths. She proposes these areas because concrete observation, experience, and analysis and knowledge acquisition can be made possible through each of these.[45]
- The question as to how these themes can be implemented in didactic practice brings us to the fourth aspect. Fundamentally, according to Fischer, teaching methods must meet the criteria that they be stimulating, multifaceted, and realistic.[46] Here, one can think of visits to places where the religion in question is practised, meetings with adherents of various faith communities, participation in religious celebrations or the practice of living rituals. But above all, it comes down to getting children to participate in the education event, to learn independently by enabling them to design education praxis and allowing choices in the encounter with the religious other.[47] Such didactic approaches that are realistic, multifaceted, and stimulating are very different from the instructionist approaches that, in line with the example of frontal teaching, certainly demote students into passive receptors of pre-packaged knowledge.

In addition to elementary education, the education of religion teachers at the university also represents a field of activity for interreligious collaboration. The curricula of teachers' education at universities in regions, particularly in states and federal provinces that provide a confessional or monoreligious religious education,[48] often display shortcomings in interreligious learning. That is why Ul-

43 *Linger-Ali, Ulrike / Mecheril, Paul*, Religion als soziale Deutungspraxis. In: Österreichisches Religionspädagogisches Forum (2016) 2, 17–24, here 22.

44 Cf. *Fischer*, Interreligiöses Lernen in der Grundschule, 459.

45 Cf. ibid., 460.

46 Cf. ibid., 461.

47 Cf. ibid.

48 While confessional religious instruction is given throughout the Austrian provinces, offered by various recognised religious communities, the situation in Germany is different. For example,

rike Baumann argues that elements of interreligious education should be offered in university theological faculties to ensure that religion teachers have a minimum basic knowledge of other religions. Moreover, it should also be a goal to have teachers of religion who are actively teaching in the schools 'gradually expand their knowledge of other religions in the form of continuing education.'[49] For such a dialogical motivation to be employed among teachers at all, however, interreligious learning already needs to have a place in their training at university.[50] Karl Ernst Nipkow therefore argues that religious education at the university – also in the sense of a 'migration education'[51] – 'should be done in a more strongly analytical and empirical way in the intercultural context'[52].

With a view to the encounter between Christianity and Islam, Baumann captures the following themes as areas of learning that are of special significance for educational requirements in religious educational training: the relation between the Bible and the Qur'an, the belief in one God, the concept of humanity, ethical questions, and views of education.[53]

The didactic and methodological question of how to implement interreligious learning in the training and continuing education of religion teachers is still a neglected field, however.

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in Hamburg and Bremen, where 'religious education for all' or the subject 'Religion' is an element of the school curriculum, interreligious learning is already a constitutive feature in the education of teachers of religion from the ground up (cf. *Weiße, Wolfram*, Der Hamburger Weg eines dialogischen "Religionsunterrichts für alle" im Kontext gegenwärtiger Debatten. Eine Einführung. In: Id. [ed], Dialogischer Religionsunterricht in Hamburg. Positionen, Analysen und Perspektiven im Kontext Europas. Religionen im Dialog – Vol. 2. Münster 2008, 9–18; *Lott, Jürgen / Schröder-Klein, Anita*, Religion unterrichten in Bremen. In: Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik [2006] 1, 68–79).

49 *Baumann, Ulrike*, Interreligiöses Lernen in der Aus- und Fortbildung von Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen. In: Schreiner / Sieg / Elsenbast (eds), Handbuch interreligiöses Lernen, 533–542, here 534.

50 Cf. *Haußmann, Werner*, Universität und Lehrerausbildung als Orte interreligiösen Lernens. In: Schreiner / Sieg / Elsenbast (eds), Handbuch interreligiöses Lernen, 508–519, here 516.

51 Cf. *Mecheril, Paul*, Migrationspädagogik – ein Projekt. In: Id. (ed), Handbuch Migrationspädagogik. Weinheim 2016, 8–30.

52 *Nipkow, Karl Ernst*, Multikulturelle und multireligiöse Erziehung in der Schule. In: Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie (2002) 2, 101–118, here 117.

53 Cf. *Baumann*, Interreligiöses Lernen in der Aus- und Fortbildung von Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen, 536–540.

Empirical Studies on the Perception of Religious Difference

In this section we will look at studies that investigate interreligious learning in educational contexts that have still not been mentioned in our discussions above. We should emphasise here the work of Andrea Betz on the spread of prejudices and stereotypes regarding religious difference among students[54] as well as the analyses that occurred in the research project REDCo coordinated by Wolfram Weiße.[55]

In her study, Andrea Betz deals empirically with questions that are connected to interreligious learning and also play an important role in our research. She thus focuses on prejudices and stereotypes towards the religious other among aspiring religion teachers. In her empirical study, which was published in the spring of 2018, Betz discusses in detail the connection between interreligious educational processes and prejudices towards the religious other and their mutual relation.

The study is based on an empirical survey in which aspiring religion teachers in Würzburg and Munich (sample size N = 557) had participated by means of a quantitative questionnaire. Here it was shown, among other things, that the confrontation with genuine theological themes in particular can lead to reflection processes that promote an open approach to religious diversity and pluralism.[56] Moreover, in her research, Betz discovered prevalent critical attitudes among Christians regarding Islam. This finding corresponds with the results from other research. The Pew Research Center, for example, came to approximately the same conclusion, i. e., that Christians are sometimes strongly prejudiced against Muslims or immigrants than adherents of other religions or secular people are.[57] But, according to Betz, these attitudes resulted primarily from the fact that the respondents to the questionnaire themselves practised an individualistic religion and therefore rejected an authoritarian form of religiosity that

54 Cf. *Betz, Andrea*, Interreligiöse Bildung und Vorurteile. Eine empirische Studie über Einstellungen zu religiöser Differenz. Berlin 2018.

55 Cf. *Knauth, Thorsten / Jozsa, Dan-Paul / Bertram-Troost, Gerdien / Ipgrave, Julia* (eds), Encountering Religious Pluralism in School and Society. A Qualitative Study of Teenage Perspectives in Europe. Münster 2008; *Weiße, Wolfram*, Interreligiöse Bildung in Europa. Neue Entwicklungen in der öffentlichen Debatte, in der Forschung und im Trialog an Schulen. In: Sajak (ed), Trialogisch lernen, 25 – 39; *Valk, Pille / Bertram-Troost, Gerdien / Friederici, Markus / Béraud, Céline* (eds), Teenagers' perspectives on the role of religion in their lives, schools and societies. A European quantitative study. Münster 2009.

56 Cf. *Betz*, Interreligiöse Bildung und Vorurteile, 263.

57 *Pew Research Center* (ed) 2018: Christ sein in Westeuropa. In: http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/05/24143201/Being-Christian-in-Western-Europe-FINAL-GERMAN.pdf, 10, [last accessed on 10. 09. 2018].

they assume Muslim believers have. The study also showed that, for the manifestation of stereotypes, prejudices, and derogatory attitudes toward the religious other, it is not exclusively personal faith and the expression of religiosity that are decisive but, stronger, cultural, ideological, historical, social, and/or political factors also play a role.[58]

In addition to Betz' study, we will now look at the large-scale REDCo[59] project led by Wolfram Weiße, which, between 2006 and 2009, investigated how religious education in schools in eight different European countries contributed to dialogue between different population groups (religious, ethnic, cultural, or social).[60] This project analyses to what extent adolescents between 14 and 16 years old perceive religious plurality as a starting point for dialogue or as a possible flash point. In addition to a qualitative research section, this mixed methods study also included a quantitative survey that showed adolescents often deliberately avoid religious or cultural heterogeneity in their circle of friends and acquaintances and have few experiences with other religions. In the school context, this means that a religiously heterogeneous composition of students would not lead necessarily to interreligious contacts or encounters. Thus, an encounter with the religious other does not occur within the peer group or in the context of leisure activities but primarily in religious education in the school.[61] Given this, according to the participating researchers, religious education thus played a crucial role in interreligious exchange and in the pupils becoming acquainted with religious difference.[62]

Furthermore, the quantitative analyses proved that – when religious difference is thematised – adolescents see the right to freedom of religion and the equality of religions as self-evident, while exclusive religious truth claims or missionary approaches are rejected. Moreover, it becomes clear in the data – similar to what we saw in Andrea Betz' study – that prejudices against Islam exist, particularly among Christian students. In general, however, according to the authors of this study, these prejudices did not stem from personal experiences but usu-

58 Cf. *Betz*, Interreligiöse Bildung und Vorurteile, 267.

59 REDCo is an acronym for the title of the project: 'Religion in Education. A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries'.

60 Cf. *Jozsa, Dan-Paul / Knauth, Thorsten / Weiße, Wolfram*, Religion in der Schule. Eine Vergleichsstudie zwischen Hamburg und Nordrhein-Westfalen. In: Eaed. (eds), Religionsunterricht, Dialog und Konflikt. Analysen im Kontext Europas. Münster 2009, 199 – 240.

61 Cf. *Jozsa, Dan-Paul*, Religious Education in North-Rhine Westphalia: Views and Experiences of Students. In: Knauth / Id. / Bertram-Troost / Ipgrave (eds), Encountering Religious Pluralism in School and Society, 173 – 206, here 194.

62 Cf. *Weiße*, Interreligiöse Bildung in Europa.

ally from media coverage on the themes of Islam and Muslims. Contact and experiences with the religious other led, as a rule, to a reduction of religious prejudice and reservations regarding religious difference.[63]

Following qualitative surveys, the insights into the perception of religious difference by young people could be explored further within the framework of the REDCo project. Group interviews revealed that contextual factors that were not connected to religious education decisively shape the perception of religious difference. Thus, among young people who come from a non-religious background, the confrontation with religious minorities in religious education can lead to even less understanding instead of tolerance. In turn, in areas stamped by religion, according to the authors, faith or religiosity is secondary and almost negligible in their treatment of their fellow students.[64]

Altogether, the empirical findings of the research project show that, among students, the internalisation of tolerance takes shape as a socially desirable form of dealing with religious difference. For the most part, however, this attitude is not rooted in their own practical everyday life, for the adolescents in the peer group have few intersection points with those of other faiths.[65] The trend among non-religious people is that religious difference can lead to conflict, whereas students who are more religious have a more open attitude to the religious other. At the same time, however, the latter tend to want to convince those of other faiths that their own religious views are correct.[66]

Taken together, the empirical analyses that were carried out within the REDCo project provide detailed insight into the range of perceptions of religious difference among students in various European educational contexts. To what extent these attitudes can change, develop, or become stronger in the course of interreligious learning was not examined in the research project. In the following section, we will present studies investigating these questions.

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63 Cf. *Jozsa, Dan-Paul / Friederici, Markus*, European Comparison: Personal Views and Experiences of Religion. In: Knauth / Jozsa / Bertram-Troost / Ipgrave (eds), Encountering Religious Pluralism in School and Society, 375–388.

64 Cf. *Ipgrave, Julia*, Relationships between local patterns of religious practice and young people's attitudes to the religiosity of their peers. In: Journal of Beliefs & Values (2012) 3, 261–274.

65 Cf. *Jozsa / Knauth / Weiße*, Religion in der Schule.

66 Cf. *Béraud, Céline*, The role of religion in students' lives and their surroundings. In: Valk / Bertram-Troost / Friederici / Ead. (eds), Teenagers' perspectives on the role of religion in their lives, schools and societies, 397–408.

Interreligious Projects from Pedagogical Praxis

This section will provide insight into interreligious projects that have already been implemented in (religious) pedagogical praxis and have been empirically researched or followed.[67] We will introduce a project that was initiated and supervised by the research group headed up by Friedrich Schweitzer and Reinhold Boschki,[68] as well as a current project by the University College of Teacher Education of Christian Churches Vienna/Krems (Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule; KPH).[69] In connection with this, we will also mention a project by the religious educator Wolfgang Weirer at the University of Graz.[70]

The first study, which empirically examines the implementation of an interreligious education project, was carried out by Friedrich Schweitzer, Magda Bräuer, and Reinhold Boschki. This study, which represents the results of a research project that ran from 2013 – 2017, was concerned primarily with the effectiveness and learning success of interreligious learning.[71] The learning success is defined in terms of the extent to which religious competences or the willingness to adopt perspectives related to religion[72] are promoted and religious attitudes undergo further development. To investigate the effects of pedagogical approaches, an intervention study was chosen. Altogether, a sample of N = 1,105

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67 Cf. *Kolb, Jonas*, Modes of Interreligious Learning within Pedagogical Practice. An Analysis of Interreligious Approaches in Germany and Austria. In: Religious Education (2021) 2, 142 – 156, https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2020.1854416.

68 Cf. *Schweitzer, Friedrich / Bräuer, Magda / Boschki, Reinhold* (eds), Interreligiöses Lernen durch Perspektivenübernahme. Eine empirische Untersuchung religionsdidaktischer Ansätze. Münster 2017.

69 Cf. *Garcia Sobreira-Majer, Alfred / Abuzahra, Amani / Hafez, Farid / Ritzer, Georg*, Interreligiöses Lernen in Begegnung – Evaluation von Begegnungslernen in der ReligionslehrerInnenausbildung. In: Krobath, Thomas / Ritzer, Georg (eds), Ausbildung von ReligionslehrerInnen. Konfessionell – kooperativ – interreligiös – pluralitätsfähig. Vienna 2014, 155 – 184; *Garcia Sobreira-Majer, Alfred*, "Das Kennenlernen des Fremden baut Vorurteile ab". Interreligiöse Studierenden-Begegnungen an der KPH Wien/Krems und der IRPA. In: Schluss, Henning / Tschida, Susanne / Krobath, Thomas / Dansgen, Michael (eds), Wir sind alle "andere". Schule und Religion in der Pluralität. Göttingen 2015, 139 – 144.

70 Cf. *Eklaude, Dagmar*, Koran in der Klasse. In: Unizeit. Das Forschungsmagazin der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz (2018) 2, 8 – 9.

71 Cf. *Schweitzer / Bräuer / Boschki* (eds), Interreligiöses Lernen durch Perspektivenübernahme.

72 The adoption of perspectives is understood in this study to refer to the extent to which the people surveyed are inclined to enter into the viewpoints of people who adhere to another religion. The measure for this exchange of perspectives is the self-description or self-perception of the person surveyed (cf. *Schweitzer, Friedrich*, Interreligiöse Kompetenz: Stand der Diskussion – Aufgaben der Forschung – Ausgangspunkte für die empirische Untersuchung. In: Schweitzer / Bräuer / Boschki (eds), Interreligiöses Lernen durch Perspektivenübernahme, 56 – 69, here 66 f.).

students could be reached in the study. The survey was done in classes of the first- and second-year students at commercial vocational schools in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg in Germany. During the study, two educational modules were developed that deal with the themes 'Religion and Violence'[73] and 'Islamic Banking'[74]. Each block had six units and included components in which the acquisition of knowledge, the practice of adopting perspectives, and the examination of one's own and others' values was made possible.[75]

After various pretests, the educational blocks were implemented in a series of school classes (experimental groups). Subsequently, empirical analyses were done with inputs from questionnaire surveys in which both the students of the experimental group participated as well as school classes where the educational units were not implemented (control group).[76] Given this research design, the study leaders investigated the extent to which the interventions led to an increase or change in interreligious competences as well as to an adoption of perspectives related to religion by comparing the experimental group and the control group.

The findings of the empirical study showed that participation in the educational units developed clearly promoted training in religious knowledge and the corresponding competences. An adoption of religious perspectives occurred only in a few cases, however.[77] Study results led to the conclusion that interreligious learning in religious education can show effects that can be clearly traced empirically. The educational unit 'Islamic Banking' in particular did not lead to any increase in interreligious competence or to an adoption of religion-related perspectives among the prospective bankers. But it became clear that there is no necessary connection between learning success and a didactic approach oriented to the life situation of the students. This finding puts into question the wide-

73 Cf. on this *Gronover, Matthias / Schnabel-Henke, Hanne*, Möglichkeiten der didaktischen Umsetzung – Einführung in die Unterrichtseinheiten. In: Schweitzer / Bräuer / Boschki (eds), Interreligiöses Lernen durch Perspektivenübernahme, 70 – 80, here 77 – 80; *Gronover, Matthias / Hiller, Simone*, Religionen und Gewalt. In: Schweitzer / Bräuer / Boschki (eds), Interreligiöses Lernen durch Perspektivenübernahme, 186 – 232.

74 Cf. on this *Gronover / Schnabel-Henke*, Möglichkeiten der didaktischen Umsetzung, 72 – 76; *Märkt, Claudia / Schnabel-Henke, Hanne*, Islamic Banking – Zum Umgang mit Geld in Christentum und Islam. In: Schweitzer / Bräuer / Boschki (eds), Interreligiöses Lernen durch Perspektivenübernahme, 147 – 185.

75 Cf. *Gronover / Schnabel-Henke*, Möglichkeiten der didaktischen Umsetzung, 72.

76 Cf. *Schweitzer, Friedrich / Bräuer, Magda / Losert, Martin*, Einführung und zusammenfassende Darstellung des Forschungsprojekts. In: Schweitzer / Bräuer / Boschki (eds), Interreligiöses Lernen durch Perspektivenübernahme, 11 – 29, here 18 f.

77 Cf. ibid., 24.

spread assumption that a realistic relation to one's lifeworld should be a condition for learning success.[78] Furthermore, this empirical study showed that participation in interreligious modules did not have compulsory effects on the level of attitude. Thus, after they expanded their knowledge of Islamic banking or of the relation between religions and violence as a result of the educational units, the student turned out to be neither significantly more open to nor more hostile to the religious other than before the intervention.[79]

In addition to the interreligious project of the research group led by Schweitzer and Boschki, we should emphasise an initiative by the University College of Teacher Education of Christian Churches Vienna/Krems (KPH) to promote encounters between Muslim and Christian students.[80] This project pursued the aim 'of making students capable of facilitating interreligious learning processes in their future professional field as teachers of religion'[81]. Like the project described above, in the approach at KPH Vienna/Krems, the interreligious processes were not only initiated and implemented but also scientifically monitored and evaluated.

The approaches of Stephan Leimgruber and Folkert Rickers, who stressed the encounter character of interreligious learning[82] and the centrality of a dialogue with the religious other,[83] functioned as the theoretical framework. Borrowing from the model of religious competences,[84] the results of processes of interreligious encounter were moored to four dimensions: 'interest in the other religion', 'knowledge of other religions', 'tolerance' and 'the capacity for adopting other perspectives'.[85] Several meetings were conducted in which Muslim and Christian students participated and dealt together with substantive questions on

78 Cf. ibid., 29.

79 Cf. *Schweitzer, Friedrich / Boschki, Reinhold*, Zur Bedeutung der Befunde – Konsequenzen für religionsdidaktische Forschung und religionspädagogische Theoriebildung. In: Schweitzer / Bräuer / Boschki (eds), Interreligiöses Lernen durch Perspektivenübernahme, 133 – 138, here 134 – 138.

80 The encounters were done at a time when the private programmes for the teaching post for Islamic Religion at Compulsory Schools (Islamische Religion an Pflichtschulen; IRPA) in Vienna had still not been integrated into KPH Vienna/Krems. This step was taken in 2016.

81 Garcia Sobreira-Majer / Abuzahra / Hafez / Ritzer, Interreligiöses Lernen in Begegnung, 155.

82 Cf. *Leimgruber*, Interreligiöses Lernen, 101.

83 Cf. *Rickers*, Interreligiöses Lernen, 875.

84 Cf. *Willems, Joachim*, Interreligiöse Kompetenz. Theoretische Grundlagen – Konzeptualisierungen – Unterrichtsmethoden. Wiesbaden 2011; *Schambeck, Mirjam*, Interreligiöse Kompetenz. Basiswissen für Studium, Ausbildung und Beruf. Göttingen 2013.

85 Cf. *Garcia Sobreira-Majer / Abuzahra / Hafez / Ritzer*, Interreligiöses Lernen in Begegnung, 157.

the theme of ethics or with the significance of Abraham/Ibrahim (from Christian and Islamic perspectives).

The meetings were evaluated on the one hand via a quantitative questionnaire that operationalised the various dimensions of interreligious competences and that the participating students filled in both before and after the meeting. A control group, which did not take part in the meeting, was also surveyed. Following the quantitative survey, qualitative focus groups were conducted where participants reflected on the experiences garnered in the interreligious encounter. Focus groups were made up of two to five people from the same religion.[86]

It became clear in the analysis that the encounters heightened awareness as well as facilitated learning experiences and growth in knowledge concerning the religious other as well as one's own religion. It was also clear from the empirical data that the interreligious encounter did not lead to saturation but to an increase in interest in the religious other. Moreover, the participants reflected the fact that their earlier ideas of the religious other were mostly influenced by negative media reports.[87] During the meetings, such negative prejudices or distorted clichés decreased. Those attitudes were replaced by one of tolerance and respect for the religious other.[88] It was also shown that many of the participating students became capable of adopting a different perspective related to religion and permitted themselves 'to enter into the other "faith world".'[89]

Another project that observes and studies concrete interreligious learning in pedagogical praxis is the research project at the University of Graz supervised by Wolfgang Weirer called 'Integration through Interreligious Education' ('Integration durch interreligiöse Bildung'). In addition to quantitative surveys, which investigated 1,300 school administrations and analysed the current state of Islamic religious education in the Austrian regions of Styria and Carinthia, interreligious units were designed for both the elementary and secondary levels I and II.[90] That project aims at setting up a continuing education programme for Islamic religion teachers.[91]

An overall view of the state of research clearly shows that, in the analysis of interreligious educational processes until now, there were some one-sided em-

86 Cf. ibid., 159 f.

87 Cf. ibid., 180 f.

88 Cf. *Garcia Sobreira-Majer*, "Das Kennenlernen des Fremden baut Vorurteile ab".

89 Garcia Sobreira-Majer / Abuzahra / Hafez / Ritzer, Interreligiöses Lernen in Begegnung, 181.

90 Cf. *Eklaude*, Koran in der Klasse.

91 Cf. *Institut für Katechetik und Religionspädagogik der Universität Graz* (ed), Islamischer Religionsunterricht im Süden Österreichs: Präsentation der ersten Studienergebnisse. Press release, March 22, 2018.

phases. There is, indeed, no lack of programmatic works and the implementation of different approaches to interreligious learning at various levels and educational contexts has already occurred. Be that as it may, however, the analysis of content, the planning of concrete educational processes, the process of interreligious learning, as well as the engagement with the participating actors has suffered from a lack of attention until now.

In this study, we therefore focus on one of these gaps in the research. We will concern ourselves with the actors who are participants in the processes of interreligious learning and encounter during their education as religion teachers. In particular, in our analysis we will emphasise the conflicts and the various points of conflict potential that emerge between the actors or groups.

Fundamentally, the theme of conflict requires a deep attentiveness, for until now it has not been the focus of research and in works on interreligious learning. In programmatic works, however, hypotheses on conflicts are already posed in theory. Those hypotheses point to the relevance of this issue.[92] The questions of which conflicts exist in interreligious educational processes and which conflicts play a relevant role or only arise in the course of such processes have been neglected in research on interreligious processes until now. For this reason as well, we focus in this study on the systematic investigation of conflicts, fields of tension, and their elements in processes of interreligious learning.

To answer the question of what can be understood concretely by conflict or an area of conflict, in the section below we will examine the relation between the concepts of religion and conflict. Starting with the analysis of selected works that are concerned with this relation, in chapter **2** we will subsequently develop proposals for understanding conflict in the context of our empirical study.

1.2 The Relation between Religion and Conflict: Research Trends

We cannot omit the multifaceted thematic area 'Religion and Conflict' from this volume. Nevertheless, this is a wide field that is discussed in the most varied sciences in disparate and sometimes also controversial ways – especially from the theological perspective of (monotheistic) religions. The purpose of this section is

92 Cf. *Nipkow, Karl Ernst*, Ziele interreligiösen Lernens als mehrdimensionales Problem. In: Schreiner / Sieg / Elsenbast (eds), Handbuch interreligiöses Lernen, 362–380, here 364; *Schweitzer*, Interreligiöse Bildung, 60.

to provide insights into social-scientific, political, and religious studies discourses.

The nature of and ways in which the debate about Muslims and Islam is conducted today can be seen in the 2018 book by the controversial German author and politician Thilo Sarrazin: *Feindliche Übernahme. Wie der Islam den Fortschritt behindert und die Gesellschaft bedroht* ('Hostile Takeover: How Islam Hinders Progress and Threatens Society').[93] Aside from its failings in content, the book refers to a recent discourse that gives rise to a conflict-charged socio-political atmosphere by means of imputations and generalities accepted in any case by politically right-wing actors. Moreover, the author takes up arguments that are not new and are even long outdated in cultural studies. Religion, here Islam, is equated with violence, danger, and conflict. Here, it needs to be demonstrated that a connection between conflict and Islam is to be rejected a priori, that religions per se do not promote violence nor lead to conflict.

While we should not dismiss the claim that a conflict potential exists both within religions as well as between them, this requires a detailed scientific analysis on macro-, meso-, and microlevels. In this chapter we will therefore present the state of research and trends in research on the relation between religion and conflict in various disciplines in order to lay a foundation for our empirical analysis in this book. In what follows, we will refer first to religion and conflict from the social-scientific perspective, in order to then discuss the relation between both concepts from the viewpoint of religious studies, theology, and religious education.

1.2.1 Religion and Conflict as a Social-Scientific Research Topic

Peace and Conflict Research

The theme of conflict as a subject of research has attracted interest in recent years in various academic disciplines. Conflicts are analysed from different perspectives and numerous theories for understanding conflicts are developed especially in political science and the social sciences, but also in psychology, cultural studies, theology, history, as well as numerous natural sciences.[94]

In the latter half of the 20th century, the macrosocial confrontation with conflict led to the emergence of interdisciplinary peace and conflict research. On the

93 *Sarrazin, Thilo*, Feindliche Übernahme: Wie der Islam den Fortschritt behindert und die Gesellschaft bedroht. Munich 2018.

94 An overview of the various theories about conflict from a psychological or a social science perspective can be found in chapter **2.2.**

one hand, this research pursued the normative claim of placing the 'value of peace above other interests'[95] and, on the other, wanted to contribute to the analysis of conflict- or peace-promoting processes. Topics of research include various social conflict constellations, such as population trends and conflict dynamics,[96] social gender relations or labour relations as a field of conflict,[97] as well as conflict analysis related to terrorism, fundamentalism, war and genocide, or energy conflicts as a consequence of climate change.[98] Since their establishment in the late 1950s, interdisciplinary research centres have developed in Europe and around the world[99] that carry out various prioritisations of conflict research. More recent approaches in conflict and peace research deal with the critical analysis of social processes for the formation of elites and the economic conditions that lead to inequality, migration, flight, or death.[100]

The research on conflict is concerned on the one hand with sociological and psychological characterisations of conflicts. Here, psychological models and social-scientific theories of conflict are consulted. On the other hand, causes, factors, and possible functions of conflicts and their course are researched, as well as solutions and intervention strategies derived from them.[101] Religion(s) as a factor in and cause of conflicts and/or their solutions are only implicitly thematised in peace and conflict research – for example, in the framework of analysing Islamic fundamentalism or migration[102] – and are hardly taken into account in the thematic fields mentioned.

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95 *Koppe, Karlheinz*, Zur Geschichte der Friedens- und Konfliktforschung im 20. Jahrhundert. In: Imbusch, Peter / Zoll, Ralf (eds), Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. Eine Einführung. Wiesbaden ^{5}2010, 17–66, here 17.

96 Cf. *Bös, Matthias*, Konfliktdynamiken der Bevölkerungsentwicklung in Deutschland nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. In: Imbusch / Zoll (eds), Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, 383–404.

97 Cf. *Kißler, Leo*, Arbeitsbeziehungen – Die ‚Konfliktpartnerschaft' zwischen Kapital und Arbeit. In: Imbusch / Zoll (eds), Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, 459–484; *Sturm, Gabriele*, Das gesellschaftliche Geschlechterverhältnis als Konfliktfeld. In: Imbusch / Zoll (eds), Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, 405–440.

98 A compilation of some systematic analyses of conflicts is to be found in *Imbusch / Zoll* (eds), Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, 221–354.

99 Cf. *Koppe*, Zur Geschichte der Friedens- und Konfliktforschung im 20. Jahrhundert, 31.

100 Cf. ibid., 54.

101 Cf. *Simon, Fritz B.*, Einführung in die Systemtheorie des Konflikts. Heidelberg ^{3}2015.

102 For a short overview of the themes of migration and Islamic fundamentalism in peace and conflict research see *Ruf, Werner*, Islamischer Fundamentalismus. In: Imbusch / Zoll (eds), Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, 309–332; *Nuscheler, Franz*, Migration als Konfliktquelle und internationales Ordnungsproblem. In: Imbusch / Zoll (eds), Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, 273–286.

The neglect of religious themes in social-scientific studies – thus also in peace and conflict research – is conditioned, according to the political scientist Mathias Hildebrandt, by the endorsement of the 'secularisation thesis' of social scientists. As a result,

> the influence of religion(s) or religious phenomena on political and social acts of people, social organisations, and national or political entities in the processes of world history [is being] increasingly marginalised.[103]

This topos of secular modernity experienced radical upheavals not least because of events like the Islamist-motivated attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC on 9/11. Because of the violent acts of religiously motivated actors, the 'invisible religion'[104] that Luckmann signalled became a visible expression of a new paradigm concerning the social relevance of religious themes.

The potential of religion(s) for violence and conflict has since then taken on a special focus in social-scientific publications, and it 'indicates a general abandonment of the secularisation paradigm'[105]. Altogether, this development in the sciences – including theology and religious education – is a subject of controversial discussion.

The Political Dimension of Religion and Conflict

Several publications place this conflict-enhancing and violent aspect of religion front and centre, such as the above-mentioned volume edited by Mathias Hildebrandt and Manfred Brocker, *Unfriedliche Religionen? Das politische Gewalt- und Konfliktpotential von Religionen* ('Non-Peaceful Religions? The Potential of Religions for Political Violence and Conflict').[106] The first part of this book discusses the potential for violence and conflict in political theologies by means of the examples of Islamism,[107] Marxism, nationalism,[108] as well as the general potential

103 *Hildebrandt, Mathias*, Einleitung: Unfriedliche Religionen? Das politische Gewalt- und Konfliktpotenzial von Religionen. In: Id. / Brocker, Manfred (eds), Unfriedliche Religionen? Das politische Gewalt- und Konfliktpotenzial von Religionen. Wiesbaden 2005, 9 – 38, here 9.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 *Hildebrandt / Brocker* (eds), Unfriedliche Religionen?
107 Cf. *Jung, Dietrich*, ‚Der Islam gegen den Westen'. Zur Genealogie eines internationalen Konfliktparadigmas. In: Hildebrandt / Brocker (eds), Unfriedliche Religionen?, 39 – 66.
108 Cf. *Hansen, Hendrik*, Ein Strukturvergleich von Sayyid Qutbs Islamismus mit Marxismus und Nationalismus. In: Hildebrandt / Brocker (eds), Unfriedliche Religionen?, 67– 94.

for violence in monotheistic revealed religions.[109] The other parts examine various dimensions and case studies of politically and/or religiously motivated violence. The political ideology of Islamism in different national contexts[110] is emphasised in this publication.

The need for a differentiated stocktaking of the various discourses emerges from the socio-political relevance of these themes, which is why social and political scientists have focused most recently on the question of the causes of political-religious conflicts. Here, a distinction is made between the so-called 'endogenous' and 'exogenous' causes or the potential for violence and conflict in political theologies. Though Hildebrandt understands the causes inherent to religion to be endogenous, those factors that influence religion from the outside and thus give rise to conflict indicate exogenous causes.

The potential of political theologies for violence and conflict can, according to Hildebrandt, already be grounded in the 'endogenous structure of religious experiences'[111] or in the theologies emerging from transcendental experiences. The claim to truth and the claim to a quasi-divine power of definition that underlie the various political theologies entail the danger of fanaticism and the exclusion of others. Another consequence is that the negotiation of religious identity and the identification with the 'in-group' that in turn accompanies the demarcation from the 'religious' other or an 'out-group' entails a significant level of conflict potential.[112]

To understand the causes of political-religious conflict, we must also take their exogenous backgrounds into account. In numerous social-scientific case analyses, various causes of conflict or usually an interplay of different causes could be identified.[113] If one assumes a 'plurality of underlying motivations'[114] in apparently religiously motivated political conflicts, religion represents one of many possible factors that induce this conflict. The identification of a genuine religious motivation behind a conflict therefore requires an extremely differenti-

109 Cf. *Walther, Manfred*, Strategien der politischen Neutralisierung des Gewaltpotenzials monotheistischer Offenbarungsreligionen. In: Hildebrandt / Brocker (eds), Unfriedliche Religionen?, 95 – 117.

110 Cf. *Derichs, Claudia*, 'Form follows function?' Popular Islamic Discourse in Malaysia. In: Hildebrandt / Brocker, Unfriedliche Religionen?, 121 – 138; *Pfahl-Traughber, Armin*, Vom Aufbau von Parallelgesellschaften bis zur Durchführung von Terroranschlägen. In: Hildebrandt / Brocker (eds), Unfriedliche Religionen?, 153 – 178; *Hubel, Helmut*, Wie viel Religion ist in den Konflikten des Vorderen Orients?, In: Hildebrandt / Brocker (eds), Unfriedliche Religionen?, 179 – 192.

111 *Hildebrandt*, Einleitung, 17.

112 Cf. ibid., 19 f.

113 Cf. *Hildebrandt / Brocker* (eds), Unfriedliche Religionen?

114 *Hildebrandt*, Einleitung, 27.

ated stocktaking and analysis of all underlying motivations of the participating actors. Because there is usually an overlapping of various motivations, like political, ethnic, social, and religious concerns and religion is frequently instrumentalised by political actors in a conflict, Hildebrandt suggests replacing the concept 'religious conflict' (*Religionskonflikt*) by the characterisation 'political-religious conflict' (*politisch-religiöser Konflikt*).[115] With this, however, he by no means rejects the notion of religion as a trigger of present conflicts and demonstrates that religions usually provoke or reinforce conflicts in those contexts where a claim to monopoly or supremacy is made over against adherents of other religions or the goal is socio-political priority. Moreover, he calls attention to the fact that religion is instrumentalised in numerous conflicts for political goals.[116]

The Return of Religion as Conflict potential?

In recent years, other authors have also made the theme of religion and conflict the focus of their research. Triggered by the events of 9/11, the perception of religion in research changed more and more. Religiously motivated violence has especially been increasingly thematised in scientific analyses.[117] Religion is usually cited here as the cause of religiously motivated conflicts or acts of violence. Numerous examples of this can be found in current world politics, including the conflicts between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, Hindus and Muslims in India, even between the Buddhists and Hindus – both usually viewed as peaceful – in Sri Lanka. There is much talk of the 'power of religions', the 'religious conflicts in world politics'[118] or 'terrorism in the name of God'[119]. In social-scientific discourse on the socio-political function of contemporary religions, religion is given the role of promoting conflict. At the same time, however, advocates of the opposite position point

115 Cf. ibid., 27 f.

116 Cf. ibid.

117 Cf. *Nehring, Andreas*, Religion und Gewalt. Ein leerer Signifikant in der Religionsbeschreibung. In: Schweitzer, Friedrich (ed), Religion, Politik und Gewalt. Kongressband des XII. Europäischen Kongresses für Theologie. Munich 2006, 809 – 821.

118 *Röhrich, Wilfried*, Die Macht der Religionen: Glaubenskonflikte in der Weltpolitik. Munich 2004.

119 *Juergensmeyer, Mark*, Terror im Namen Gottes. Freiburg 2004.

to the peaceful or conflict-reducing aspect of religion in socio-political dynamics.[120]

Already in 1996, Samuel P. Huntington contributed a negative perception of religion to public discourse with his theory of the 'clash of civilizations'.[121] Although his thesis that future conflicts would develop along the boundaries of eight civilizations defined along religious and cultural lines[122] is viewed as controversial and not tenable empirically, his approach still has wide influence today on the presentation and perception of religion, particularly Islam, as a factor that induces conflict in world politics.[123] Huntington distinguishes between the Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Christian Orthodox, Western Christian, Latin American, and African cultural regions.[124] A central identification marker of each region is religion. Huntington sees the conflict potential especially between the Christian West and Islam and thus intensifies the idea of the West as threatened by Islam.[125]

Huntington's approach has been criticised in particular by the sociologist of religion, Martin Riesebrodt. In his 2000 book, *Die Rückkehr der Religionen* ('The Return of Religions'), Riesebrodt analyses the reinvigoration of religion using the examples from current fundamentalist groups. With his differentiated thesis, he takes a different line than Huntington's view of cultures as monolithic.[126] He rejects Huntington's view of cultural spaces or civilisations as marked off from each other by 'blood, language, religion, and lifestyle'[127]. Riesebrodt criticises the one-sided, monocausal explanation model for religious-political conflicts that Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* implies. He points out that a differentiated and systematic approach based on empirical evidence is needed to understand current religious-political conflicts and the conflict potential.

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120 Cf. *Brocker, Manfred / Hildebrandt, Mathias* (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen? Religion und die Deeskalation politischer Konflikte. Wiesbaden 2008.

121 Cf. *Huntington, Samuel P.*, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York 1996.

122 Huntington is inspired by the so-called cultural circle theory that was coined by the German ethnologist Leo Frobenius.

123 Cf. *Brocker, Manfred*, Einleitung: Friedensstiftende Religionen? Religion und die Deeskalation politischer Konflikte. In: Id. / Hildebrandt, Mathias (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 9 – 25, here 9.

124 Cf. *Riesebrodt, Martin*, Die Rückkehr der Religionen: Fundamentalismus und der "Kampf der Kulturen". Munich 2000, 17.

125 Cf. ibid., 26.

126 Cf. ibid.

127 *Huntington*, Der Kampf der Kulturen, 52.

In addition to religious and cultural influences on values, a significant role is played by commercial, political, and social factors like the influence of mass media.[128] In contrast to Huntington, Riesebrodt points to the beneficial aspects of religion as 'potential for identity formation and solidarity'[129].

Religions' Potential for De-escalating Conflicts?

As far as the connection between religion and conflict is concerned, social-scientific studies – as already demonstrated – have usually dealt with the factors of religion that trigger and promote conflict. Current studies, however, have neglected the investigation of the effects of religion that hinder and de-escalate conflict.

Here the work *Friedensstiftende Religionen? Religion und die Deeskalation politischer Konflikte* ('Peacebuilding Religions? Religion and the De-Escalation of Political Conflicts')[130] is to be especially emphasised. The first part of this three-part volume discusses theological discourse. Here it traces, from the perspective of current theologies, the assumptions that religions contain the potential for resolving conflicts and peacebuilding. Using various examples, authors like Mathias Hildebrandt, Thomas Fuchs, Uwe Voigt, and Reinhard Sonnenschmidt look at religious dialogue in European religion in the past and present. In the first contribution Hildebrandt points to the Christian encounter with other religious ideas in the Middle Ages through written religious dialogues. The written testimonials demonstrate strategies and the purpose of religious dialogue. According to Hildebrandt, they served to defend and strengthen Christian doctrines by means of rational arguments over against other competing religions (in particular Judaism, Islam, and Christian 'heresies').[131]

Looking at the Reformation, Thomas Fuchs explores the question of dialogue as a conflict management strategy.[132] Uwe Voigt also deals critically with religious dialogue or interreligious dialogue and refers to the example of the theologian Johann Amos Comenius on the necessity of knowing one's own religion as

128 Cf. *Riesebrodt*, Die Rückkehr der Religionen, 14.

129 Ibid.

130 *Brocker / Hildebrandt*, Friedensstiftende Religionen?

131 Cf. *Hildebrandt, Mathias*, Mittelalterliche Religionsdialoge: Auf der Suche nach einer interreligiösen Hermeneutik. In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 29 – 70.

132 Cf. *Fuchs, Thomas*, Reformatorische Auseinandersetzungen in der Stadt. Das Religionsgespräch der Reformationszeit als Konfliktlösungsstrategie. In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 71 – 84.

well as the other's for entering into dialogue.[133] In distinction from the first three authors, who approach conflict and peace from a historical perspective, in the last contribution Reinhard Sonnenschmidt analyses the problem of dialogue with contemporary religious fundamentalists.[134]

In the second part of the book, the ability of religions to engage in dialogue on the theoretical level is analysed. Peter Koslowki links up here with theological discussions on the philosophy of revelations and situates the source of religion in the human need to overcome contingency. He distinguishes in this context between two basic categories of religion, namely 'retribution' and 'revelation'.[135] Retribution is related to the human need for righting injustices, whereas the hope for retribution is grounded in revelation. Starting from the perspective that both of these aspects underlie the Abrahamic religions, the author discusses connecting and exclusionary features of these religions. Whereas the idea of the one God who has manifested himself in various times and in various contexts can be used as an identification marker, there is on the other hand the problem of the claim to absoluteness. This claim is inherent in the current monotheistic theologies and constitutes a challenge for interreligious dialogue.[136]

A political or social-scientific perspective is presented in the contribution by Mark Arenhövel and Andreas Hasenclever. Following current discourses in the social sciences, Arenhövel links up with the concept of the 'postsecular' and discusses the problem of diverging worldviews on the basis of the growing religious plurality that has been diagnosed in contemporary Western societies.[137] He shows the importance here of active religious actors in political debates on the maintenance of peace within the state.[138]

Andreas Hasenclever provides an important contribution to the understanding of religious-political conflicts with his empirically oriented analysis of the

133 Cf. *Voigt, Uwe*, ‚Allen alles auf allseitige Weise lehren' (Johann Amos Comenius). Das Menschenrecht auf Bildung als Bedingung und Inhalt eines interreligiösen Dialogs. In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 85 – 97.

134 Cf. *Sonnenschmidt, Reinhard W.*, Dialog der Religionen? Das Modell Eric Voegelins: ‚The Christian idea of mankind' oder ‚Gnostizismus als Wesen von Modernität'? In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 98 – 107.

135 Cf. *Koslowski, Peter*, Der Dialog der Weltreligionen und die Philosophie der Offenbarungen. In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 111 – 122.

136 Cf. *Brocker*, Einleitung: Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 15 f.

137 Cf. *Arenhövel, Mark*, Über das Befriedungspotential der Religion in den ‚postsäkularen Gesellschaften'. In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 158 – 178.

138 Cf. *Brocker*, Einleitung: Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 18.

course of political conflicts.[139] He demonstrates that there are, generally speaking, political or economic factors behind wars that are considered to be religiously motivated. Religion or religious motives are construed by the actors to justify their political or commercial interests. But religion, according to Hasenclever's thesis, influences the course of such political confrontations as either impeding violence or intensifying conflict. As a result of empirical studies, the engagement especially of religious peacebuilding actors influences the course of conflicts away from violence.[140]

The third part of this book clarifies the peacebuilding potential of religions via various case studies from the history and present state of religion like the conflicts in Northern Ireland[141] or in the Middle East[142]. The above-mentioned authors demonstrate the role of religion in political confrontations by means of examples and concretise these via numerous empirical proofs.

The clarification of whether religion functions to build peace or to promote conflict and disintegration is based on a 'functional' view of religion that is oriented to what religion brings about or which societal function religion fulfils.[143] At the same time, the question of the religious causes of conflict also implies a substantialist or essentialist concept of religion that looks for the 'essence of religion'. From the perspective of religious studies, both cases display a narrow concept of religion from which religious studies research has distanced itself in recent years.[144] From a theological point of view, one can see that the fault lines of the conflict between religious studies, sociology, and theology follow precisely the question of a functionalist or substantialist treatment.

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139 Cf. *Hasenclever, Andreas*, Merkmale gewaltresistenter Glaubensgemeinschaften –Überlegungen zum Schutz religiöser Überlieferung vor politischer Vereinnahmung. In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 179 – 201.

140 Cf. ibid.

141 Cf. *Moltmann, Bernhard*, Irritationen des Friedens. Die nordirischen Kirchen auf der Suche nach ihrer Rolle als Friedensstifter. In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 246 – 268.

142 Cf. *Scheffler, Thomas*, Dialog und Dialog, Frieden und Frieden: Zur Ambivalenz von interreligiösem Dialog und Friedensarbeit im Nahen Osten. In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 284 – 298.

143 Cf. *Hock, Klaus*, Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft. Darmstadt ^{3}2008, 16.

144 Comprehensive representations of the conceptualisations and current discourses in religious studies are found, for example, in *Bergunder, Michael*, Was ist Religion? Kulturwissenschaftliche Überlegungen zum Gegenstand der Religionswissenschaft. In: Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft (2011) 1/2, 3 – 55.

1.2.2 Conflict and the Conflict Potential from the Perspective of Theology and Religious Studies

Approaches to the Relation between Religion and Conflict

The question of the connection between conflict and religion from a theological and philosophical perspective was the focus of the volume published in 2011 and edited by Ingolf U. Dalferth and Heiko Schulz: *Religion und Konflikt. Grundlagen und Fallanalysen* ('Religion and Conflict: Foundations and Case Studies').[145] This volume looks at the theme from the perspective of the sacred scriptures of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In particular, Dalferth and Schulz examine the problematic claim to absoluteness by monotheistic religions. Dalferth introduces the volume by discussing preliminary considerations about religions and conflicts in terms of a hermeneutics of conflict. He refers to different perspectives from which the question of religion and conflict can be posed. In his opinion, religions are themselves conflict phenomena, both 'in their external relation to each other' and 'in their internal structure'[146]. According to Dalferth, religions will inevitably lead to conflict if they are perceived as value orientations for a certain way of life.[147] The co-existence of people from different religions subsequently leads unavoidably to conflict. But tension internal to a religion can also cause conflict. On the one hand, conflicts can arise between religious and non-religious alternatives. On the other hand, every fundamental tension with respect to religion is grounded in its acts of symbolising a transcendent power, which also manifests itself in the language of religion:

> By speaking of the undefinable by means of the defined and definable, religions generate differences, distinctions, tensions, and paradoxes that are not distinctions in the definable and between phenomena ... but they symbolise and variegate the fundamental distinction between definable phenomena and the undefinable in the definable (in language and in the performed cultic actions).[148]

Dealing with the contingency of human life via religion and the experience of uncertainty and indefinability presents a fundamental conflict here.[149] First, there is the conflict between the world of human experience and the world of

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145 *Dalferth, Ingolf U. / Schulz, Heiko* (eds), Religion und Konflikt. Grundlagen und Fallanalysen. Göttingen 2011.

146 *Dalferth, Ingolf U.*, Einleitung. Religionen und Konflikte. Konfliktthermeneutische Vorüberlegungen. In: Dalferth / Schulz (eds), Religion und Konflikt, 9 – 22, here 11.

147 Cf. ibid.

148 Ibid., 15.

149 Cf. ibid., 16 f.

the transcendent. But the alternative world posed by religion is, for its part, already charged with conflict, which emerges from the example of the discrepancy between heaven and hell in Christian understanding. As a consequence, religions are characterised by insurmountable challenges that imply an internal conflict potential.[150]

Fundamental questions of the theory of religion and conflict are discussed by various authors on different levels. Heiko Schulz first outlines a framework for religious conflicts on the basis of the clarification of the concept of religion. He distinguishes between religion as an institutional aspect and religiosity as an attitudinal aspect.[151] According to Schulz,

> only what is understood, said, or done phenomenologically as an expression or name for something like religion (alternatively: God, Christianity, true faith or something similar) can be said to be religious.[152]

If experiences, attitudes, or actions are characterised as religious, they can subjectively be treated as religious. In the first instance, one thus encounters the distinction as to whether a conflict can be classified as genuinely religious or not.[153] The presupposition here, however, is that 'the truth of conflict-generating beliefs is also irrelevant for the constitution of the character of the conflict in question'[154].

Gesche Linde sketches a theory of action that grounds religion theoretically as a 'theory of implicit sociality' that can be used for understanding religious conflicts and their regulation.[155] Making use of the semiotic theory of action, Linde first defines her concept of conflict and describes, by means of the example of the history of the Christian religion the extent to which religion represents a reason or occasion for conflict.

We should also mention Stephan Sellmaier here, who developed a theory of the 'ethics of conflict'.[156] Based on this theory, a connection between religion

150 Cf. ibid., 20 f.

151 Cf. *Schulz, Heiko*, Sind Religionen konfliktfähig? Vorüberlegungen zum themenspezifisch relevanten Begriffsfeld. In: Dalferth / Schultz (eds), Religion und Konflikt, 23 – 46, here 37.

152 Ibid., 39.

153 Cf. ibid., 41.

154 Ibid.

155 Cf. *Linde, Gesche*, Religion als implizite Sozialitätstheorie. Eine handlungstheoretische Skizze. In: Dalferth / Schultz (eds), Religion und Konflikt, 47 – 84.

156 *Sellmaier, Stephan*, Ethik der Konflikte. Über den moralisch angemessenen Umgang mit ethischem Dissens und moralischen Dilemmata. Stuttgart 2008.

and conflict can be posed and a distinction can be made between narrow and broad dissent.[157] Dissent in the narrow sense exists, according to Sellmaier, if

> an honest normative judgment of a religion that is thought through on a fundamental level and contains a truth claim contradicts a similar judgment by another religion about a concrete and clearly defined crucial situation.[158]

But this seldom exists in ideal forms in political contexts. Much more often, 'religious dissent in the broad sense'[159] can be identified: 'dissent concerning the appropriate presentation and recording of an ethically relevant situation.'[160]

Violence and Conflict in Religions

The connection between religion and conflict is examined from various perspectives especially in religious studies. Here the question of the religious roots of conflict is often the focus. With reference to the analysis of the religious studies scholar, Andreas Nehring,[161] the most common explanatory models will be presented below. These are 'religion as a fundamental source of conflict', 'violence-promoting religions vs peaceful religions', and 'religion as such has no connection with violence'.

A very common explanatory model understands religion as a fundamental source of violence. The biblical verse Hebrews 9:22 is often used here as a point of contact: 'In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.' This view can also be found in Mikhail Bakunin's work (published in 1871) *God and the State*, to demonstrate the ambivalence of the sacred and the cruelty that underlies the essence of religion. He sees the ambivalence of the sacred grounded in the fact that religious people have to bring sacrifices. People had to offer a sacrifice to a vengeful, ambivalent God. To speak of the ambivalence of the sacred refers, according to Nehring, to a discursive religious studies praxis

> that does not purely present or depict an allegedly always present reality, Rather, it is itself effective by producing for the academic discourse only what characterises it.[162]

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157 Cf. *Sellmaier, Stephan*, Enger und weiter religiöser Dissens. In: Dalferth / Schulz (eds), Religion und Konflikt, 85–100.
158 Ibid., 87.
159 Ibid., 94.
160 Ibid.
161 Cf. *Nehring*, Religion und Gewalt.
162 Ibid., 814.

Nehring sees the field of tension between 'violence-promoting religions and peaceful religions' as a second model. Eastern religions, like Hinduism and Buddhism, which are often seen as peaceful, tolerant, and spiritual, are contrasted with violence-promoting, intolerant monotheism.[163]

The last current explanatory model that, according to Nehring, dominates this debate is the idea that religion and violence are incompatible. This – in his view – apologetic justification consists in the assertion that religion has a noble and peaceful core that has nothing to do with violence and conflict.[164]

In this essay, Nehring points out that, on the one hand, these explanatory models all draw on the assumption of an essence of religion. On the other, in each case, religions are ascribed features that reflect the intentions of its respective 'spokespersons'. A religion like, for example, Christianity can be presented as both peaceful and as promoting violence. Violence, like conflict potential, is not a natural, essential feature of religion but is construed in concrete, usually political situations. Nehring therefore proposes a non-essentialist approach to the religious studies analysis of this discourse, arguing for carrying out a careful historicisation of the conceptualisation of this discourse in order to reveal the power constellations and intentions behind it.[165]

Another access to the theme of religion and violence has been made by the cultural anthropologist and philosopher of religion, René Girard, who investigated the development of religions and rites in the archaic world in dealing with destructive violence between individuals. This violence grows out of the potential for violence that underlies human desire. Girard describes the human being as primarily determined by his desire, which is based in mimesis, i. e., the imitation of a usually unconscious example that serves as a model. Through this process of mimesis, the desire of the imitator and imitated (the model) is directed at the same object. If this is available in only a limited way, a rivalry arises because of the mimesis: the model becomes a rival.[166]

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163 Cf. ibid., 815; moreover, the work of the religious studies scholar Michael Bergunder on Hinduism and violence (*Bergunder, Michael*, Hinduismus und Gewalt. In: Biehl, Michael (ed), Gottesgabe. Vom Geben und Nehmen im Kontext gelebter Religion. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Theodor Ahrens. Frankfurt/Main 2005, 215 – 237) as well as an issue of the *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft zu Buddhismus und Gewalt* (*Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* [2003], Nr. 2) have contributed to the deconstruction of this debate.

164 Cf. *Nehring*, Religion und Gewalt, 815.

165 Cf. ibid., 817.

166 Cf. *Girard, René*, Figuren des Begehrens. Das Selbst und der Andere in der fiktionalen Realität. Vienna ^{2}2012, 11 – 58.

This conflict potential, which is present in the mimetic desire underlying human nature, threatens human society if violence is not curbed or suppressed. In communities in the archaic world, according to Girard, there were mechanisms that reined in this mimetic rivalry through ritualisation and the divinisation of the sacrificial cult. The social crisis that violence caused

> led to the mimetic sacrifice mechanism to form the first systems of prohibitions and sacrificial rites. These were the first religions and they formed the initial form of human culture.[167]

Girard thus presents the rise of the first religions in his work and traces the development of human dealing with the potential of mimetic desire for conflict through the biblical writings. He situates the high point of this in the gospels where Jesus becomes the model of a positive mimesis. The dynamics of the mimetic rivalry are revealed in the narratives and transformed in the actions of Jesus.[168] Jesus frees himself from the dynamics of mimetic rivalry by renouncing the violent implementation of his objectives and orients his desire to higher goals: life, peace, and happiness.

Influenced by biblical tradition, Girard emphasises Jesus as the turning point in human history with respect to dealing with mimetic desire. The Christian theologian Wolfgang Palaver points out that the continuity in Girard's expositions on a positive handling of mimetic desire lies 'in a mystical attitude'[169] that entails a rejection of egoistic individualism and the violence-prone implementation of one's own beliefs. That opens up a way of reconciliation and peace that, in Palaver's view, is emphasised in the demonstration of the central place of the mystical attitude found in different religious traditions, also outside Christianity.[170]

The directions for such an attitude can be found, for instance, in the Islamic scholar and mystic Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111). In his work, al-Ghazali emphasises the significance of renunciation for rejecting inhuman violence: 'So, the anger of him whose need is greater will be greater and he will be more help-

167 *Girard, René*, Gewalt und Religion: Ursache oder Wirkung? (edited by Wolfgang Palaver). Berlin 2010, 15.

168 Cf. *Girard, René*, Ich sah den Satan vom Himmel fallen wie einen Blitz. Eine kritische Apologie des Christentums. Munich 2008, 156 – 192.

169 *Palaver, Wolfgang*, Girard und Hölderlin: Die Bedeutung der *kenosis* für Girards apokalyptisches Denken. In: Guggenberger, Wilhelm / Palaver, Wolfgang (eds), Eskalation zum Äußersten? Girards Clausewitz interdisziplinär kommentiert. Baden-Baden 2015, 135 – 155, here 135.

170 Cf. ibid.

less and impoverished; for freedom lies in needlessness.'[171] Al-Ghazali can be a point of contact in the Islamic tradition for Girard's mimetic theory. There are, according to Palaver, such instructions for an abjuring attitude, also in the mystical traditions of, for example, Christianity, Judaism, and Eastern religions.[172]

Girard's theory allows the discovery of points of contact in different religious traditions that show a positive approach to mimetic desire and a rejection of violence. For the relation between religion and violence or conflict, Girard's thinking is relevant primarily with respect to the significance of religious norms and rites. In his view, these norms and rites can keep the existing violence and conflict potential in check. Furthermore, there are models and instructions in religions, especially in the mystical traditions, that provide instructions for a path to reconciliation and peace. By way of example, Kerstin Kellerman also presents a theological-Christian perspective that grounds the potential for a peaceful dialogue in the ethic of love in Christianity.[173]

The Center for Comparative Theology and Cultural Studies at the University of Paderborn also emphasises the thematic area of religion and violence. Hamideh Mohagheghi in particular does that from a Muslim perspective. In the current context of religious fundamentalism and extremism, she considers a reflective analysis on the relation between religion and violence to be necessary. From her perspective, it is crucial that adherents and teachers of these religions have a clear view of the problematic areas of their own religions and deal with them. In the present increasing turn to 'clarity in beliefs', for Islamic theology this means reviving the tradition of *iǧtiḥād* (concern with new doctrines anchored in the tradition).[174]

Religion and Conflict in Interreligious Education

Our discussion until now has adequately shown that there is conflict for potential in the encounter between people who have been socialised in different ways religiously and culturally, particularly on the macrolevel. But the question of re-

171 *Al-Ghazali*, On the Treatment of Anger, Hatred and Envy. (Translation by Muhammad Nur Abdus Salam). Chicago 2002, 10.

172 Cf. *Palaver*, Girard und Hölderlin, 139.

173 Cf. *Kellermann, Kerstin*, Christus – Stein des Anstoßes: Über ‚kulturelle Friedfertigkeiten' jenseits von Siegerlogiken in Religion und Politik. In: Brocker / Hildebrandt (eds), Friedensstiftende Religionen?, 138 – 157.

174 Cf. *Mohagheghi, Hamideh*, "Tötet sie, wo ihr sie trefft." – Eine Auslegung zu Q 2:190 – 195. In: Ead. / von Stosch, Klaus (eds), Gewalt in den Heiligen Schriften von Islam und Christentum. Paderborn 2014, 73 – 91, here 73 – 75.

ligiously determined conflict potential has become more and more significant in recent years in the field of religious education as well, even though it is not explicitly thematised.

Here we look once again at the international REDCo project that we discussed above. The goal of this project is 'to establish and compare the potential and limitations of religion in the educational fields of selected European countries and regions.'[175] The project included various disciplines like theology, Islamic studies, educational sciences, sociology, political science, and ethnology. It also engaged in historical and contemporary analyses combined with each other in order to work out the factors that promote interreligious dialogue in the area of education.[176]

In addition to the openness of the students to other religions, in the research project, 'structures of prejudices towards other religions'[177] became clearly visible. What still remains, however, is a detailed investigation of the extent to which religion and religiosity are determinants of prejudice and conflict.

Furthermore, we would also like to refer here to the online journal for intercultural studies, *Interculture Journal*. In the ninth issue, *Interkulturalität als Gegenstand in Lehre, Training, Coaching und Consulting* ('Interculturality as a Subject in Teaching, Training, Coaching and Consulting'), challenges and objectives of interculturality are described by various authors. Any references to conflict are found here between the lines. In particular, the contribution by Joachim Willems *Interreligiöses und interkulturelles Lernen: notwendige Bezüge und notwendige Unterscheidungen* ('Interreligious and Intercultural Learning: Necessary References and Necessary Distinctions') is relevant for our topic. In both intercultural and interreligious education, plurality is perceived as a problem or challenge,[178] which, according to Willems, also consequently emerges in the area of intercultural and interreligious learning. One objective of interreligious learning is to get to know adherents of other religions and to treat their different views with respect and recognition. The fundamental assumption here is 'the clarification

175 *Weiße, Wolfram*, Interreligiöse Bildung in Europa. In: epd-Dokumentationen (2009) 20, 12–14, here 13. For the English translation, see: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/28384/reporting, [last accessed: 09.09.2019].

176 The final report can be found on the following website: https://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/47525_en.html, [last accessed 10.09.2018].

177 *Weiße*, Interreligiöse Bildung in Europa, 14.

178 Cf. *Willems, Joachim*, Interreligiöses und interkulturelles Lernen: notwendige Bezüge und notwendige Unterscheidungen. In: interculture journal. Online-Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Studien (2009) 9, 23–44.

and awareness of one's own moral concepts, identities, and worldviews'[179] as well as being occupied with other cultures. Here, the ability to engage in metacommunication and to show empathy and to acknowledge others is necessary. The objectives of intercultural education therefore lie in the revealing and thematisation of discrimination and racism, promoting solidarity, and preventing further conflicts.[180]

Willems therefore holds that a 'general objective' of interreligious and intercultural learning is 'to deal with other worldviews'[181] and 'to find ways to balance interests and to reflect to some extent on the foundations and process in order to arrive at such a balance.'[182] It is important to clarify whether conflicts should be seen as intercultural, interreligious, social, legal, etc. For that, it would be helpful to analyse and investigate processes of ascription.[183] Willems also points beyond that to a need to connect intercultural and interreligious learning in order to counteract stereotyping, culturalisations, ethnicisations, or religionisations because concepts like 'culture' and 'religion' are reflected in them.[184]

Finally, we should also mention here the Innsbrucker Forschungszentrum Religion – Gewalt – Kommunikation – Weltordnung (Innsbruck Research Centre of Religion – Violence – Communication – World Order; RGKW), which consists of two research programmes: Dramatic Theology or Mimetic Theory, and Communicative Theology. The centre focuses on questions of the connection between theology and church and between theory and praxis. In the research programme of dramatic theology, questions of religion and violence are central to theological research. The research programme of Communicative Theology is concerned with theological and religious educational processes from the perspective of theme-centred interaction (TCI). There R. C. Cohn's interactional method of learning as

> sharing and compassionate teaching and learning ... is removed from the straitjacket of a purely material approach to knowledge into a holistic approach that is oriented to a humanisation of society.[185]

179 Ibid., 32.

180 Here Willems refers to a monograph by *Nieke, Wolfgang*, Interkulturelle Erziehung und Bildung. Wertorientierung im Alltag. Opladen ^{2}2000.

181 *Willems*, Interreligiöses und interkulturelles Lernen, 37.

182 Ibid.

183 Cf. ibid.

184 Cf. ibid., 34–44.

185 *Scharer, Matthias*, Begegnungen Raum geben. Kommunikatives Lernen als Dienst in Gemeinde, Schule und Erwachsenenbildung. Mainz 1995, 35.

Teachers in theme-centred learning groups thus look at a 'dynamic balance between the Globe, I, We [and] It,'[186] whereby particular conflicts or disruptions that arise in interactions are revealed and discussed.[187]

The idea for this project is thus due not least to this conflict-sensitive approach to learning and teaching, especially in interreligious encounter. Even though we could show here that in recent years various disciplines have turned to the analysis of the relation between religion and conflict, especially on the macrolevel, there is also a gap in research on the microlevel, on the level of interaction between individuals, as we see in the area of education. In our view, there is a desideratum for research particularly in empirical research into interreligious conflicts. By building on existing social-scientific studies and theological considerations, we intend to lay another building block for understanding the relation between religion and conflict through an empirical investigation into interreligious educational processes and the concomitant conflict potential emerging from them.

186 Ibid.; the concepts 'I', 'We', 'It', and 'Globe' are also known as the TCI triangle. Whereas 'I' refers to individuals with their respective biographies and 'We' to the interactions and relationship structure of the group, the 'It' refers to the content that is focused on, or the task that is to be handled by the group. 'Globe', in turn, refers to the surroundings that influences the group and, conversely, is influenced by the group (cf. *Sejdini / Kraml / Scharer*, Mensch werden, 87).
187 Cf. *Scharer*, Begegnungen Raum geben, 35; on this, cf. also: *Scharer, Matthias*, Der Universitätslehrgang "Kommunikative Theologie" als Modell theologisch inspirierten Konflikt- und Versöhnungshandelns. In: Schwager, Raymund / Niewiadomski, Józef (eds), Religion erzeugt Gewalt – Einspruch! Innsbrucker Forschungsprojekt ‚Religion – Gewalt – Kommunikation – Weltordnung'. Münster 2003, 273–286.

2 Theoretical Considerations: Identity and Conflict

2.1 Reflections on the Concept of Identity

The perception of 'oneself' and 'others' represents a central aspect in social interaction and thus in interreligious encounters. How one sees and presents oneself and experiences oneself in the encounter with others influences how one is perceived by the other. This in turn indirectly influences the self-perception of the other and also affects interactions. Depending on whether one accepts the concept of a stable identity or that of multiple identities, one will see interreligious educational processes differently and organise them differently, when it is viewed as possibly dangerous.

Therefore, in order to adequately grasp interreligious educational processes, we will examine interaction patterns against the background of social psychological and social-scientific identity models. We will pose the question as to what role personal and social identity and the perception of the other play and how they influence the interreligious encounter positively or negatively.

So that we can address the question of identity, the theoretical framework that underlies our reflections will be discussed first. 'Identity' goes back to the Latin word *idem* and means 'the same.' As a philosophical concept, identity means that 'something must be the same as something else in all aspects and distinct from others'[1]. Since the establishment of the concept of identity by specialists in the 18th century, the models of and properties of the concept have changed. Up until the present the question of identity has been at the centre of the discussion about identity: 'Who am I?'[2] Various processes of social change, which accompany the conditions and consequences of modernity, offer new answers and possibilities to the old questions of identity. Processes of social differentiation, the pluralisation of lifeworlds, and the concomitant individualisation process lead to the detachment of the individual from preconceived societal frameworks.

At the same time, identity discourse has experienced a boom in recent years, as shown by the numerous social-scientific and psychological publications, that

1 *Niethammer, Lutz*, Kollektive Identität. Reinbek 2000, 41.

2 *Straub, Jürgen*, Identitätstheorie, empirische Identitätsforschung und die ‚postmoderne' armchair psychology. In: Zeitschrift für qualitative Bildungs-, Beratungs- und Sozialforschung (2000) 1, 167–194, here 170.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110762877-004

indicates the relevance of the theme.[3] The question of 'individual' or 'personal' identity has been discussed from various perspectives, especially in (social) psychology. In empirical studies on identity, psychology focuses on the analysis of cognitive self-images. Education looks at the possibilities of self-development while, from the social-scientific perspective, the social presuppositions for concepts of identity are reconstructed.[4] Viewed from the perspectives of the various sciences, identity can be understood 'as a (cognitive) self-image, as habitual impression, as social roles, or as ascription, as performative service, as a constructed narrative'[5]. In what follows, we will elucidate the perspectives of identity research that are central to our own research, which are also reflected in our evaluation of the empirical material.

2.1.1 Psychological Perspectives on Identity

The German-American psychoanalyst and developmental psychologist Erik Erikson (1902–1994) influenced the present psychological concept of identity in a significant way. He was the first to develop a psychologically based identity model, conceived as a

> fundamental attitude that a young person had to form at the end of his youth from the successful synthesis of the post-adolescent organisation of the urges of his I and social reality.[6]

The 'I identity'[7] that develops at the end of post-adolescence[8] is characterised, according to Erikson, as a uniform and 'stable' essential core that secures a more or less successful management of life after adolescence.[9] Erikson's identity theory is a psychological development model that he considers to be the foundation of personality development. In this model, identity is a partial aspect of personality and the final step in the development of the I that takes place

3 Cf. ibid., 169 f.; *Eickelpasch, Rolf / Rademacher, Claudia*, Identität. Bielefeld 2004, 5.
4 Cf. *Zirfas, Jörg*, Identität in der Moderne. Eine Einleitung. In: Jörissen, Benjamin / Id. (eds), Schlüsselwerke der Identitätsforschung. Wiesbaden 2010, 9–18, here 9.
5 Ibid.
6 *Erikson, Erik H.*, Das Traummuster der Psychoanalyse. In: Psyche (1955) 8, 561–604, here 601.
7 Cf. *Erikson, Erik H.*, Identität und Lebenszyklus. Frankfurt/Main 1973; *Erikson, Erik H.*, Jugend und Krise. Stuttgart ^{3}1980.
8 The concept of post-adolescence characterises early adulthood and lasts from the age of 18 to 24 according to Erikson's model of psychosocial development.
9 Cf. *Erikson*, Identität und Lebenszyklus, 107 f.

in the first three life phases.[10] This step includes all significant identifications.[11] Erikson identifies eight life phases that assign specific tasks to the individual to master crisis situations. To that extent, his model is significant for the evaluation of our empirical material since it is also frequently used in religious education today. This model is the foundation for the understanding of the development of students, especially in educational and developmental processes. Above all, this is important because,

> beyond the horizon of objectives related to content but obviously also motivated and supported by them, [religious instruction makes] a universally human contribution to children and young people finding their identity.[12]

Although Erikson does not formulate an explicit theory of religion, his model of religious education was adapted to describe processes of the development of religious identity.[13] Moreover, Erikson's concept has also had lasting influence on the progress and continued development of psychological and social-scientific theories of identity. The focus on the processual character of psycho-social development as well as the idea of a lifelong development of the human being has been valuated positively. In the context of postmodern identity discourse, the idea of identity as a stable essential core, which continues to exist into adulthood has, however, been criticised in particular.[14]

In addition to its significance in the various scientific disciplines, Erikson's model is important for the social-scientific analysis of the present data in connection with the question of what self-image emerges with regard to one's own religious identity and how these fundamental ideas can also be identified in the narrations of the interviewees.

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10 Cf. *Noack, Juliane*, Erik H. Erikson. Identität und Lebenszyklus. In: Jörissen / Zirfas (eds), Schlüsselwerke der Identitätsforschung, 37–54, here 45.

11 Cf. *Erikson*, Jugend und Krise, 156.

12 *Mendl, Hans*, Religionsdidaktik kompakt: Für Studium, Prüfung und Beruf. Munich 2012, 71.

13 Cf. ibid., 34.

14 James E. Marcia operationalised Erikson's phase model for empirical research and developed an expanded identity theory, at whose centre are four states of human identity (cf. *Marcia, James E.*, The ego identity status approach to ego identity. In: Id. / Waterman, Alan / Matteson, David / Archer, Sally / Orlofsky, Jacob (eds), Ego identity. A handbook of psychosocial research. New York 1993).

2.1.2 Social Psychological Models: Identity as Narration

We will use the concept of patchwork identity to examine the narrations and identity constructions of the interviewees. This model was developed by Heiner Keupp and his research group on the basis of empirical studies in order to get a theoretical grasp of identity negotiations in contemporary circumstances. For our analysis, Keupp's approach represents a useful theoretical foundation because, on the one hand, self-narrations are present in the interviews, and, on the other, the plural and religiously heterogeneous situation of our interviewees requires a strategy that directs our focus on the construction of identity in the sense of images of oneself and of the other. The approach of patchwork identity permits us to, among other things, focus on partial aspects of identity, like that of religious identity. Guiding questions here are how one's own religious identity is developed and 'narrated' and how the religious identity of the other is perceived and represented.[15]

Keupp's identity model is directed at the 'deconstruction of founding co-ordinates of modern self-understanding' like the 'ideas of the unity, continuity, developmental logic or progress'[16] of identity. Keupp is a postmodern representative of identity research who demonstrate the processes of social change and the concomitant chances and risks for individual identity negotiation. In distinction from modern identity models like Erikson's, which view identity as a stable core in an unvarying socio-cultural environment, representatives of postmodern identity theories criticise the 'ideal of a successful integration of subject and society' and refer to 'the impossibility of such a synchronisation in a capitalist society'[17].

The processes of differentiation, individualisation, and pluralisation that have been ascertainable since the 1960s and lead to the loss of meaning and the dissolution of traditional communities in the sense of identity-guaranteeing ways of life,[18] compel the individual into a more active role in shaping his or her life and in the attribution of meaning. Thus, the 'processing of different roles, ways of life, and elements of meaning into a whole of meaning is demanded as one's own contribution and task.'[19]

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15 Cf. *Bauer, Nicole M.*, Kabbala und religiöse Identität: Eine religionswissenschaftliche Analyse des deutschsprachigen Kabbalah Centre. Bielefeld 2017, 57–65.

16 *Keupp, Heiner*, Identitätskonstruktionen. Das Patchwork der Identitäten in der Spätmoderne. Reinbek ^{4}2008, 30.

17 Ibid., 29.

18 Cf. *Eickelpasch / Rademacher*, Identität, 6.

19 Ibid., 7.

It is precisely those processes of active construction that are the focus of late modern identity research.[20] Moreover, with respect to the identity model, it is primarily the notion of a 'seamless integration of the subject into the respective socio-cultural environment'[21] and the assumption of an 'complete internal psychological integration of the personality' that are critiqued.[22] Here, Keupp picks up on, among other things, Theodor W. Adorno's notion of the 'end of the compulsion of identity'[23], which emphasises that the individual has the opportunity to form his/her own self-image, without being subjected to pregiven role constraints and models of normality that aim at the 'unity' of the personality.[24] Furthermore, Keupp puts the focus on the creative potential that lies in the active process of identity negotiation[25] and allows the individual the possibility of functioning as the builder of one's own container for one's life.[26] He characterises identity as

> the individual conceptual framework of a person within which one interprets one's experiences and that provides a basis for everyday identity negotiation.[27]

This daily identity negotiation consists in 'matching' internal and external experiences and linking various partial identities.[28] Thus, identity negotiation also happens in and through the interaction with others and in 'patchworking' different aspects of identity. Identity negotiation is, accordingly, also a conflict negotiation whereby a 'conflict-oriented state of tension' is reached by finding a subjectively coherent fit between internal and external aspects. At the same time, identity formation is an ongoing, open-ended process of linking experiences to-

20 The American philosopher George Herbert Mead and other representatives of the so-called 'symbolic interactionism' of the 1950s and 1960s held that identity was to be understood as a process of negotiation and ascription. They argued for the idea of the constructed character of identity (cf. *Mead, George Herbert*, Geist, Identität und Gesellschaft aus der Sicht des Sozialbehaviorismus. Frankfurt/Main [17]1973). The concept of identity developed by Mead describes identity as the 'relation between personal identity and (internalised external) social expectations' (*Laack, Isabel*, Religion und Musik in Glastonbury. Eine Fallstudie zu gegenwärtigen Formen religiöser Identitätsdiskurse. Göttingen 2011, 34). According to this concept, personal identity arises only 'in interaction and communication with other subjects' (ibid.).
21 *Keupp*, Identitätskonstruktionen, 16.
22 Ibid.
23 Cf. *Adorno, Theodor W.*, Negative Dialektik. Frankfurt/Main 1966, 175.
24 Cf. *Keupp*, Identitätskonstruktionen, 17.
25 Cf. ibid., 28
26 Ibid., 55.
27 Ibid., 60.
28 Cf. ibid., 7.

gether,[29] which occurs only in narration by means of self-narration. It is important to keep in mind that narrative structures, the ways by which an individual sorts his/her experiences and integrates them into the self-image, are socially and culturally influenced.[30]

For the assessment of the interview material, the aspect of the constructed character of identity is also helpful on the one hand for examining the narrations as such. On the other hand, we want to understand the dynamics and structures that lie behind the constructions and their social and cultural conditionality – particularly with respect to religiosity as a central part of identity.

2.1.3 Sociological Aspects of Identity: Identity and Community

Personal, Collective, and Cultural Identity

To understand the constructions of identity in contexts like interreligious educational processes, another element is needed, namely, social or collective identity. Two aspects play an essential role here in the analysis: on the one hand, identification with a specific social group or the feeling of belonging to a certain group such as a certain religious community and delimitation from others[31] and establishing lines of demarcation on the other. To clarify this, the perspectives and models of personal identity discussed above regarding the aspect of cultural and social identity will be expanded and some theoretical perspectives introduced that are necessary for the analysis of interreligious educational processes and the conflicts that arise in them.

Cultural studies in particular – as well as sociology – explores the connection between culture, society, and the subject. Here, it is less the concept of iden-

29 Cf. ibid., 197.

30 Cf. ibid., 207 f.

31 The concept of the other is often linked to the concept of the stranger in religious education. In the literature, this connection is frequently critically discussed, as, for example, in the works of Georg Auernheimer (*Auernheimer*, Einführung in die interkulturelle Erziehung), Erol Yildiz (*Yildiz, Erol*, Konstruktion des Anderen als ethnisch Fremder: Zur Notwendigkeit eines Perspektivenwechsels in der interkulturellen Bildung. In: Karakasoglu, Yasemin / Lüddecke, Julian [eds], Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Pädagogik. Aktuelle Entwicklungen in Theorie, Empirie und Praxis. Münster 2004, 145–157) or Paul Mecheril (*Mecheril, Paul*, Prekäre Verhältnisse. Über natio-ethno-kulturelle [Mehrfach-]Zugehörigkeit. Münster 2003). In line with these works, we also take a critical view of the construction of the stranger or of strangeness because linguistic differences are cemented and ontologised here. Consequently, we do not use the concept of 'strangeness' or 'the strange/stranger' but the concepts 'otherness', 'the other', or 'the religious other'.

tity that is in the foreground than the concept of subject. At the same, the 'entire cultural form ... in which the individual as a physical-spiritual-emotional entity becomes a social being in specific practices and discourses'[32] is subsumed under this concept of subject. Identity is thus understood as a particular expression of the subject form, as

> the way in which a specific self-understanding, a self-interpretation is built into this cultural form, whereby this identity is always linked, directly or indirectly, with a marking of differences from cultural others.[33]

As a marking of difference, as the delimitation from others or strangers, identity is the basis of collective identity construction.[34] Moreover, fundamental personal identities are to be distinguished from collective 'we' identities. By the latter we understand, following Jan Assmann,

> the image that a group constructs of itself and with which its members identify. Collective identity is a question of the identification on the part of the participating individuals. There is no 'group in itself' but only to the extent that specific individuals affirm it. It is as strong or weak to the extent it exists in the consciousness of the group's members and is able to motivate their thinking and actions.[35]

Because of processes of social change and political developments in the late modern period, modern collective identities like 'nation, 'class', 'gender', 'ethnicity' or 'religion' have also partly lost the power of stabilisation.[36] One of the most far-reaching consequences of the above-mentioned social changes can be seen in the disintegration of traditional connections and communities. Thus, viewed in terms of society as a whole, collective identities have also lost efficacy for orientation and identification. The British sociologist Stuart Hall speaks in

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32 *Reckwitz, Andreas*, Subjekt. Bielefeld [2]2010, 17.

33 Ibid.

34 We follow an anti-essentialist approach also with respect to the understanding of collective identity, thus emphasising the construction character of identity and not viewing this as an obvious given.

35 *Assmann, Jan*, Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen. Munich [6]2007, 132.

36 Comprehensive representations of the collective identities of ethnicity and culture can be found in the works of Stuart Hall. On this, see: *Hall, Stuart,* Die Frage der kulturellen Identität. In: Id. (ed), Rassismus und kulturelle Identität. Ausgewählte Schriften. Hamburg 1994), 180 – 222; *Hall, Stuart*, Ethnizität. Identität und Differenz. In: Engelmann, Jan (ed), Die kleinen Unterschiede. Der Cultural Studies-Reader. Frankfurt/Main 1999, 83 – 98; *Hall, Stuart*, Rassismus und kulturelle Identität. Hamburg [4]2008.

this context of the decentering and relativisation of comprehensive stable identities in postmodernism.[37]

Through the loss of the significance of effective collective identities, as noted by social scientists, the individual is forced into the active role of creating references and basic conditions for his or her own life. Consequently, a great freedom of action now exists in specific social areas with respect to the choice of communities that one identifies with. The identification with different collectives is thus

> subject to the subjective dynamics of personal identity negotiation, and the significance of that for the individual is no longer as powerful as the erstwhile influence of the community.[38]

Nevertheless, communities are central markers of identification for the individual.[39] Identification with a specific group leads in turn to demarcation from others.[40]

The construction of the other is a central concern in the analysis of the empirical material here presented and is indispensable for the understanding of interreligious educational processes. Stuart Hall developed a far-reaching model for the analysis and the understanding of cultural identity, at whose centre is the construction of the 'other' and the latter's influence on oneself, one's personal identity.[41] Identity is created as a narration of the self within a discourse through the construction of difference and is a continuing process.[42] Hall describes those areas 'from which our "affiliation" with a distinct, ethnic, "racist", linguistic, religious, and above all national cultures'[43] arises as 'cultural identity'.

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37 Cf. *Hall*, Ethnizität, 90.

38 *Pirker, Vera*, Fluide und fragil. Identität als Grundoption zeitsensibler Pastoralpsychologie. Ostfildern 2013, 157.

39 Mead had already established that identification with a specific group enhances the individual's personality, and that in turn strengthens the individual (cf. *Mead*, Geist, Identität und Gesellschaft aus der Sicht des Sozialbehaviorismus, 363).

40 Cf. *Kolb, Jonas*, Präsenz durch Verschwinden. Sprache und Ethnizität in der Alltagspraxis junger Kärntner Slowen_innen. Bielefeld 2018, 101–137.

41 He explains his theory of cultural identity by using the example of racism. Hall views racism as 'a structure of discourse and representation that seeks to expel the other symbolically' (*Hall*, Ethnizität, 94).

42 Cf. ibid.

43 *Hall*, Die Frage der kulturellen Identität, 180.

Belonging to a (religious) community creates a 'fictitious imaginary we', which brings about a demarcation externally from the 'other'.[44] The construction of the identity of the other, the stranger, happens in the same way as one's own personal identity is constructed. Concepts of 'othering' take up this problem.[45] The process of the construction of collective identity thus contains the identification with oneself as well as the external demarcation. Stuart Hall refers in this connection to the significance of the other for oneself.

The encounter with the religious other is a central aspect in interreligious educational processes. A reciprocal influence occurs between the 'I' and the 'other', which becomes visible in the communicative processes of negotiation. At the same time, precisely this confrontation contains substantial conflict potential, which is the focus of our research.

Social Identity

In interreligious educational processes, individuals are constantly challenged through their experiences with 'boundaries' – challenged to concern themselves with their religious identity and to defend it when appropriate.[46] The boundary becomes the central place where identity as a whole and religious identity (as part of one's identity) are primarily negotiated. A theoretical concept that is useful for the evaluation and discussion of our empirical material is the model of 'social identity'. This concept allows us to analyse the social interaction processes in the different religious groups and the concomitant evaluation. Henri Tajfel,[47] who derived his theory from group experiments, developed a comprehensive group theory that allows him to describe social interaction processes with a particular focus on social identity.

For this, he developed a model of identity that directs his focus in particular to this boundary, the transition from inside to outside. With the term 'self-concept', he describes two aspects of identity: 'personal identity' and 'social identity'.[48] Social identity includes that aspect of self-understanding that

44 Cf. *Eickelpasch / Rademacher*, Identität, 68.

45 Cf. *Mecheril, Paul / Scherschel, Karin / Schrödter, Mark*, 'Ich möchte halt nur wissen, wie es ist, du zu sein'. Die Wiederholung der alienierenden Zuschreibung durch qualitative Forschung. In: Badawia, Tarek / Hamburger, Franz / Hummrich, Merle (eds), Wider die Ethnisierung einer Generation. Beiträge zur qualitativen Migrationsforschung. Frankfurt/Main 2003, 93–110.

46 Cf. *Pirker*, Fluide und fragil, 393.

47 *Tajfel, Henri*, Gruppenkonflikt und Vorurteil. Bern 1982.

48 Cf. *Güttler, Peter O.*, Sozialpsychologie. Munich ^{3}2000, 162.

> derives from his/her knowledge about his/her membership in social groups and from the value and emotional significance with which this membership is occupied.[49]

Through belonging to a social group, individuals divide their social world into an 'in-group' and an 'out-group'. Because individuals strive for a positive valuation of their self-understanding and this in turn is influenced by membership in a social group, one's own group has a more positive valuation attached to it than the out-group.[50] Here, it is important that the positive assessment of the in-group happens 'only in relation to perceived differences from the other group and the value connotations of this difference.'[51] Social comparisons are thus indispensable for the positioning of one's own group and for the reinforcement of the self-image of the group.

The theory of social identity is necessary and helpful especially in the area of interreligious education in order to register processes of interaction between different religious groups – in our case between Muslims and Catholic students – and to interpret their narrations in reference to their own and the other religion. This offers a theoretical foundation for analysing conflicts that emerge in interreligious encounters and the conditions under which they develop and for gauging the conflict potential that lies precisely in these processes of negotiation and delimitation.

2.1.4 Identity from the Perspective of Theology

The concept of identity plays an important role precisely in theological contexts and is expressed in various concepts and aspects. From this perspective, religion functions fundamentally as a constitutive determinant of identity.[52] How this concept is used in the religious context depends above all on two factors. On the one hand, it comes down to, as was explained above, how the relation to oneself/to one's own religion or to one's own faith is conceived. If this is related exclusively to one's own development, to the intrareligious context, and it is accompanied by a static view of identity, then this religious other is considered more of a threat.

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49 *Tajfel*, Gruppenkonflikt und Vorurteil, 102.

50 Cf. ibid., 159.

51 Ibid., 106.

52 Cf. *Schweitzer, Friedrich*, Entwicklung und Identität. In: Bitter, Gottfried et al. (eds), Neues Handbuch religionspädagogischer Grundbegriffe. Munich ^{2}2006, 188 – 193, here 189.

If, however, the concept of identity is interwoven with the religious other in the form of ascriptions of different orders to oneself and the other – both in the form of constructions and co-constructions – the theological understanding of identity is also expanded to the idea 'that religious identities always develop out of the interaction with alterities, i.e., other religious and worldview conceptual systems'[53]. Thus, theologically as well, identity is always to be seen in relation to other contexts and other persons.

Another influential factor on the theological understanding of identity is the concept of God that always guides human thinking and acting. If one sees in God as primarily the guarantor of stability and immutability, this leads to denotations and connotations that impact the concept of identity differently than if God – viewed as the ultimate orientation – represents possibilities, the other, changeability, and fragmentariness.

From the theological perspective, we can also mention on the theoretical level – in addition to the approaches discussed more fully above – the concept of multiple identities developed by Raimon Panikkar.[54] This theory takes up the question of the identification with various religious traditions and manifests itself in, among other things, families whose members belong to different religious traditions.[55] Perry Schmidt-Leukel is of the opinion that, since such phenomena are a matter of course in the current pluralistic religious and worldview conditions, one should speak rather of 'multireligious identity'[56]. Reinhold Bernhardt reminds us that the 'formation of patterns of individual and communal religious identity'[57] can be viewed less as the 'cognitive reception of pregiven systematic complexes of convictions and behaviour orientations'[58] than something that occurs through narratives. Each person's identity is influenced, strengthened, disrupted, irritated, or built up by an abundance of narratives. The different traditions or narratives are placed in relation to each other; they penetrate each other

53 *Dehn, Ulrich*, Einleitung: Brauchen wir für den interreligiösen Dialog eine Theologie der Religionen? In: Id. (ed), Handbuch Dialog der Religionen. Christliche Quellen zur Religionstheologie und zum interreligiösen Dialog. Frankfurt/Main 2008, 13 – 27, here 13.

54 Cf. *Nitsche, Bernhard*, Raimon Panikkar. Multiple Identität als gelebte inter-intra-religiöse Transversalität. In: Bernhardt, Reinhold / Schmidt-Leukel, Perry (eds), Multiple religiöse Identität. Aus verschiedenen Traditionen schöpfen. Zurich 2008, 59 – 77, here 60.

55 Cf. *Schnell, Tatjana*, Religiosität und Identität. In: Bernhardt / Schmidt-Leukel (eds), Multiple religiöse Identität, 163 – 183, here 167.

56 *Schmidt-Leukel, Perry*, Multireligiöse Identität. Anmerkungen aus einer pluralistischen Sicht. In: Bernhardt / Id. (eds), Multiple religiöse Identität, 243 – 265, here 244 f.

57 *Bernhardt, Reinhold*, "Synkretismus" als Deutekategorie für multireligiöse Identitätsbildungen. In: Bernhardt / Schmidt-Leukel (eds), Multiple religiöse Identität, 267 – 290, here 287.

58 Ibid.

without being dissolved into each other.[59] Bernhardt says that it is precisely this that occurs in a high-quality interreligious dialogue.

Another point should be clarified here: the issue of multiple identities applies not only to religions but also to the – wider – area of worldviews.

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Conflict and Conflict Potential

2.2.1 Approaches to the Concept of Conflict

Conflicts can arise wherever people encounter each other. In most cases, conflicts do not need any special starting situations or conditions. Above all, ordinary conflicts, i.e., all conflicts that occur in everyday interactions between people, often arise from misunderstanding in communication.[60] Accordingly, the conflict potential lies in disruptions within communication processes.[61]

To call a specific interaction a conflict depends on the concept of conflict and the concomitant theory that are hereby invoked. Generally, a distinction is made between psychological conflicts, thus conflicts that are psychological in nature, and social conflicts that arise within social frameworks between social actors like persons, groups, organisations, or states.[62] With respect to conflicts in interreligious educational processes, social conflicts are of special interest to us in the analysis and interpretation of the empirical material. Here we concentrate on so-called everyday conflicts that can also have a religious or cultural stamp.

Etymologically, the term 'conflict' can be traced back to the Latin verb *confligere* ('collide' or 'meet'). Its meaning includes 'discord, dispute, strife [between persons, states, etc.] – and internal strife between motives, desires, aspirations'[63]. Social conflicts include differences in interests and 'the disputes of differing intensity and violence between persons, groups, organisations that follow from those disagreements.'[64] The content of conflicts can be quite varied. Disa-

59 Cf. ibid., 289.
60 Cf. *Zuschlag, Bernd / Thielke, Wolfgang*, Konfliktsituationen im Alltag. Ein Leitfaden für den Umgang mit Konflikten in Beruf und Familie. Göttingen ^{3}1998, 20 f.
61 Cf. ibid., 34.
62 Cf. ibid.
63 *Meyer, Joseph*, Meyers großes Konversations-Lexikon: ein Nachschlagewerk des allgemeinen Wissens. Leipzig ^{10}1986, 89.
64 Ibid.

greements regarding moral concepts or perspectives on life are thematised in conflicts, as are power relations and differences concerning power and status struggles. There are also different theories about the origins of conflict that depend on the academic discipline and respective perspective.[65]

The definition of the concept of conflict is determined by the respective theoretical approach and is quite a vague concept in the social sciences. This vagueness in turn has effects

> on the levels on which conflict is thematised in theory, on possible topics regarding conflict and parties involved in conflict and on special forms of settling conflicts.[66]

In general, conflict is defined as a situation of competition

> in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other.[67]

It also has to do with struggles rooted in various motives that contradictory aspirations, driving forces, or desires underlie.[68] In summary, conflicts can be defined as a contest between contradictions (positions, values, faith issue, social status, desires, urges, expectations, etc.) that can lead to tension, strife, and even violence and war.

When the word 'conflict' is used in this book, it refers in the first place to tensions on the basis of which various positions and values become visible. Conflicts are thus found between two parties in the interaction

> when two people want different things; they follow different goals, have different purposes, make different decisions, etc.; when the actions pursued in this or the goals of such action are mutually exclusive or cannot ... be reconciled ...; if the partners are thus unable to achieve an optimal result for both.[69]

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65 Cf. ibid., 90.

66 *Bonacker, Thorsten,* Sozialwissenschaftliche Konflikttheorien. Einleitung und Überblick. In: Id. (ed), Sozialwissenschaftliche Konflikttheorien: eine Einführung. Wiesbaden ^{3}2008, 9 – 29, here 9.

67 *Boulding, Kenneth E.*, Conflict and Defense. A General Theory. New York 1962, 5.

68 Cf. *Ulich, Dieter*, Konflikt und Persönlichkeit: psychologische Modelle und ihre Bedeutung für die Pädagogik. Munich 1971; *Zuschlag / Thielke*, Konfliktsituationen im Alltag, 34.

69 *Sachse, Rainer*, Konflikt und Streit. Wie wir konstruktiv mit ihnen umgehen. Heidelberg 2017, 8.

We define conflict potential as a contradiction concerning values, socialisation, and social position that can, in our view, lead to conflict; it is not visibly manifest but underlies conflicts that may arise.

Moreover, two different types of conflict can be distinguished. We speak of 'interaction conflicts' when both parties take part in the conflict and also bear responsibility for that conflict.[70] 'Internal conflicts' are distinguished from that and describe conflicts that occur within an individual.

Conflicts always arise where people with different biographies, values, intentions, etc. encounter each other, both in the private and the professional domain. Conflicts are thus part of the 'normal' processes of interhuman interaction. The way conflicts are dealt with, how and if they are thematised determines the further course of interhuman encounters and (educational) processes.

As was already explained above in the section on 'identity', religion is a central marker of personal identity. If people with various religious values and accompanying biographies, life plans, and goals meet, for instance, in interreligious educational processes, the conflict potential increases. What this looks like, what the central 'areas of conflict' are, and how the concrete conflicts are expressed will be described in the empirical part of this book. In the following section, some theories of conflict will be introduced that are fundamental for this analysis.

2.2.2 Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Conflict Theories

Theories of conflict are embedded in various academic disciplines and represent subfields of political science, sociological, and psychological theories.[71] These positions on social conflicts are related to each other systematically and can in turn be found in classical conflict theories – like the theories of Thomas Hobbes, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel – and in conflict theories related to international relations theories, in sociological social theory, and in actor theories in social science.[72]

Social-scientific conflict theories seek on one hand to analyse the origin and development of violence and, on the other, predict future conflicts. According to these theories, conflicts occur on three levels. The macrolevel, for instance, con-

70 Cf. ibid., 7.

71 For a comprehensive overview and presentation of individual theories, see *Bonacker*, Sozialwissenschaftliche Konflikttheorien and *Bonacker, Thorsten*, Konflikttheorien. In: Kneer, Georg / Schroer, Markus (eds), Handbuch Soziologische Theorien. Wiesbaden 2013, 178–198.

72 Cf. *Bonacker*, Sozialwissenschaftliche Konflikttheorien, 16.

cerns international political conflicts between states; on the mesolevel, conflicts between groups, such as religious or ethnopolitical conflicts, are examined. Here the focus is on mutual perception as well as on intra- and intergroup processes. On the microlevel, it is conflicts between individuals that are studied. Here, individual conduct and interaction processes are focused on. Conflicts arise between individuals or collectives but also within actors and collectives.

Whereas social-scientific theories examine the social foci, psychological, and social psychological conflict theories concentrate on social processes like communication between individuals and on psychological processes like thinking and feeling.[73] Conflict theories thus explain conflicts on different levels. The choice of the corresponding theories and the concept of conflict therefore also determine the focus of the analysis.

In what follows, we will present an overview of the social psychological and psychological conflict theories that are relevant for this research project. The conflict theory of social identity from the field of social science is of particular interest. In addition, we will look at so-called intercultural and interreligious conflicts. Also, we will give an overview of the psychology of conflict so that we can explain the psychological processes that come to light in the expressions of the subjects interviewed.

Social Psychological Perspectives on Conflicts: The Conflict Theory of Social Identity

The essential building blocks of the theory of social identity by Henri Tajfel and John Turner[74] were already introduced in the section above on identity. This social psychological theory explains processes and conflicts that can emerge between groups. Here the foremost question is: For what reasons do people distinguish their reference groups from other similar groups, usually by disparaging other groups? In various studies on perception, stereotyping, and prejudice, Tajfel and his colleagues observed that people always favour the in-group.[75] The in-group, according to their results, is preferred even when it goes against their own interests. The theory of social identity can be summarised in three fundamental assumptions. First, individuals strive 'to maintain a positive social identity that

73 Cf. *Simon*, Einführung in die Systemtheorie des Konflikts, 11.

74 *Tajfel, Henri / Turner, John C.*, The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In: Worchel, Stephen / Austin, William G. (eds), Psychology of intergroup relations. Chicago 1986, 7–24.

75 Cf. *Zick, Andreas*, Die Konflikttheorie der Theorie sozialer Identität. In: Imbusch / Zoll (eds), Sozialwissenschaftliche Konflikttheorien, 409–426, here 409.

is completely defined by membership in a certain group.'[76] Second, social identity is based on processes, and the in-group must be demarcated from the out-group in a positive way. Third, people either abandon the in-group if the concomitant social identity is unsatisfactory or reinforce the positive ascriptions to the in-group.[77]

The theory of social identity serves to analyse the motivations and needs that lead to conflicts. This is preceded by a specific understanding of conflicts as 'intergroup conflicts' where the focus is on the negotiation of social identity. According to this theory, conflicts either restore the social status of a group or effectuate an increase in the self-worth of a social group. Here Tajfel and Turner[78] distinguish between objective and subjective as well as between explicit and implicit conflicts and request an analysis of the understanding of group conflicts. The extent of conflicts depends in turn, according to Tajfel and Turner, on different factors like the strength of one's identification with the group and the perceived threat to group identity. Beyond that, the comparable out-groups must show a specific similarity to the in-group (as is the case with similar religions) that depends, for its part, on the assessment of the status of the in-group and the out-group. In this theory, social conflicts have social identity as their aim, to prevent threats to the identity of one's own group or to maintain and reinforce the group's self-worth.[79]

The origin and maintenance of social prejudice and racist ideologies can also be demonstrated on the basis of this theory. Stereotypes are based on processes of categorisation whose goal is to favour the in-group and to distinguish itself from the out-group. In turn, they depend on the self-categorisation of someone within a social group. Stereotypes and prejudices thus have a cognitive function and are not automatisms. The cognitive function of stereotypes consists in constructing a clear image of the social world on the one hand and in stabilising one's positive self-image on the other. It therefore also has a 'value function'.[80]

Precisely in the interreligious encounter in which religious groups establish contact with each other, it is necessary to look at these dynamics of demarcation and differentiation and the degree of tension between the in-group and the out-group. Conflict potential is found particularly in the preconceptions concerning the respective other religious groups that exist, in possible prejudices and stereotyping. In the assessment of the empirical materials therefore, preconceptions,

76 Ibid.,410.
77 Cf. ibid.
78 Cf. ibid.
79 Cf. ibid., 417 f.
80 Cf. ibid., 418 f.

stereotypes and prejudices that became visible in the interviews were investigated and analysed. For successful interreligious collaboration, it is essential to identify and thematise precisely this conflict potential that lies in social interaction.

Intercultural and Interreligious Conflicts in Educational Contexts

In the area of interreligious education, questions of interculturality also play a central role. This concerns not only people with different religious socialisations but also people from different cultural backgrounds. In the area of education research as well as in social work, the theme of conflicts and the conflict potential with respect to cultural diversity is becoming more and more the focus of research.[81] Here as well, the definition of the concept is also vague. The questions relevant for us here are: Where does the conflict potential lie, and what influence does the cultural background of those involved have on conflicts?

A theoretical explanatory model for this is provided by the communication theory of 'cultural conflict', which explains conflicts between actors from different cultures as conflicts in communication:

> People from different backgrounds come into conflict with each other because their communication is affected by misunderstanding and by competing, often exclusive valuations.[82]

Different cultures thus also bring different 'conflict cultures' with them, which again increases the conflict potential if there is a great difference between the moral conceptions of the cultures in question. The 'culture-conflict theory' can also be transferred to the area of subcultures as well as to gender cultures, professional cultures, etc.[83] This concept is criticised for pushing the determinist as-

81 See *Bar-On, Dan*, Die ‚Anderen' in uns. Dialog als Modell der interkulturellen Konfliktbewältigung. Hamburg 2003; *Weiß, Anja*, Was macht interkulturelle Konflikte aus? Kulturelle Differenzen, ethnische Identitäten und die Frage der Macht. In: Journal für Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung (2001) 2, 87–110; *Weiße*, Interreligiöse Bildung Europa; *Jozsa / Knauth / Weiße* (eds), Religionsunterricht, Dialog und Konflikt; *Haumersen, Petra / Liebe, Frank*, Multikulti: Konflikte konstruktiv. Trainingshandbuch. Mediation in der interkulturellen Arbeit. Mühlheim/Ruhr 1999.
82 *Fechler, Bernd*, Dialog der Anerkennung. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Mediation bei ‚interkulturellen' Konflikten an der Schule. In: Kloeters, Ulricke / Lüddecke, Julian / Quehl, Thomas (eds), Schulwege in die Vielfalt. Handreichung zur Interkulturellen und Antirassistischen Pädagogik in der Schule. Frankfurt/Main 2003, 103–148, here 105.
83 Cf. ibid., 106.

sumption that ascribes specific mentalities to conflicts and leaves other factors that encourage conflict out of consideration.[84]

Another theoretical concept for the explanation of conflicts in intercultural encounters presents the concept of a 'struggle for recognition'.[85] Here, the focus is less on cultural discrepancies than on power relations. Thus, conflicts were perceived as the results of different social positions that people take in a pluralistic society. These are related to both social status as well as legal and political aspects.[86] This approach is relevant for the analysis of educational contexts insofar as the dynamics of status positions can be detected here as well.

Fechler points out, via the example of the school, that struggles for social recognition between young people frequently occur, which can be implemented by means of various strategies and considerably influence the social dynamics in a heterogenous school class. In the foreground here are themes of group affiliation and self-worth that are of particular importance to students who belong to minorities. The conflict potential increases in heterogenous classes through the teacher's attitude and how he/she deals with diversity.[87]

From a sociological perspective, this can be explained by the theory of established-outsider relations.[88] Based on an empirical study they carried out, Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson describe the social dynamics in an English suburb that lead to the reinforcement of social inequality and power differences. The starting point for such dynamics is the observation that members of groups that feel superior to other groups with respect to their power position assess their qualifications and 'human qualities' as better and suggest to the less powerful that they are inferior.[89] The 'established group' ascribes the worst properties of the worst members to the 'outsider group' as a whole and forms their own self-image through identification with the properties of their most positively assessed member.[90] Referring to individual cases reinforces the opinion formed about the 'outsider group'. The foundation for the established-outsider figuration represents 'an unequal balance of power with the tensions that develop from that.'[91]

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84 Cf. ibid., 107.

85 Cf. *Honneth, Axel*, Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte. Frankfurt/Main ^{6}2010.

86 Cf. *Fechler*, Dialog der Anerkennung, 108.

87 Cf. ibid., 111 f.

88 Cf. *Elias, Norbert / Scotson, John L.*, Etablierte und Außenseiter. Frankfurt/Main 1993.

89 Cf. ibid., 7 f.

90 Cf. ibid., 13.

91 Ibid., 14.

> It is also the deciding factor that makes it possible for an established group to effectively stigmatise an outsider group. A group is able to effectively stigmatise another group only if it operates from a clear position of power that is denied to the stigmatised group. As long as that is the case, the collective stigma placed upon the outsider group remains.[92]

The strategies of stigmatisation are different, depending on the social nature of the group in question. They are often meaningless outside the respective context of the established-outsider relation.

Anja Weiß also refers to power and power asymmetry in her analysis of interreligious conflicts. She advocates the thesis

> that the phenomena that are treated under the headings of intercultural or ethnic conflicts become so problematic only because of power asymmetries between the conflict parties.[93]

Weiß criticises the fact that power asymmetries are neglected in research on interculturality. Here she refers to Weber's concept of power, which defines power as 'the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action.'[94]

According to Weiß, political power relations in intercultural contexts are crucial for the question whether the interests of a specific ethnic group can be enforced. She refers here to political research into ethnic conflicts.[95] Groups that find themselves in positions of political power have at their disposal the appropriate resources in conflict constellations to enforce their interests. So-called 'microsocial conflicts', conflicts that arise between individuals are, according to Weiß, subject to relations of dominance and inequality. Educational contexts in particular are stamped by the dynamics of power and inequality. Weiß points out, moreover, that 'for many students the state school system does not encourage learning but becomes a coercive instrument and that the selectivity of this system permanently harms precisely "difficult" students',[96] instead of examining the structures and dynamics behind that difficulty.

Another approach, which can be used in social inequality relations and also in the intercultural context is, in Weiß' view, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'sym-

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92 Ibid.

93 *Weiß*, Was macht interkulturelle Konflikte aus?, 89.

94 *Weber, Max*, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology (ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al.). Berkeley 1978, 926.

95 Cf. *Hopmann, P. Terrence*, The Negotiation Process and the Resolution of International Conflicts. Columbia 1996.

96 *Weiß*, Was macht interkulturelle Konflikte aus?, 90.

bolic power'.[97] Bourdieu uses this term to describe all power structures that are based on neither immediate and public coercion nor on violence and are embedded in systems of meaning to such an extent that individuals' objective spaces of opportunity are internalised. The 'dominated ones' only want what is wanted by the 'dominating ones' or the system. This consolidates and at the same time instrumentalises culturally conditioned relations of inequality. In studies on intercultural and interreligious educational processes, it is therefore necessary to unmask the power structures lying behind them in order to assess accordingly the conflict potential that is influenced by them at the same time.

The Psychological Concept of Conflict

Finally, even though political and social factors are indispensable in conflict analysis, we will now look at microprocesses, thus the psychological aspects of conflicts. In the foreground here is the question how conflicts are manifested on the level of thinking and feeling and thereby become expressed in social interaction. A psychological perspective can also provide insight into the attitudes and behavioural motives that underlie conflicts since 'personal attitudes and behavioural motives in the sense of motivations for actions ... are the significant constituent elements of conflict in the end.'[98]

Above all, the actors' various needs and motivations for are relevant in everyday conflicts. Abraham Maslow's so-called 'need pyramid' represents a theory for understanding human needs.[99] According to Maslow, human needs can be described on five levels that determine everyday life and interactional processes. These are physiological needs like sleep, nourishment, oxygen, etc.; physical, mental, and material needs for security; social needs for family, friendship, sexuality, belonging, etc., individual needs like trust, esteem, self-confirmation, success, freedom, and independence as well as the need for self-realisation.[100] According to Bernd Zuschlag and Wolfgang Thielke, conflicts arise particularly in ordinary communication, for example in negotiations, through precisely these fundamental needs being either unfulfilled or fulfilled in a limited way, which can lead to setbacks.[101] Therefore, according to Zuschlag and Thielke, 'what pre-

97 *Bourdieu, Pierre*, Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht. Hamburg 2015.
98 *Zuschlag / Thielke*, Konfliktsituationen im Alltag, 50.
99 Cf. *Maslow, Abraham H.*, Motivation und Persönlichkeit. Reinbek [15]1981.
100 Cf. ibid.
101 Cf. *Zuschlag / Thielke*, Konfliktsituationen im Alltag, 54.

cise needs this conversation partner has at this moment needs to be discovered in detail in each case with sensitivity'[102].

A range of theories and strategies can be found particularly in the field of business conflict management or in communication training, for guiding conversations by exploring and identifying personal needs and motives for acting.[103]

Psychology offers several models that attempt to explain conflict and its interpsychic conditionality and constitution. In addition to the most important conflict model, which goes back to the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud, in which tensions can be traced back to opposing urges between different aspects of the individual,[104] psychology itself can be partially understood as the 'psychology of conflict'.[105] Psychology sees conflict potential on the internal psychological levels especially in the also well-known everyday ambivalences between feeling and thinking that underly the psychodynamics of conflict. The level of feeling is mentioned here in particular insofar as the effect of feelings on the origin and development of both individual and social conflicts are of decisive importance from a psychological perspective. Moreover, feelings play a central role in the origin of social systems, such as, for example, the formation of communities and belonging, and they also play a significant part in the dissolution of those communities.[106] This 'co-reflection' on precisely these psychological perspectives is also helpful in the analysis of interreligious educational processes to the extent that 'internal psychological conflicts' in communication become clear and individual needs influence them.

As is clear here, conflicts and the conflict potential can be researched from different perspectives. The analysis of conflicts and the conflict potential in interreligious educational processes requires an open, multi-perspectival or interdisciplinary approach that incorporates – in addition to theological and religious pedagogical aspects, sociological, political, and (social) psychological aspects in order to understand the complexity of the themes in a comprehensive way.

102 Ibid.

103 An overview of different approaches and theories of conflict can be found in *Zuschlag / Thielke*, Konfliktsituationen im Alltag, in chapter B: Konflikt-Analyse, -Diagnose und -Bewältigung.

104 With the model of the so-called psychic apparatus, Freud describes three distinct psychic components that are related to and interact with each other. The 'id' here represents the instinctive drives in the individual that are opposed to the 'superego', the internalised and socialised compulsions. The thus conflicting urges are brought into balance by a third component (cf. *Freud, Sigmund*, Abriss der Psychoanalyse. Einführende Darstellungen [reprint]. Frankfurt/Main ^{4}2009).

105 Cf. *Simon*, Einführung in die Systemtheorie des Konflikts, 52.

106 Cf. ibid., 59.

2.3 Our Conception of Identity, Conflict, Interreligiosity, Religious Education and Religious Didactics

In this section we will offer – in connection with the state of research and the theoretical foundations – a short overview of the use of the five concepts of identity, conflict, interreligiosity, religious education and religious didactics in this study.

Identity

As described above,[107] the concept of identity is a key term in the context of interreligious education. In particular, people and institutions that have misgivings about interreligious endeavours often argue that a stable (religious) identity formation is fundamental and necessary before any interreligious encounter can occur.

From the perspective of an interreligious religious education that focuses on inter- and transreligious education or teaching and learning processes, forms of reasoning and concepts associated with them are urgently needed that assume a progressive development of identity towards a stable essential core. In contrast, from the viewpoint of this study, the following can be proposed: first, we should keep in mind that, in the current pluralistic world, children encounter religious, cultural, and social identities already in infancy and then increasingly in kindergarten and school and thus also experience and apply the most varied ascriptions to themselves and to others. Religious and cultural plurality and the corresponding relations and social ascriptions are thus given in the earliest stages of childhood already. The individual is challenged to deal with that in his/her education. Another requirement is related to the increasing scientific knowledge with respect to the concept of identity. Precisely sociological and also religious pedagogical and theological studies[108] consider a multi-perspectival concept of identity to be more suitable. This approach is based on concepts of social ascriptions or constructions, subjectifications, and multiple identities or the idea of fragments.[109]

With this critical understanding of identity – and thus with more recent scientific data – in our project we link up with scientific interreligious religious ed-

107 Cf. chapter **2.1**.

108 On this, see the discussion in chapter **2.1.2**.

109 Cf. *Keupp*, Identitätskonstruktionen; *Foucault, Michel*, Subjekt und Macht. In: Id. (ed), Analytik der Macht. Frankfurt/Main 2005, 240 – 263; *Bernhardt / Schmidt-Leukel* (eds), Multiple religiöse Identität.

ucation and religious didactics. Following Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, we understand identity fundamentally as a social construction in whose development both the religious in-group and the religious out-group participate, the former through self-ascriptions and the latter through ascriptions by others. Following Heiner Keupp, we understand identities not as stable, finished entities with a fixed essential core but as entities that are characterised by dynamic flexible features and a fragmentary patchwork nature. Here, in accordance with the work of theological writers like Reinhold Bernhardt,[110] Raimon Panikkar, and Bernhard Nitsche, the significance of the transitory, transversal, and thus potential religious boundary areas will come into view.[111]

Conflict

Following the multi-dimensional explanation of the semantic fields of the term conflict,[112] we will make a few brief remarks here on aspects that are essential to our concept of conflict in this study.

The first remark concerns the concept of conflict and its connotations. Given all other specific facets worked out above regarding the concept of conflict, one general aspect should not be forgotten. The concept of conflict often has negative connotations from the outset, above all in the context of religions as well as in everyday life. In contrast, we argue for a 'more neutral' use of the concept of conflict, which can be indicated by the expression 'conflict potential' or 'what gives rise to conflict'. Here we can include 'movements' of various kinds that encounter each other from various perspectives, that intersect or cross each other and – at first glance – do not 'fit' or can be brought into relation or connection with each other or 'be' integrated. They can, for example, represent different 'logics' in the sense of intellectual, perceptive, or reflective logics that cannot – in any case a priori – be subsumed under one denominator, or include different interests, strivings, habits, practices, and goals. In this sense, what intervenes or mediates can also be understood as what give rise to conflict, something that introduces another element into the usual situation – a new meaning, a current struggle, a sudden expectation, etc. Whereas conflicts manifest themselves in perceivable ways, for example in the wake of explicit differences of opinion, confrontations, or disputes, the conflict potential or what gives rise to conflict rep-

110 *Bernhardt / Schmidt-Leukel* (eds), Multiple religiöse Identität.

111 Cf. *Nitsche*, Raimon Panikkar.

112 On this, see the discussion in chapter **2.2**.

resents a latent foundation that may not, however, always be visible or lead inevitably to manifest, observable conflicts.

The second remark concerns the negative connotations of the concept of conflict. Only against the background of this basic understanding of conflict can the so-called conflictual aspect, viewed as neutral rather than good or bad, be unfolded in the various detailed aspects so that one can speak in scientifically about a psychological, a sociological, a theological, or a religious educational dimension. On the general level of what gives rise to conflict, it is 'normal' that conflicts arise, especially in contexts of plurality and heterogeneity. That there are always movements that contradict or conflict with each other is simply part of life. In this sense, conflict processes must not be controlled – that is not at all possible. Rather, they should be observed, analysed, processed, or discussed.

In this process, a subjective positioning occurs sooner or later as a matter of course. The subject places him-/herself in relation to what befalls him/her or the conflict processes he/she triggers. If these affirm his/her concepts, actions, plans, or goals, they are judged positively. If they do not affirm them but destroy them sometimes, he/she then assesses these processes negatively. Thus, various levels and dimensions come into play, and those differentiations that we discussed above become relevant.

Interreligious Education – Interreligious Learning

In our presentation of the state of research, we focused on the concept of interreligiosity. We analysed the concepts multireligious and interreligious and maintained that in the religious educational context 'multireligious' entails religious studies, whereas 'interreligious' emphasises communal learning – it concerns communal education in religious educational and religious didactical contexts.[113] Thus, in this study we will use the concept of interreligiosity for the encounter between Christian and Muslim students, teachers and supervisors, and communal learning. We are not, however, suppressing the distinctions here between the different religions or between the adherents of the different religions nor are we advocating simple co-existence.

In this sense, we understand interreligious education and interreligious learning as a learning that is sensitive to religion, a learning that also acknowledges the importance of religion in public life. Moreover, we conceive of interreligious education as contingency-sensitive, as treating the position of the reli-

113 On this, see the discussion in chapter **1.1**.

gious other respectfully and humbly. Interreligious learning and interreligious education should also 'be understood as a multi-perspectival learning that moves between inter- and intrareligious perspectives in a critical-creative way.'[114]

Religious Education

Regarding the term religious education, we follow the dominant view and understand religious education as theories of religious and worldview education and training processes (sometimes also including the concept of learning), their presuppositions, and individual-personal, collective-social as well as societal and economic-political conditions.

Religious education is widely viewed as a theological discipline at theological institutes or faculties,[115] whereby its connection with other sciences (educational sciences, sociology, psychology, etc.) is strongly emphasised. With respect to these, however, different views exist concerning what is important for theology: material views (the subject matters for theology), formal views (it is the theological perspective that turns religious education into a theological discipline) and organisational views (religious education/religious didactics is found in the 'concert' of the theological sciences; this means it is also a theological science).[116]

In the context of this study, we share the second view: the theological exists in the perspective under which the corresponding religious-worldview educational processes will be viewed. It should be noted that this educational process can be implicit or explicit, formal or informal, institutionalised or less institutionalised. A series of fields of action are thereby discussed: family, elementary education, secondary school, professional training, continuing education, adult education, community formation, education for seniors, etc. The religious educational area of responsibility in our study is related to the interreligious area, as

114 *Danzl*, Interreligiös oder multireligiös?, 47.

115 Cf. *Englert, Rudolf*, Wissenschaftstheorie der Religionspädagogik. In: Ziebertz, Hans-Georg / Simon, Werner (eds), Bilanz der Religionspädagogik. Düsseldorf 1995, 147–174, here 152.

116 For the concept of 'material' see: *Ziebertz, Hans-Georg*, Religionspädagogik und Empirische Methodologie. In: Schweitzer, Friedrich / Schlag, Thomas (eds), Religionspädagogik im 21. Jahrhundert. Gütersloh 2004, 209–222 and *Kraml, Martina*, What about knowing? Überlegungen zur Konzeptualisierung religionspädagogisch-empirischer Forschung im Gespräch mit ‚anderen' Orten. In: Österreichisches Religionspädagogisches Forum (2011) 1, 32–38, here 33f. The formal perspective is, in turn, also brought into play by Hans-Georg Ziebertz. According to his models, what makes a science is not the material object but the formal object, the perspective, from which the object is viewed (cf. *Ziebertz*, Religionspädagogik und Empirische Methodologie, 221).

has been discussed above, and includes the praxis fields of elementary, secondary, and tertiary education as well as extra-curricular contexts.

Religious Didactics

Religious didactics deals, in our view, with the theory of the conceptualisation, implementation, and evaluation of educational processes – or, formulated more specifically, of teaching and learning processes in educational institutions.

Interreligious didactics reflects the conceptualisation, guiding, and implementation of religious collaboration or interreligious teaching and learning processes in the specific fields of action. In our view, didactics focuses on the conceptual level, not the methodological. The methodological approach is a subarea of the conceptual that is concerned with the means (methods and social forms) of the teaching and learning processes. Before we can tackle the question of means in the sense of methods, we must first provide the conceptual part, a theological-didactic orientation, and properly delimit the topic of our study. Only if the topic – as a result of the didactic steps of analysis and determination of an objective or competence – is known and is clear can the process be structured further.

From our perspective, the subject of religious didactics raises the question of quality. This refers on the one hand to the issue of multi-perspectivity: Should – in addition to the substantive dimension – other dimensions be included, such as the subjective dimension, the social dimension, or the contextual dimension? On the other hand, we must also take into account the process that indicates which planning phases in the process are being completed – such as, for example, the analysis phase, the goal, issue, and competence phases, the phase of formulating of the theme and indication of the structure (methods, media, social forms, etc.). Moreover, we also need to look at the characteristics of the learning process and how the evaluation phase is conceptualised.

3 Research Methodology and Design

3.1 Methodological Orientation

This empirical study is rooted in the project implemented at the University of Innsbruck. Components of the Catholic and Islamic training programmes for religion teachers are to be attended jointly by students in these programmes. This interreligiously structured university teaching and practice was empirically researched and documented. The purpose of this scientific research was to investigate and reflect on the encounter and learning processes with a view to interreligious activities in education. This volume thus focuses on conflicts and fields of tension that emerged within the framework of interreligious religious education between the participating individuals and groups.

In accordance with the background of the research, the empirical analysis contains elements of evaluation research. The latter is characterised by an activated phenomenon that is being studied in an exploratory way, and conclusions are drawn for an evaluation and (where appropriate) the continuation of that research.[1] Connected with this, moreover, there is a reference point for this study on activities or praxis. That is, the goal of this empirical study is to analyse the implementation of an interreligiously structured university teaching and praxis and to provide interpretations, descriptions, and recommendations that are relevant for praxis and also important for future activity and the continuation of interreligious collaboration.[2] We are not aiming for an empirical description just for the sake of description.

Unlike what is usually the case in evaluation research, the standards are not, however, pregiven and able to be deduced from elsewhere.[3] Rather, this study is part of the tradition of an unbiased procedure and exploratory, interpretative social research.[4] The criteria and categories – by means of which this analysis is

1 Cf. *Döring, Nicola / Bortz, Jürgen*, Forschungsmethoden und Evaluation in den Sozial- und Humanwissenschaften. Berlin [5]2016, 979.

2 Cf. *Prengel, Annedore*, Perspektivität anerkennen – Zur Bedeutung von Praxisforschung in Erziehung und Erziehungswissenschaft. In: Friebertshäuser, Barbara / Ead. (eds), Handbuch Qualitative Forschungsmethoden in der Erziehungswissenschaft. Weinheim 1997, 599 – 627; *von Unger, Hella*, Partizipative Forschung. Einführung in die Forschungspraxis. Wiesbaden 2014, 13 f.

3 Cf. *Döring, Nicola*, Evaluationsforschung. In: Baur, Nina / Blasius, Jörg (eds), Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung. Wiesbaden 2014, 167 – 181, here 170 f.

4 Cf. *Lamnek, Siegfried / Krell, Claudia*, Qualitative Sozialforschung. Weinheim [6]2016, 33; *Kleemann, Frank / Krähnke, Uwe / Matuschek, Ingo*, Interpretative Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung in die Praxis des Interpretierens. Wiesbaden [2]2013, 19.

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done – are derived from the data that was collected, the interactive processes observed, and the experiences of participants. Conflicts and fields of tension are reconstructed on the basis of this empirical data that emerged since the implementation of the interreligious training of teachers of religion until present.

In addition to the echoes of evaluation, praxis, and action research as well as of the tradition of an exploratory interpretative social research this present study contains, it is also oriented to the subject as part of its methodology.[5] This is shown in the empirical analysis in that we devote a lot of space to the personal views and individual experiences of the participating actors. This procedure takes into account the fact that the empirical analyses of the emerging fields of tension are relevant not only for setting up an interreligious religious education but also for contemporary encounters with the religious other outside of educational institutions. This applies to both for Catholics and Muslims because various groups (course lecturers, students, supervisors) are involved in the educational programme for religion teachers. Not only do their statements indicate professional impressions of the training as it progressed but much more also mirror individual views and impressions of each social environment, for example in the form of unquestioned stereotypes or biased views of the religious other. Such views appear in a partly explicit way at various places in the empirically collected data and in a partly implicit way between the lines. The empirical conclusions are thus not limited to the analysis of the interreligious courses but also offer insights into interreligious co-existence in contemporary plural societies. The data is therefore significant not only for interreligiosity in the field of education but also for interreligiosity in everyday life.

The principle of orientation to the subject, to which we adhere methodologically in this study, also corresponds to an empirical theology that is focused on the world, that is interested in the individual, in his/her experiences and history, and to which this volume and the research team is committed.[6] We take special care in our analysis and interpretation of the empirical data to proceed in a way that is sensitive to contingency and possibility. That is why we approach the data carefully and without prejudice and present possible – and different – explanations in our interpretation of the statements.

Last but not least, there are also genuine theological reasons why we, as teachers and educators of religion working in an interreligious setting, attach such a high value to empirical research – in this case qualitative empirical re-

5 Cf. *Przyborski, Aglaja / Wohlrab-Sahr, Monika*, Qualitative Methoden. Ein Arbeitsbuch. Munich [4]2014, 19 f.

6 Cf. *Kraml, Martina / Sejdini, Zekirija*, Methodologie. In: Eaed. (eds), Interreligiöse Bildungsprozesse, 21–34, here 23.

search – even when it does not resonate in all theological contexts, particularly not in one that places great store on dogma.

Because theology grapples with the lives and life conditions of people within the horizon of the question of God, empirical research and teaching is indispensable in arriving at a sound, methodical, and scientifically assessed approach to the reality of life. This reality embraces the social and socio-economic preconditions to the same extent that it does individual biographical, or contextual approaches. Here, not only are the results relevant, but it is also necessary to reflect theologically on the method of gaining knowledge.

This also applies to interreligious religious research. Here, the question of the compatibility of the approach to the basic theological-religious pedagogical paradigm arises. With respect to this question, we link up here with the concept of contingency that was defined above and in other works we have published.[7] Given this background, we are thoroughly aware of the epistemological ambivalence of empirical research and the role of the subject. This concerns the contingency of interpretations, the necessity of multi-perspectivalism, and the scepticism regarding both the concepts of truth and of science.[8] If, as is central to the theological perspective, the question of God matters on the horizon of research and teaching, we approach this horizon with a view to the aspects of plurality, ambiguity, of making contingency visible, and the orientation to possibility. From this source, research and teaching acquires contours that correspond to an interreligious or transdisciplinary approach.

3.2 The Research Strategy and Data Collection

The Elements of the Interreligious Education of Religion Teachers at the University of Innsbruck

This empirical study researches and follows the project initiated in religious education at the University of Innsbruck to conduct parts of the curricula of the Catholic and the Muslim education of religion teachers in joint sessions, thus interreligiously.[9] The origins of the project coincide with the introduction of the

7 Cf. among others, *Kraml / Sejdini / Scharer*, Mensch werden, 113–130; *Kraml*, Anderes ist möglich.

8 Cf. *Kraml / Sejdini*, Methodologie.

9 For a more detailed presentation of the interreligious collaboration at the University of Innsbruck in the area of religious education, we refer the reader to the following work: *Kraml, Martina / Sejdini, Zekirija*, Der Forschungskontext. In: Eaed. (eds), Interreligiöse Bildungsprozesse, 13–19.

Bachelor's programme in Islamic Religious Education at the University of Innsbruck in the winter semester of 2013/2014. The decision to give an interreligious shape to courses resulted on the one hand from the consideration that the curriculum of the Islamic Religious Education programme had a great deal in common with the existing programme offered in Catholic Religious Education. On the other hand, the pragmatic organisational challenge of setting up the programme anew and ensuring the range of subjects was also a major factor in this decision.[10]

It was determined that interreligious collaboration occurs on different levels and in various areas. It encompasses primarily two school practicums in the religious pedagogical training (a basic practicum and a specialised practicum at compulsory schools II) that includes the practicums in the schools and the accompanying course at the university. In the accompanying course for the specialised practicum, however, there is no collaboration. Beyond that, in the following other areas interreligious cooperation was agreed: in the religious didactical course 'Foundations in Religious Didactics' (seminar and lecture) and in courses on special methodological topics.

The consequence of this procedure is that Muslim students who enrolled in the Bachelor's programme in Islamic Religious Education completed their basic practicum together with Catholic students in Catholic religious education in Tyrolean compulsory schools under the guidance of a Catholic teacher of religion as supervisor. The reason for this asymmetry was the circumstance that few Muslim religion teachers had the formal qualifications required in this period of study to be supervisors for the basic practicum, which entailed that this role had to be assumed by Catholic religion teachers.

The Multi-Perspectival and Complementary Research Design

This empirical study made use of different methods of data collection, such as qualitative problem-centred guided interviews,[11] group discussions,[12] and meth-

10 The interreligious collaboration is described in this study as Catholic-Muslim (and not as Christian-Muslim) because in the given context it concerns only Catholic and Islamic religious education.

11 Cf. *Witzel, Andreas*, Verfahren der qualitativen Sozialforschung. Überblick und Alternativen. Frankfurt/Main 1982; *Witzel, Andreas*, Das problemzentrierte Interview. In: Jüttemann, Gerd (ed), Qualitative Forschung in der Psychologie. Grundfragen, Verfahrensweisen, Anwendungsfelder. Heidelberg 1989, 227–256.

12 Cf. *Lamnek / Krell*, Qualitative Sozialforschung, 384 f.; *Przyborski / Wohlrab-Sahr*, Qualitative Methoden, 88 f.

ods for evaluating the course as laying the groundwork (*Legearbeit*).[13] The qualitative guided interviews function as a key method on which the following analysis is primarily based. These were conducted with the course instructors and the supervisors. The data collection was done in the winter semesters of 2014/15, 2015/16, and 2016/17. The empirical data material that resulted from the other empirical instruments mentioned is used as context knowledge. The analysis here concentrates in the first place on a year in which ample experience was already gained in the implementation of the interreligious training of religion teachers but also take into account the findings from the other years.

On the basis of this design, the empirical study is thus characterised methodologically by the study of different phenomena in ordinary religious pedagogical situations. The situations researched are not marked by continuous unvarying and controlled labour conditions but reflect everyday challenges that can arise in both school and university contexts and are influenced by variables in the environment.[14]

This empirical study has a multi-perspectival design: it places various perspectives in relation to each other (see figure 1). In that way, the potential for interreligious conflict, sources of tension, and their various facets are related to both the perspectives of the students and those of the instructors and supervisors, each of whom brings a different perspectivity and interreligiosity.

13 Cf. *Cavis, Fatima / Juen, Maria*, "Zwischen Spannung und Sehnsucht" – Einblicke in forschungsgeleitete interreligiöse Lehrentwicklung unter Berücksichtigung des Aspekts Sprachsensibilität. In: Hinger, Barbara (ed), Zweite "Tagung der Fachdidaktik" 2015. Sprachsensibler Sach-Fach-Unterricht – Sprachen im Sprachunterricht. Innsbruck 2016, 257–273, here 262.

14 Cf. *Hug, Theo / Poscheschnik, Gerald*, Empirisch forschen. Die Planung und Umsetzung von Projekten im Studium. Vienna ^{2}2015, 76.

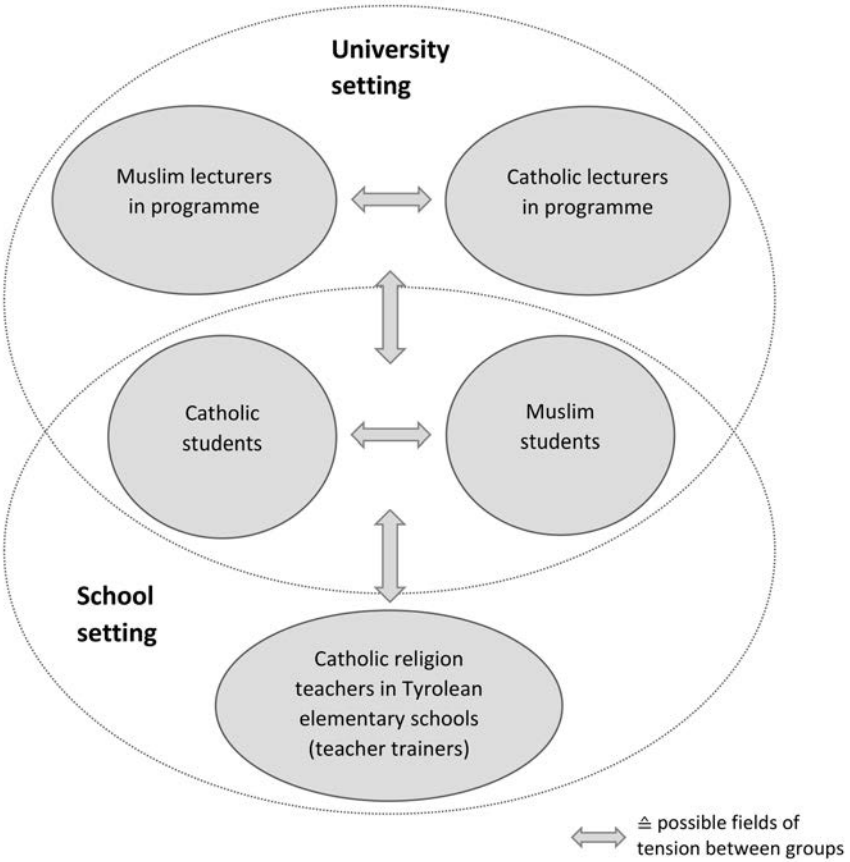

Fig. 1: Multi-Perspectival Design

All three groups are involved in the training of religion teachers in different ways. The positions they occupy in that training, the tasks they carry out, and how they relate to each other are all different. Thus, given their decades of professional experience, supervisors, for example, generally viewed and discuss interreligious challenges, conflict potential, and their dynamics differently than students. With respect to methodology, the empirical data reflects the perceptions and views held by the individual actors. These views and perceptions have an individual, personal character and are thus bound up with the principle of orientation to the subject. This also holds for the positions and interests that enable conclusions to be drawn about the groups involved and the fields of tension between them.

The complementary character that stamps the research is connected with the multi-perspectival design. This is so because the positions of the participating Muslim and Catholic students, who take the accompanying interreligious course and do the practicum together, are triangulated in the empirical analysis. These different actors look at the same phenomena from their respective standpoints. Thus, the system of the empirical study enables the analysis and juxtaposition of the views of the participating individuals who represent conflicting positions in the university or school context. In making conflicts, their causes and dynamics the focus of analysis, the perspectives of the participating actors complement each other, chart a more comprehensive and deeper picture than individual perspectives isolated from each other do and at the same time reveal insights into the internal life of the participating subjects.

Conducting the Empirical Survey

The implementation of the interreligious building blocks of the training of Catholic and Muslim teachers at the University of Innsbruck was evaluated and followed from the first time it was given in the winter semester of 2014/15 to the third year of its implementation in the winter semester 2016/17. No interviews were conducted any longer in the fourth year, the winter semester of 2017/18. Catholic and Muslim students who were taking the course in religious education that accompanied the practicum in the relevant semester were interviewed (always subsequent to their attending the course), the supervisors in charge of the practicums, as well as the lecturers of the accompanying university course. The group discussions were initiated as an experimental method but yielded empirical findings that were limited in their informative value. Based on them, follow-up interviews were conducted in the form of qualitative problem-centred guided interviews that were better suited in the sense of the principle of appropriateness to the subject matter,[15] to researching conflicts and their components and backgrounds.

The interviews were conducted in teams of two, which were generally set up interreligiously. Only the interviews of the students were conducted by a religiously homogenous team matched to the interviewee's own religion. This procedure was chosen because experience suggested that conflict potential among these students was more often expressed in this arrangement than in a

15 Cf. *Flick, Uwe*, Qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung. Reinbek [5]2012, 26 f.; *Helfferich, Cornelia*, Die Qualität qualitativer Daten. Manual für die Durchführung qualitativer Interviews. Wiesbaden [4]2011, 46.

mixed religious setting. The interviews were conducted in German in university or school locations. Their duration varied significantly at times. While the interviews with supervisors and students each lasted about an hour, the interviews with the course leaders stretched to two to three hours. The interviews were recorded via an audio recorder and then transcribed.[16]

The guided interviews were prepared following the multistage SPSS method[17] worked out by Cornelia Helfferich and further developed by Jan Kruse.[18] The first step consisted of a collection of questions (in the sense of a question pool) before they were systematised and sorted according to a critical review. The questions were subsequently summarised in thematic blocks, each of which began with a narrative-generating lead-off question and various prepared follow-up questions that were linked to the narrative and sought for additional depth with respect to content.

Different guidelines were developed for each of the different groups for the interviews. The interviews with the students focused on the themes:

- Expectations they had of the accompanying course (AC),
- Perception of the interreligious and intrareligious part of the AC,
- Wishes and expectations regarding the Catholic or Islamic religious education programme,
- Interactions with the Catholic or Muslim students and interreligious collaboration,
- Fields of tension between the students,
- Challenges and the potential of the interreligious shape of AC.

The guidelines for the interviews with the instructors of the accompanying course at the university include in turn:

- The planning, preparation, and didactic shape and expectations of the AC,

16 The interviews were transcribed using a simplified version of the transcription format TiQ (Talk in Qualitative Social Research). (On this transcription method, cf. *Bohnsack, Ralf*, Rekonstruktive Sozialforschung. Einführung in qualitative Methoden. Opladen ^{3}1999, 233 f.). The spoken word is transcribed, and dialectical aspects are preserved. A transformation of the spoken word into standard language was not done. A literal transcription was carried out, thus fillers, indicators of understanding, and emotional expressions (e. g., hmmm, yes, oh yes, oh well, etc.) were also transcribed and written out. Quotes or direct speech in the interviews were placed in inverted commas (‘’).

17 SPSS stands for the four German words Sammeln, Prüfen, Sortieren, and Subsumieren (collect, test, sort, and prioritise). These steps can be implemented for the elaboration of qualitative guidelines.

18 Cf. *Helfferich*, Die Qualität qualitativer Daten, 182 – 189; *Kruse, Jan*, Qualitative Interviewforschung. Ein integrativer Ansatz. Weinheim 2014, 234 – 240.

- Ideas of what religious educators should do,
- Distinctions between an interreligious and an intrareligious AC,
- The praxis of team teaching and differing approaches to religious education among the instructors,[19]
- The course of AC, positive and negative experiences, the perception of collaboration between Muslim and Catholic students,
- Recommendations for the further development of religious collaboration.

The guidelines for the qualitative interviews with the supervisors who supervised the practicums of the students in the compulsory schools contained the following elements:

- The implementation of the interreligious basic practicum concerning the planning and preparation of lessons and team teaching by the students,
- The perception of the trial lessons of the students by the school class,
- Tensions and interactions between the students and the challenges that resulted from that,
- Wishes and expectations of the interreligious basic practicum,
- Perspectives of the parents, the school directors, colleagues, and local pastors,
- Opportunities, limits, and recommendations for the future of the basic practicum.

After the interviews had been conducted, a critical reflexion on the course of the interviews was done, which led in turn in a revision of the guidelines. The guidelines were constructed in such a way that questions of a more narrative nature were asked at the beginning of the interviews, whereas more thematic reflective questions were asked at the end.

The guidelines were, moreover, applied in a flexible way: the interviewees specified the discussions and the themes, the originally proposed structure was adapted to that. The prepared questions for reflection that the interview partners had already independently answered in detail in the response to the narrative-generating leading question for the individual thematic blocks were checked off and not posed anew. Only the questions about thematic issues that had not yet been discussed were asked later with the reflective questions. In formulating those questions, we oriented ourselves less to the prepared questions of the guidelines but derived our questions from what had already been

19 These themes were relevant when the accompanying course was led by a team of course leaders that was interreligiously composed.

said.[20] The guiding questions were to guarantee that all the substantive aspects listed would be dealt with in the interviews and a comparable data situation was given with respect to the various interview partners.[21] Qualitative guided interviews, which were conducted with students and supervisors, showed a comparatively higher structuring level than the interviews with course leaders.

In general, we were careful in our gathering of data to circumvent a question-answer dynamic. Moreover, we avoided assessing the actions of the interviewees in the interview. Instead, in principle, in the interview we followed Jean-Claude Kaufmann's concept of the comprehensive interview.[22] Accordingly, the interview partners can disclose their views and mental categories most easily if the interviewers go along with them and thus break through the hierarchically structured interview situation. What is central here, according to Kaufmann, is a fundamental empathetic attitude towards the interviewee: the interviewer records what is said in a friendly, attentive, receptive, and positive way. Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that points already mentioned are repeatedly raised and referred to through the interview.[23] This procedure includes 'getting the conversation going and obtaining access to the world of the informant.'[24]

On the Data and Sampling

From 2014 to 2017, 40 persons in problem-centred guided interviews and group discussions were interviewed. This included four course leaders, six supervisors and 27 students. For the empirical analysis, the interviews from one year were used, and the remaining empirical data was employed as context knowledge in the analysis.

The students included 13 Catholic and 14 Muslims. The Catholics had an almost equal representation of both men and women, whereas the Muslim group had a surplus of women because it was mostly Muslim women who enrol in this programme. For the empirical analysis and presentation, the students were anonymised through the use of common first names, though their gender and migration background were retained in the choice of pseudonym.

The instructors in the accompanying course were composed equally of Muslims and Catholics. The supervisors interviewed had been, in contrast – for reasons that have already been indicated above – consistently working in Catholic

20 Cf. *Kaufmann, Jean-Claude*, Das verstehende Interview. Konstanz 1999, 72.
21 Cf. *Helfferich*, Die Qualität qualitativer Daten, 180.
22 Cf. *Kaufmann*, Das verstehende Interview.
23 Cf. ibid., 73.
24 Ibid., 76.

religious education. That primarily women were interviewed in both groups had an impact on our anonymisation strategy: to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees, we used only female pseudonyms for the supervisors and the course leaders, although male teachers were also interviewed. These changes for the sake of anonymity had no impact on the analysis of the conversations and the validity of the empirical data.

All the course lecturers in the period between 2014 and 2017 are completely represented in the survey, and all the supervisors who said they were willing to do an interview were interviewed. The student sample differed from that with respect to the religion of those concerned. Of the Muslim students, those were asked who were most frequently present in the teachers' training programme. Because more trainee Catholic teachers attended the seminar, a choice among them was made. We interviewed those whom we thought held distinctive views and who displayed a wide range in the existing plurality of views in the seminar. Per year, at least four Catholic and four Muslim students were chosen. This procedure allowed the variation range in the different attitudes towards the interreligious model to be covered.

3.3 Evaluation

The evaluation of the empirical data was done on the basis of the written transcriptions. The analysis of the data follows the procedural steps of the Grounded Theory developed by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin.[25] Not all the analytical steps the theory allows for were carried out, however, but the processes were modified and adapted pragmatically to the given research conditions. Moreover, in the various phases of the evaluation, we placed particular importance on our role as subjects within the research process. Thus, a few members of the research team were also active as actors in the interreligious modules of the religious education programme. The relations to those interviewed as well as their own experiences in the field required a targeted reflexion – a procedure that, for example, is also suggested by Franz Breuer with his conception of the Reflexive Grounded Theory.[26]

The evaluation was carried out in the following phases. In the first step, we divided the interview transcriptions into units and did an analysis of individual

25 Cf. *Strauss, Anselm L. / Corbin, Juliet*, Grounded Theory. Grundlagen Qualitativer Sozialforschung. Weinheim 1996, 43 – 56.

26 Cf. *Breuer, Franz*, Reflexive Grounded Theory. Eine Einführung für die Forschungspraxis. Wiesbaden ^{2}2010, 115 f.

sequences.[27] In this initial analytical step, which is strongly oriented to the empirical data, the interview statements were broken down as raw data, in the sense of the open coding of the Grounded Theory.[28] All qualitative guided interviews were openly coded, and the codings were collected and organised. Categories were drawn up on this basis, i.e., derived inductively from the empirical data.[29] The interpretation of each was done in teams, in which three to five people together analysed the various guided interviews sequence by sequence. All interpretation sessions were documented.

The records of the interpretation activity and the coding system that was developed constituted the basis of the second analytical step in which the case profiles were worked out. These were created both for the students and course leaders interviewed as well as also for the supervisors, each on the basis of the categories developed. Using the case analyses we had made, we compared the distinctions and commonalities between the various representatives of a group that emerged.

In the third step of the evaluation, which followed the procedural step of the axial coding of the Grounded Theory[30] and in accordance with the underlying question of this volume, we focused on codes and categories in which conflict potential became apparent. Following the paradigmatic model of Strauss and Corbin,[31] which was specifically modified at various points, we focused here on sources of tension and their various facets (see figure 2) that emerged from the data.

27 Cf. *Mey, Günter / Mruck, Katja*, Methodologie und Methodik der Grounded Theory. In: Kempf, Wilhelm / Kiefer, Markus (eds), Forschungsmethoden der Psychologie. Zwischen naturwissenschaftlichem Experiment und sozialwissenschaftlicher Hermeneutik. Vol. 3: Psychologie als Natur- und Kulturwissenschaft. Die soziale Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Berlin 2009, 100–152, here 118 f.

28 Cf. *Strauss / Corbin*, Grounded Theory, 44.

29 Cf. *Mey, Günter / Mruck, Katja*, Grounded-Theory-Methodologie. Entwicklung, Stand, Perspektiven. In: Eaed. (eds), Grounded Theory Reader. Wiesbaden ^{2}2011, 11–48, here 32.

30 Cf. *Strauss / Corbin*, Grounded Theory, 75 f.

31 Cf. ibid., 78 f.; *Mey / Mruck*, Methodologie und Methodik der Grounded Theory, 129 f.

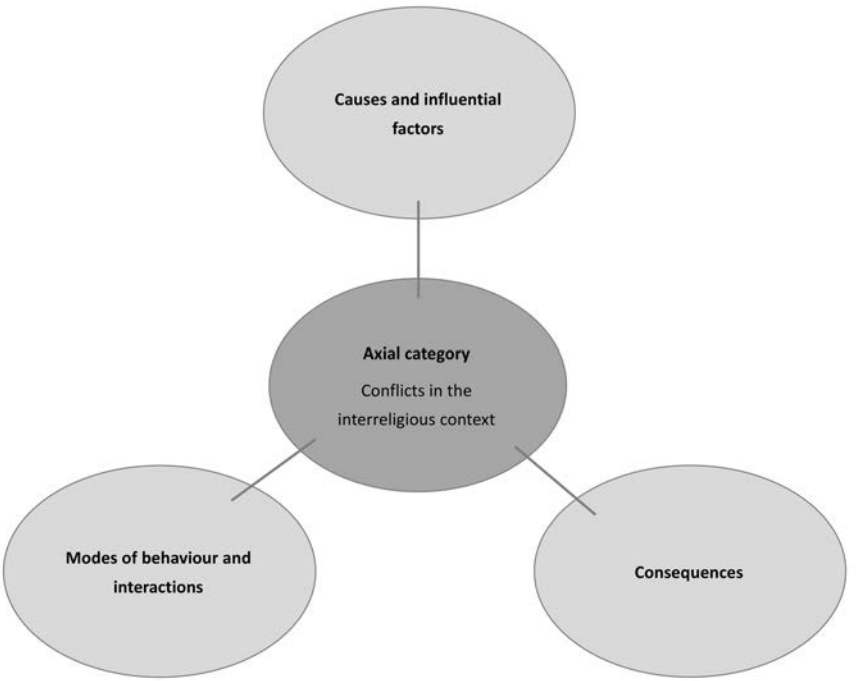

Fig. 2: Conflicts and their Sub-Categories[32]

In the course of our evaluation, we differentiated the axial categories, thus the various potentials for conflict, into the sub-categories 'causes and influential factors', 'modes of behaviour and interactions' and 'consequences'. The sub-categories were labelled during the repeated analysis of the case profile and the interview transcriptions. The evaluation in this step is thus transformed from a person-centred stage, reflected in the case profiles created, into an analysis of

32 The various (sub-)categories are characterised as follows. 'Axial categories' deal with the questions: What is it about? Which conflicts are focused on? 'Causes and influential factors' deal with the aspects: What are the general (cultural, geographical, education policy, etc.) pre-conditions on the one hand and the individual and situational pre-conditions on the other that lead to a conflict? The category 'modes of behaviour and interaction' asks: How do the participating actors deal with the causes? Which interactions occur that express the potential for conflict? Which forms of settling conflicts occur in the field of tension? Finally, the category 'consequences' explores these questions: What results do the actions and interactions produce that are connected with the conflict? Where do they lead?

content, which focuses on the thematic substance and the various elements of conflict at the centre.

3.4 Presentation

The three-step analysis of the empirical data will be presented in the chapters below. This presentation of the empirical findings follows a fundamental division in the two settings of 'school' and 'university'. These were researched separately because the potential for conflict that emerged is very dependent on context and cannot be forcibly imposed on other contexts.

The first analytical chapter (**4**) is devoted to the school setting. After an analysis of the conflict setting (**4.1**), in which the participating actors' interests and relations to each other are examined, the various fields of tension are presented that arose in the school context in connection with the interreligious teachers' training programme. In analysing the data, we could identify the following areas of conflict: '(religious) group dynamics' (**4.2**), 'themes and methodology' (**4.3**), and 'identity and confessionality' **(4.4**). Each area of conflict is presented in detail by means of interview statements by the supervisors, course leaders, and the students as a multi-perspectival analysis (see fig. 3).

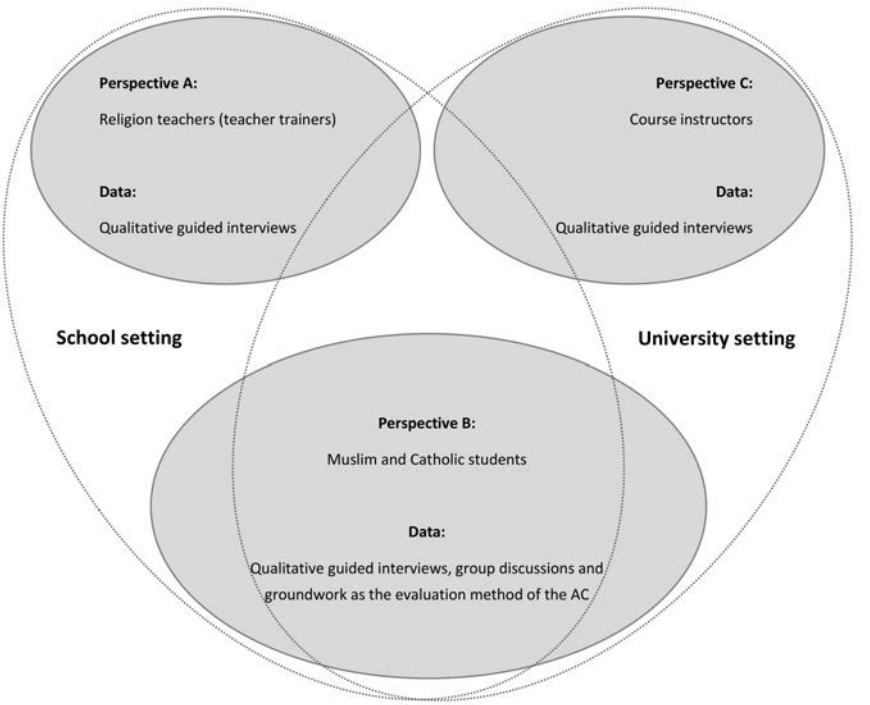

Fig. 3: Multi-Perspectival Analysis of the School and University Settings

Looking at the school setting from a multi-perspectival approach allows us to examine in a fundamental way the conflict potential and the associated aspects in the school context that are part of the interreligiously shaped components of the teachers' education programme. It also allows a mutual validation of the various standpoints.

In the second empirical section (**5**), there is an analysis of the university setting. Following the introductory description of the setting (**5.1**), in which the group of actors involved and their interests are discussed, this chapter, like the previous one, presents the various conflicts that emerged in the university context. As such, the following fields of tension are identified within the framework of empirical evaluation: 'planning, approach, and expectations' (**5.2**), 'process, communication, and group dynamics' (**5.3**), and 'conflict about the "ideal" religious education and recognition' (**5.4**). The conflicts in the university setting are also discussed in this chapter from a multi-perspectival approach and investigated from the point of view of both the leaders in the accompanying

course and the participating students. Following this, chapter **6** presents a summary and discussion of the central empirical results. In this context, we pay particular attention above all to the theological and religious educational implications of the empirical findings.

Empirical Analysis

4 The School Setting

In this chapter we will focus on the tensions that formed in the school setting. The conflicts that emerged in connection with the university course will be discussed in chapter **5.**

Three fields of tension could be identified through the analysis of the empirical data:

- Area of conflict 1: (Religious) group dynamics (**4.2**)
- Area of conflict 2: Themes and methodology (**4.3**)
- Area of conflict 3: Identity and confessionality (**4.4**)

Before we turn to the analysis of these areas of conflict, we will first describe the school setting in the following section (**4.1**). Here the participating actors, their interests, and their perspectives on the interreligious component of the programme will be introduced.

4.1 Description of the School Setting

The Genesis and Process of the Interreligious Basic Practicum

Because of the interreligious collaboration in the religious education programme at the University of Innsbruck, Muslim students who enrolled in the Bachelor's programme of Islamic Religious Education did their basic practicum in Catholic religious education together with Catholic students in Tyrolean elementary schools. Their supervisors in the practicum were Catholic religion teachers. The purpose of the basic practicum is to give the students an initial understanding of the concrete event of teaching religion at the elementary school level, to familiarise them with the educational location of the elementary school, and to enable them to build up initial experience in working in a team as well as individually as teachers. The basic practicum should stimulate the students to take a close look at their future role as religion teachers. It also serves as a basis for the so-called specialised practicum, which focuses on methodologies for a specific subject. The specialised practicum is not done, however, as part of the interreligious project but in a religiously homogenous setting. Both the episcopal education authority of the Diocese of Innsbruck and the education authority of the Islamic Religious Community in Austria (IGGÖ) approved the interreligious collaboration in the basic practicum.[1]

1 Cf. *Schluifer, Winfried*, Organisation – Schulrecht – Praxis. Die Perspektive des Bischöflichen

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110762877-006

During the one-month basic practicum, the students take part in four practice sessions in Catholic religious education under the supervision of qualified teachers in elementary schools. The basic practicum is offered each fall after the beginning of the school year. The schools where the supervisors work as teachers agree to host the students – the trainees in religious education – and to supervise them. According to the didactic plan, the students are to complete the basic practicum in groups of three students each. This number was decided upon because groups of two often become entangled in a dynamic of mutual self-affirmation by the two members and groups of four are too large for the classrooms. Practicum groups consisting of three students, however, provide better conditions for the students to learn from one another.[2]

The practicum groups are to be interreligious in their composition. Since the number of students registering for the basic practicum oscillated in the year investigated, groups of two Catholic students were first formed according to their preferences regarding time and location and a practicum placement was set. Then the Muslim students were placed. The teachers and students are informed as to who was assigned to which practicum just before the practicums actually began.

The process of the basic practicum in the elementary schools is preset by both the curriculum and the regulations of the episcopal education authority of the Diocese of Innsbruck. The students are to sit in on the first unit and actively participate in the following units by teaching individually once and in team teaching at another time. It is not clearly indicated as to whether the latter is to be done in teams of two or three; in an interreligious arrangement; or to be done with the supervisor or with one's fellow students.

The independent education on this level is limited to one part of the lesson. Care is taken to ensure that Muslim students do not handle any specific Islamic – or Christian – theological themes but limit themselves to general ethical or didactic methodological elements.

The concrete implementation of the active participation in the education by the students is constantly monitored by their supervisors in the practicum. These provisions provide a comparatively small framework in which the students can

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Schulamtes auf die gemeinsamen Ausbildungselemente von ReligionslehrerInnen. In: Kraml / Sejdini (eds), Interreligiöse Bildungsprozesse, 195–200, here 196; *Redžepović, Samir*, Chancen und Herausforderungen des islamischen Religionsunterrichts in Österreich. Reflexionen angesichts der interreligiösen Zusammenarbeit im Rahmen des Basispraktikums. In: Kraml / Sejdini (eds), Interreligiöse Bildungsprozesse, 185–194, here 187.

2 Cf., among others, *Wecker, Christof / Fischer, Frank*, Lernen in Gruppen. In: Seidel, Tina / Krapp, Andreas (eds), Pädagogische Psychologie. Weinheim 2014, 277–296.

participate in the education and choice of themes. These circumstances were taken into consideration when interpreting the empirical data.

Participating Actors in the Interreligious Basic Practicum

Our discussion so far has centred on the above actors: the university departments of the University of Innsbruck that offer the Bachelor's programme in Catholic Religious Education and Islamic Religious Education and the episcopal education authority of the Diocese of Innsbruck, as well as the education authority of the Islamic Religious Community. In addition to them, the following three groups participated as actors in the basic practicum: Catholic religion teachers, who acted as practicum supervisors, Catholic elementary school pupils, and Muslim and Catholic students. Moreover, the parents of the elementary school students, the local media, and politicians play a role as other groups of actors, and local priests and fellow teachers constitute still other groups. These different groups and institutions make up the field in which the participating actors work at the school setting (see fig. 4).

The participating groups and institutions each have distinct perspectives on the interreligiously structured basic practicum and pursue different goals.[3] The interests of the actors are not only individual in nature but also have a supraindividual aspect that characterises a group as a collective. This supraindividual aspect comes to light in the views of the individual participants and forms a common denominator of the actors in a particular group.

3 Here we point out that the concerns of the participating actors' groups can also be understood as field interests, following the French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu.

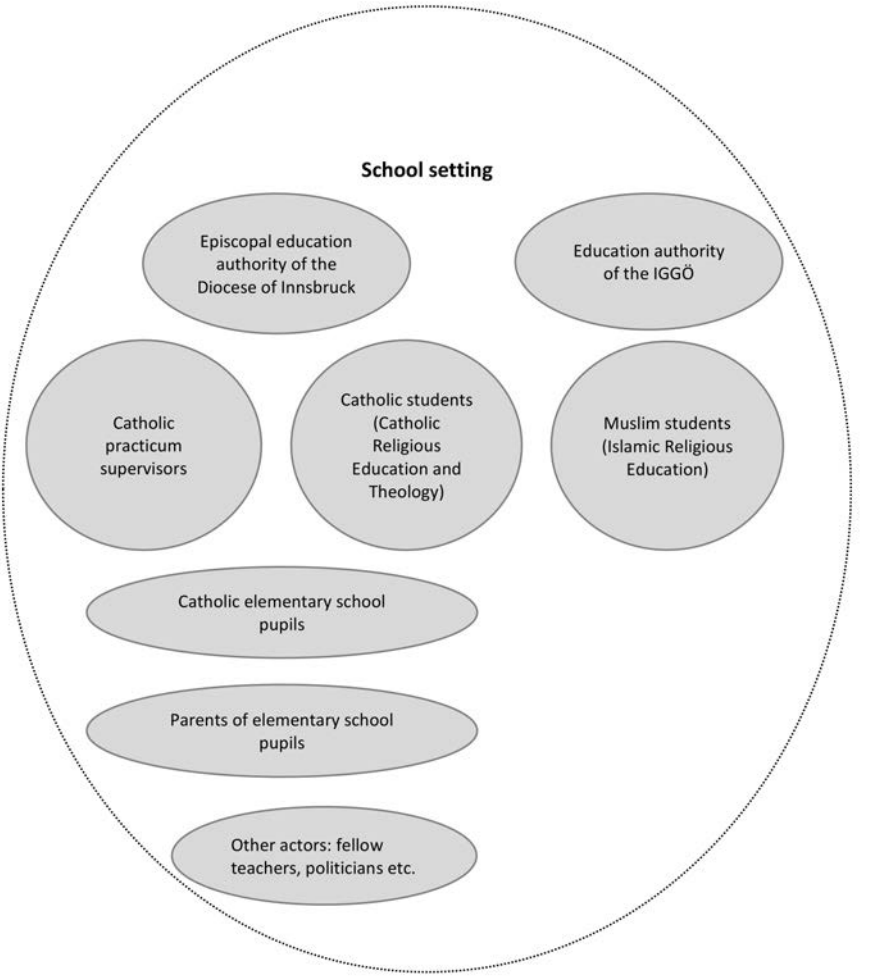

Fig. 4: Participating Actors in the School Setting

In the following sections we will sketch the supraindividual interests of the participating actors. In presenting the perspective of the supervisors and the students, we will use, among other things, the qualitative interviews that were conducted among both groups. Through the dovetailing of both perspectives, a complementary perspective on the conflicts emerged in the analysis of the data. The positions of the education authorities were clear from the regulations concerning the basic practicum on the one hand and from written contributions that were published in one of the University of Innsbruck's collected volumes on

the other.[4] The pupils, their parents, local politicians, and other actors, such as local priests, do not speak for themselves as groups because no empirical enquiries were conducted among them. Nevertheless, they are present in the conducted interviews as discursive figures with their needs and concerns – especially in the interviews with the supervisors – and in media reports on the interreligious basic practicum. Subsequently, the field interests, positions, expectations, and reservations of the education authorities (group of actors I), the parents, pupils, and local politicians (group of actors II), the practicum supervisors (group of actors III), and the students (group of actors IV) towards the interreligious basic practicum will be presented section by section.

Group of Actors I: The Education Authorities

The episcopal education authority is responsible, in the name of the bishop, for education and schools, especially for Catholic religious education and for the Catholic educational institutions in the schools. This also concerns the curriculum and teaching content for the Catholic religious education in the different levels of education. Given this allocation of responsibilities, the permission of the education authority was necessary for the implementation of the interreligiously modified basic practicum in Catholic religious education.

In principle, because of its responsibility to supervise Catholic religious education, the episcopal education authority has a 'preserving' function. Thus, its objective is to make Catholic religious education in the school context as comprehensive as possible within existing time constraints and to make it age-appropriate. That is why the education authority did not unconditionally accept the modification of the homogenous religious practicum into an interreligious educational component. It was pointed out in particular that changes in the practicum were not to be made at the expense of obtaining competences in Catholic religious education.[5] The participants were thoroughly aware of the role that is attributed to the education authority as a result. Thus, for example, Winfried Schluifer, the interim director of the institution in the school year 2014/15, said that the education authority was perceived – especially by the university – as having been assigned the role of 'brakeman'.[6] This status resulted, however, from the institutional function of the organisation and not from personal preferences.

4 *Kraml / Sejdini* (eds), Interreligiöse Bildungsprozesse.
5 *Schluifer*, Organisation – Schulrecht – Praxis, 197.
6 Ibid.

Nevertheless, the education authority also has a vested interest in tension-free collaboration with the Department of Religious Education in the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Innsbruck: it wants to support and guarantee the best possible training for future religion teachers. Indeed, the education authority of the diocese was not the initiating actor of the interreligious basic practicum, but it did not stand in the way of the project either. In order to avoid suspicion in its own faith community that it was not advocating sufficiently for Catholic religious education and opening the doors wide to Muslim themes – according to an objection formulated by some parents[7] – the education authority defined precisely the framework of this interreligious basic practicum. Thus, on the one hand, it laid down what would be addressed regarding content in this process and what not. The fears the parents had were therefore alleviated and countered. On the other hand – pushed by an initiative by the supervisors – the parents of the elementary school pupils were informed in advance: the diocese sent the parents a letter about the participation of Muslim students in the basic practicum and thus about the temporary presence of Muslim student teachers in Catholic religious education in the selected elementary schools.[8]

The episcopal education authority and the responsible school inspectors[9] justified their approval of the interreligious initiative also on the basis that interreligious learning could be seen as an objective and important competence in Catholic religious education.[10] In this respect, the interreligious basic practicum offered concrete points of contact with Muslims and thus with the religious other in the teaching situation.[11] Aside from this, nothing suggested that this interreligious basic practicum would adversely affect Catholic themes in religious education because 'Muslim religion teachers do not teach in Catholic religious education.'[12]

For the education authority of the Islamic Religious Community in Austria (IGGÖ), the initial situation was different right from the outset. Until this time,

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7 Cf. ibid.

8 Cf. *Jetzinger, Judith / Plankensteiner-Spiegel, Maria*, "... und wie sieht die Realität in der Schule aus?" Überlegungen aus dem Bischöflichen Schulamt zur gemeinsamen Ausbildung katholischer und muslimischer ReligionslehrerInnen. In: Kraml / Sejdini (eds), Interreligiöse Bildungsprozesse, 173–184, here 179 f.; *Schluifer*, Organisation – Schulrecht – Praxis, 196.

9 In Austria, school inspectors are organs of faith communities and responsible for the interests of religious education in schools and can be consulted on important issues.

10 Cf. *Jetzinger / Plankensteiner-Spiegel*, "... und wie sieht die Realität in der Schule aus?", 179.

11 For further information on the consent of the episcopal education authority, see ibid. and *Schluifer*, Organisation – Schulrecht – Praxis.

12 Memorandum of the episcopal education authority of the Diocese of Innsbruck (Date: April 14, 2014), cited by: *Schluifer*, Organisation – Schulrecht – Praxis, 196.

there was no possibility in Tyrol for Islamic students at the Bachelor's level to take part in a school practicum with established teachers in everyday school life. Thus, the permission by the education authority of the IGGÖ also met with no resistance worthy of mention. The approval to introduce the interreligious educational component was also facilitated by interreligious competences being considered an important building block of Islamic religious education.[13] The acquisition of interreligious competences by Muslim religion teacher trainees in the course of their religious educational and didactic education was therefore viewed in principle as positive and the quality of the programme as beneficial.

Group of Actors II: Parents, Pupils, and Local Politicians

The concern with being accused of watering down Catholic religious education through the interreligious basic practicum proved to be well founded. The following occurred the first time the interreligious practicum was carried out in the fall of 2014. A father in a district whose elementary school was scheduled to host the interreligious project became angry after receiving the letter from the education authority and threatened to withdraw his child from Catholic religious education. He argued that the presence of Muslim students in religious education would not be beneficial for his child's development and that the confrontation with the religious other would stand in the way of the formation of his child's own Christian faith.

This case was publicised by the media and drew the attention of politicians.[14] A representative of the FPÖ in the Tyrolean parliament used the occasion and disparaged the interreligious basic practicum as an 'Islam project'. In a statement, she described the danger that the Muslim students taking part in the practicum would propagate radical ideas and that as a result a confessional Catholic religious education would become impossible.[15] The Tyrolean minister of education at that time was also attentive to the reports and asked the education authority about this. The conflict in the district in question could finally be

13 Cf. *Redžepović*, Chancen und Herausforderungen des islamischen Religionsunterrichts in Österreich, 189.

14 Cf. *Thurner, Samuel*, Eltern laufen gegen interreligiöses Pilotprojekt an der Volksschule Wattens Sturm. Kritik wegen Muslimen im Unterricht. In: Kurier, Issue: Oct. 11, 2014; *Hammer, Hermann*, Islamische Studenten in katholischer Religionsstunde. In: ORF Tirol, article from Oct. 12, 2014. In: https://tirol.orf.at/news/stories/2673084/, [last accessed July 15, 2018].

15 Cf. *Thurner, Samuel*, Aufregung um Pilotprojekt an Schule. LA Schwaiger empört. FPÖ fordert "Islamprojekt" im Religionsunterricht zu stoppen. In: Tiroler Krone, Issue: Oct. 11, 2014.

settled through a discussion with all participants.[16] Nevertheless, the case continued to have an impact. The incident constantly confronted the actors with the fact that interreligious projects can very quickly give rise to a critical and hostile attitude on the part of the parents and subsequently public criticism in the media.

The interviews with the practicum supervisors reveal that, in general, the elementary school pupils had formed no deep-seated attitudes about their own religion or other religions at this phase. The parents primarily want their children to receive an introduction to the knowledge, foundations, rituals, and scriptures of their own religion at the elementary school. They also want their children to experience a fundamental religious socialisation during their elementary education, which in many cases helps pass on the religious tradition of the family to the following generation. The attitudes of the parents towards other religions and people of other faiths are quite varied to some extent and range from a fundamental openness to a rejection on principle. In concrete cases, the attitude towards the religious other is the result of multiple factors like educational background, place of residence, contact with people of a different faith, political orientation, and debates in the media.

Many politicians allegedly have a different interest in this than parents or legal guardians, even though they usually present themselves as 'advocates for the interests' of the elementary school pupils and their parents. Politicians usually strive for an increase in their personal influence locally and for an increase in votes for their respective party in the event of an election on the municipal or state level. Above all, in recent years, the themes of migration, refugees, and Islam have been taken up for the sake of political capital.

Group of Actors III: The Practicum Supervisors

Catholic religion teachers who have followed the required programme at educational colleges can act as practicum supervisors. Their task consists in familiarising students with the teaching situation and with challenges that are entailed by preparing simplified content at the elementary school. The supervisors carry out an educational function.

Their motive here is to share their own practical experience with the prospective religion teachers so that they can contribute to ensuring the future quality of religious education. In connection with this, they assess the progress of the students during the basic practicum. Another basis for the role of practicum su-

16 Cf. *Schluifer*, Organisation – Schulrecht – Praxis, 196 f.

pervisors can be found in the recognition they experience in their involvement in educating a younger generation of teachers. Moreover, the additional work is not an honorary, unpaid activity. There is minimal remuneration, even if the amount in no way matches the actual work invested.

Most of the teachers who serve as practicum supervisors and were interviewed in this empirical study have been carrying out this task for many years. In most cases, they were already working as supervisors before the introduction of the interreligious basic practicum in the winter semester of 2014/15. Up until then, they had only supervised religiously homogenous groups of prospective Catholic religion teachers. As a result, in the qualitative guided interviews, the practicum supervisors often relate their experiences in the interreligious basic practicums to their practical work with Catholic groups of student teachers. Because of the interreligious modification, the supervisors also underwent a process of development and were confronted with having to adapt the basic practicum to both Catholic and Muslim students. As the empirical analyses show, this represented a challenge both conceptually and substantively as well as organisationally.

In principle, the supervisors aspire to have a positive influence on the didactic intuitions of the students, their competences, and ways of preparing for teaching.[17] This motivation was manifested in the conversations with all participating practicum supervisors. They also assume a sympathetic attitude towards the students taking part in the interreligious basic practicum. They do have options and a certain amount of freedom in the arrangement of the basic practicum, but the process is – as stated above – already fundamentally prescribed.

But there were also discussions between the supervisors and the episcopal education authority on the appropriateness of the guidelines.[18] Regardless of their individual attitude and possible reservations towards interreligiosity, the supervisors were – because of their role – always the (first) points of contacts for colleagues, the school administration, and parents whenever there were questions about the basic practicum. Because of that, they were often challenged to take a defensive or justifying attitude towards the interreligious approach and to advocate this to others.

17 In the basic practicum, this is possible only with respect to the basic questions about the teaching, whereas it is only in the specialised practicum that the concrete didactic methodological treatment of specific content and the didactic reduction (*Elementarisierung*) of themes are dealt with.

18 Cf. *Jetzinger / Plankensteiner-Spiegel*, "... und wie sieht die Realität in der Schule aus?", 180 f.

Group of Actors IV: The Students

In general, during the basic practicum, the students acquire initial experiences in religious education in the elementary school. Until then, even though they have chosen this kind of study, it is often unclear to them what working in an elementary school is actually like and what aspects are to be kept in mind. Correspondingly, the prospective religion teachers expect above all that these aspects are communicated within the framework of the basic practicum.

Moreover, the basic practicum is a compulsory component of the curricula in question – and thus the positive completion of the basic practicum is also a performance prerequisite for the programme. The obligation to complete the basic practicum can also have effects on how the students participate in this.

The concrete perspectives on the basic practicum and on its interreligious character can indeed differ according to the study programme. Both Muslim students, who are enrolled in the Bachelor's programme in Islamic Religious Education, and Catholic students in the Bachelor's programme in Catholic Religious Education participate in the practicum. Beyond that, the basic practicum is often also attended by students who are enrolled in the degree programme in Catholic Theology and want to acquire an additional qualification for teaching. Generally speaking, they do the basic practicum in the seventh semester – when they are already more advanced and experienced than their fellow students. Students in the Catholic Religious Education programme were scheduled to do the practicum in the fifth semester; whereas, in the period we researched, students in the Islamic Religious Education programme did so in their third semester. That led to a partial disparity when a practicum group consisted of theology students and students in the religious education programme.

The concerns of the students in the Catholic Theology programme differ in part from the expectations of their fellow students. These students were often focused on the analysis of theological themes. They also, generally speaking, did not see themselves as religion teachers and were not inclined to view the latter as being on their level. That reflected an internal competition between the two disciplines in Catholic Theology that, despite all efforts to bridge the gap, nevertheless arose at some points. The students in Catholic Theology in the basic practicum were often interested in interreligious dialogue and theological debates with Muslim students.

In contrast, the prospective Catholic religion teachers in the basic practicum were primarily interested in religious education. Accordingly, not only did they expect a somewhat vague practical orientation to theological themes but also wanted concrete suggestions for the didactic reduction (*Elementarisierung*) of educational content.

Unlike their Catholic fellow students, the prospective Islamic religion teachers usually entered the basic practicum with few concrete expectations of the interreligious arrangement and with vaguely formulated concerns. This is due both to the early period in their study as well as to the still recent history of the Islamic Religious Education programme. Thus, the Muslim students apparently still had no experience regarding what they could expect from the individual components of the religious education and what not. The prospective Islamic religion teachers need time to be able to address concrete needs and concerns about the course and the practicums, and these needs and concerns have to be defined. This could be done, for example, by allowing students who have yet to complete the basic practicum to acquire a basic impression of the content and process by talking to older students who have already completed it. They can thus shape their expectations accordingly.

In principle, however, the situation of Muslim students in comparison to their Catholic fellow students entails extra challenges. In addition to successfully completing the basic practicum in the schools with a positive assessment of their performance by designing their own teaching experiment in education, the Muslim students also need to do this in a context they are unfamiliar with, i.e., in Catholic religious education.

Following this presentation of the concerns and motives of the different groups of actors that play a role in the basic practicum at the school, the following sections will describe the areas of conflict in the school setting that came to light in the analysis of the empirical data.

4.2 Area of Conflict 1: (Religious) Group Dynamics

The first area of conflict in the school setting can be found in the group dynamics among the students who form a training group in the basic practicum. The field of tension in the group composition includes not only the organisation of the composition but also the effects of the group composition on the interactions between the practicum supervisor, the students, and the pupils and on whether the students can at all attain the intended objectives of the basic practicum. The area of conflict here is '(religious) group dynamics'. We have deliberately placed the adjective 'religious' between parentheses. The reasons for choosing this term will be made clear in the course of the empirical analysis.

As explained above, the project in pedagogical praxis was constructed fundamentally in an asymmetrical way because it occurs in Catholic religious education. The equal participation of Muslim students thus encountered obstacles. Nevertheless, the group dynamics did not only follow structural requirements

that were independent of individuals but also took on very different forms in the different groups. What mechanisms came into effect and how the participating individuals dealt with the prescribed structural causes can be seen from the case descriptions presented in the empirical analysis in this chapter.

In our analysis of the data, in which the individual elements and relevant manifestations of the area of conflict are explained, we will first look at the initial conditions. There we will investigate structural requirements on the one hand and influential individual and situational factors on the other that the participants bring with them and can be distinguished from the structural causes that are not person-dependent (**4.2.1**). Following that, we will depict the interactions and behaviour that could be observed in connection with the area of conflict (**4.2.2**) and analyse the consequences of these arrangements for the participants (**4.2.3**). In a preliminary conclusion, the mechanisms that form the area of conflict are summarised (**4.2.4**). The presentation of the other fields of tension that are described in later chapters follow this structure.

4.2.1 Causes and Influential Factors

The first non-person-dependent, structural condition for this area of conflict is the arrangement of the interreligious project in pedagogical praxis that requires students of different religions to complete the basic practicum together. The groups consisted of three individuals each.

Conveying the educational content to elementary school pupils represents a challenge and, generally speaking, a new experience – particularly for the prospective Islamic religion teachers because they do the practicum in a framework that is unusual (of a different religion) for them. In this context, the supervisor Gertrud points out that the class size in Catholic and Islamic religious education is often different. Whereas Catholic religion teachers generally teach their subject in classes that are not essentially smaller than in other subjects, Islamic religious education is sometimes given to very few pupils (cf. IP Gertrud, lines 23–28).[19] She thus concludes that, due to their own school socialisation experiences, Muslim students – to the extent they have attended Islamic religious education in school – bring other expectations of the educational situation with them (cf. ibid., lines 28–38).

19 Unlike our references to the literature and secondary sources, references to the collected empirical data will, for better readability, be included in the text. Direct citations from the interviews conducted will be placed in italics in the main text.

The case of the practicum supervisor Gertrud revealed a striking asymmetry among the students. She supervised a group that was composed of two male Catholic students and one female Muslim student. Both male students, each of whom was enrolled in the degree programme in Catholic Theology, had been friends already since the first semester and were further advanced in the programme. The Muslim student, however, was still at the beginning of the Bachelor's programme in Islamic Religious Education and thus had had no contact with her Catholic fellow students before then.

This initial structural condition already set the course for the formation of an in-group. This was reinforced by situational and individual influential factors. Although each student was, generally speaking, open to interreligiosity, this constellation did not lead to a balanced participation by these students. Both Catholic theologians had already known each other for a long time because of their study, '*were simply attuned to each other*' (ibid., line 124), always arrived together at the practicum location, were dominant in the class, and occupied '*an incredible amount of space*' (ibid., lines 355 f.); the Muslim student had the opposite personality traits and shunned contact with her Catholic fellow students. She also showed, in Gertrud's opinion, less curiosity or was less interested in experiencing how the teaching event occurs (cf. ibid., lines 37 f.). The supervisor had the impression, rather, that the student felt the practicum was an obligation imposed on her – in the sense of '*we have to do it, thus so be it*' (ibid., lines 544 f.). The initial structural conditions and the individual and situational factors led to the development of a fixed in-group within the group along religious and gender lines. That the prospective Islamic religion teacher wore a headscarf and thus stood out because of her external appearance in the education situation did not, however, have any ostensible influence on the process of establishing boundaries. According to Gertrud, neither the two Catholic theologians nor the pupils at the school remarked about the headscarf (cf. ibid., lines 274 – 278).

The fact that the in-group consisted of two Catholic students cannot, however, be causally traced back to the question of affiliation with a specific religious community. It resulted, rather, from the fact that both knew each other well from their previous study and were friends. Other factors contributing to the development of the in-group are that they shared the same gender and that they linked up quickly as future theologians and maintained their distance from the field of religious education.

The drawing of boundaries was also addressed by the student Klaus, one of the two male students in Catholic Theology. In principle, he wondered how the Muslim student could have been better integrated into the practicum and teaching in Catholic religious education. Admittedly, he himself does

not want to be in an Islamic educational institution and have to say something about the prophet Muhammad to Muslim pupils. (IP Klaus, lines 460 – 463)

Klaus thus makes a clear distinction between an internal and an external perspective on religious themes and wonders whether an external perspective can contribute to the confessional religious education of the religious other. His comparison with the Muslim educational situation is, however, not to the point because the Muslim student was not asked to discuss Christian themes in her teaching. Regardless, Klaus felt an interreligious team in a practicum group was an opportunity because it did allow the possibility of splitting the group if a theme was discussed that concerned only one religion or confession. He did not find the basic idea of collaboration to be problematic, but he was sceptical about collaboration in all thematic areas (cf. ibid., lines 455 – 479).

The second supervisor, Eva, was faced with other initial conditions than Gertrud. Her practicum group was homogenous from a gender-specific perspective and consisted of three female students. With respect to religion, however, the make-up of the group was similar to that of her colleague Gertrud, for Eva supervised two Catholic female students and one Muslim female student. All three were enrolled in a Bachelor's programme (Catholic or Islamic Religious Education) and were comparably far advanced in their programmes. This structural setup stood in the way of the development of an in-group, even though Eva describes her group in retrospect as '*colourfully mixed*' (IP Eva, line 243).

That the Muslim student was not marginalised is due significantly to both situational and individual influential factors. It remained an open question in the interview as to whether the two prospective Catholic religion teachers were already friends before the practicum. The supervisor did not say that the two were especially close. Eva repeatedly, however, describes the already advanced teaching competences of the Muslim student and emphasises that, at the time of the practicum, she had already built up considerable practical experience as a teacher and could be appropriately active in the teaching sessions (cf. ibid., lines 198 – 202). Moreover, in her communication behaviour, the Muslim student showed herself to be self-aware, articulate, and accessible; she approached other people openly and did not shy away from interaction with others (cf. ibid., lines 15 – 25).

Eva was at first sceptical about the efforts to turn the homogenous Catholic basic practicum into an interreligious component of the education programme for religion teachers (cf. ibid., lines 13 – 15). But her reserved attitude changed during the course of the project and the various times she herself took part as a supervisor. The Muslim student in the year we are describing contributed in particular to her changed attitude; in the interviews, Eva spoke in an explicitly

positive way about her character and work. She gave a lower evaluation of the contributions of the Catholic students than that of their Muslim colleague (cf. ibid., lines 26 f.).

Lara, the third supervisor, experienced other factors related to the composition of her practicum group. She also supervised three young women – two Muslim students and one Catholic student. All three were in the Bachelor's programme (Islamic or Catholic Religious Education). An in-group developed in this constellation because the two Muslim students had already known each other for a few semesters in their programme. In contrast to Gertrud's practicum group, in Lara's group it was the Muslims who set the boundaries.

Lara was relieved to supervise a group that consisted only of women. In her opinion, her own approach to the practicum would change if the group had included a man instead of one Muslim woman:

> *I could imagine that this can still possibly be a distinction ... even if they perhaps have grown up there, if they, coming from their cultural circle, perhaps view women differently if they have to work in a team. (IP Lara, lines 174 – 179)*

In principle, Lara notes that she welcomed the supervision of Muslim women but had reservations about possible collaboration with men. With regard to gender, she assumed that Muslim men simply had a certain backward-looking attitude because of their culture. Admittedly, she did not refer in the interviews to any personal experiences that could ground her reservations and make them understandable. In many statements, however, Lara also showed uncertainty about the specific practicum group, having had no say in its composition (cf. ibid., lines 4 – 30).

In line with social identity theory, an aspect comes to expression here that was described by Henry Tajfel and John Turner (see chapter **2.2**). When people of different religions co-exist, comparisons are made between the religions. Religious out-groups are generally given negative ascriptions in the form of stereotypes, such as the assumed backwardness of Muslim men. The effects of stereotypes on one's own group are thoroughly positive because they are implicitly favoured and upgraded.

Lara describes the mood in the group as collegial. The students had been '*mutually supportive*' (ibid., line 197) by '*everyone simply contributing her character and her strengths and weaknesses*' (ibid., lines 189 f.). Altogether, the group '*as a team had got on well as a whole*' (ibid., line 27). What was crucial for the internal collaboration of this group was the fact that she was supervising '*somewhat mature young women*' (ibid., lines 1038 f.) who were more active; as a result, this practicum was better as a whole than the previous ones (cf. ibid., lines

1049 f.). Altogether, she asserted that the students showed themselves to be open to interreligious concerns and were '*very interested in themes I raised in the classroom training*' (ibid., lines 45 f.). Nevertheless, in Lara's case, a smaller group also developed within the practicum group. The boundaries drawn were not, however, as clear and asymmetrical as in Gertrud's group.

4.2.2 Behaviour and Interactions

In the practicum group supervised by Gertrud, the initial structural and individual conditions supported the development of an in-group – consisting of the two Catholic Theology students – from which the Muslim student was excluded. The dominant behaviour of the Catholic students and the reserved character of the Muslim student led to her hardly contributing anything to the teaching (cf. IP Gertrud, lines 694 f.). For example, she did not organise any sequence in a teaching unit alone, as she was actually supposed to do in the practicum. It can be assumed that this was because she did not want to be exposed to the feedback of her fellow Catholic students. According to Gertrud, because of this, the Muslim student did not do any team teaching with her Catholic fellow students either but preferred to teach in a team with the supervisor (cf. ibid., lines 727–731).

Gertrud was not successful in preventing the Catholic Theology students from being so dominant and the Muslim student from falling behind. She did observe the dynamics in the group, judged it to be a problem, and wanted the prospective Muslim student to be more energetic and to partake more actively. But Gertrud did not see herself as able to stop the boundaries from being drawn. Also, neither the two Catholic students nor the Muslim student displayed any attempt to resolve this situation (cf. ibid., lines 856 – 872). This example shows parallels with the established-outsider problem described by Elias and Scotson (see chapter **2.2**): both Catholic students claimed a great deal of space, based on a position of power occupied by the established party and at the same time did not provide any opening for their fellow student or encourage her to take the opportunity. Because of that, they caused the inequalities and power asymmetries in this constellation to become fixed.

That Gertrud could not balance the asymmetry within the group was due to her understanding of her role as a practicum supervisor. Thus, she saw herself primarily as the supervisor who remained '*in the background*' (ibid., line 561), did not intervene in the interactions in the group, gave the students confidence and actively participated only '*when it went off the rails*' (ibid., line 562). This is perhaps why she was not successful in helping the reserved student in a delib-

erate and targeted way to participate more and to suppress the dominant behaviour of the two male Catholic students.

This became clear, for example, when a visit was to be made to the local church as part of the religious education. In accordance with the interreligious structure of the practicum, the group of students – independent of their religion – could attend the service together with the class. But the teacher left the Muslim student free to decide whether she would go to the church or attend an Islamic religious education class that was taking place at the same time (cf. ibid., lines 53 f.). Gertrud supported splitting the practicum group because she thought that insight into Islamic religious education '*made even more sense perhaps [for the Muslim student] than seeing what went on in the church with so many children*' (ibid., lines 63 f.). It is possible that Gertrud did not want to tell the student to attend the rites of another religion. By doing so, however, she unintentionally supported a religious homogenisation of the practicum group. The initial structural conditions, the individual character traits of the participating actors, and their interactions and dealing with the given situation contributed in particular to the formation of the asymmetrical group dynamics.

In supervisor Eva's case, no such subgroup formed over the course of the practicum. Rather, a good sense of fellowship developed between the three trainees: '*They communicated well among each other, were very open and honest with each other*' (IP Eva, lines 376 f.). The supervisor connected that openness in particular to the mutual feedback the students gave to their teaching experiments in education. The collegial treatment of each other was cultivated and constructive feedback was aimed at improving each other's methods and presentations in the teaching situation. This was, according to Eva, not often the case in practicum groups (cf. ibid., lines 71–74). She could perceive no tensions within the team. The collegial atmosphere in the practicum group even led the students to decide to fulfil the team teaching assignment with the three of them, which succeeded very well, according to Eva (cf. ibid., lines 252 f.). That they mastered this task as a group testifies that it was important to them not to exclude anyone from the group. By working as three, the students were successful in striking a balance in any disparity arising from their religious affiliation in the sense of the above-mentioned established-outsider problem. Moreover, the strategy of open communication prevented the emphasising and establishment of any inequality.

The supervisor Eva was not part of this process because she – like Gertrud – did not interfere in the group interaction. Eva sees her task as supervisor primarily as giving the students the opportunity to experiment in the teaching situation and to receive feedback on that. Accordingly, like Gertrud, she interprets her role as staying in the background. Eva intervenes only to the extent that she can en-

courage the prospective religion teachers to participate and give feedback as to which aspects can be improved.

The fact that the practicum group was religiously homogenous did not have, in Eva's view, any negative impact on the success of this practicum. Rather, it was obvious in the teaching itself that the group was present in the class and '*the Muslim student [was present] with them*' (ibid., line 607). The reception by the children was '*very warm*' (ibid., lines 607 f.) and the Muslim student '*also talked with them*' (ibid., lines 608 f.). Moreover, there was no critique voiced by the pupils nor the parents on the presence of an Islamic religion teacher, as Eva emphasised:

> *So, my pupils were apparently entirely straightforward in that there was never any question raised: 'Why is this so?' or 'Why is that woman with the headscarf teaching us?' Or anything like that. It didn't come up at all. Nor did I ever get any questions from the parents, I mean critical questions. (Ibid., lines 109 – 117)*

In the case of the third supervisor, Lara, there was an entirely different dynamic within the group. In this constellation, in which she supervised two Islamic religion teachers and one Catholic religion teacher, as in Eva's case, there was a constructive atmosphere. Thus, Lara had the basic feeling that she – if necessary – could discuss anything with the students (cf. IP Lara, lines 421 – 427). She also describes the students as '*simply very warm and open*' (ibid., line 420). She adds to this that her trainees were happy '*when the children approached them so openly, happily*' (ibid., lines 340 f.). They also showed themselves to be curious and asked Lara about the children and were interested in their '*life circumstances*' and the '*social structures*' (ibid., lines 332, 334) in the class.

In turn, the school children were not bothered by the presence of the two young, headscarf-wearing Muslims. To the contrary, they were '*completely happy ... when they were there*' (ibid., line 217). Also, for the pupils, the headscarf

> *was not even a topic.... It was just part of it. Yeah, they had already asked about it, but purely out of interest, but not now, that would be viewed as negative. That's how it is in our school because we simply have a great deal of openness there, and there are also a few moms wearing headscarves who pick up their children, so it's not that strange for them. (Ibid., lines 218 – 225)*

According to Lara, the joint teaching proceeded in such a way that both forms of participation –team teaching and taking over components of the education – merged. In general, the Muslim students acted very much in tune with each other as a duo, while the Catholic student worked with them as an additional secondary actor, particularly on themes that involved Catholic theology (cf.

ibid., lines 538 f.). Lara describes the feedback culture and acting in concert within the group of three altogether as positive. The initial unequal conditions did not lead therefore to the establishment of a power disparity within the training group.

In the interview, Lara repeatedly expressed her requirement that the three students approach her as a colleague during the practicum (cf. ibid., lines 248 – 250). In this respect, however, she was disappointed by the students. For example, she alleges that the Muslim students had difficulty addressing her informally (with 'du'). She feels such a form of communication is an appropriate collegial conversational tone between the supervisor and the prospective religion teachers. Lara proposed to both Muslim students that they address her informally and did not think she formulated this in an unusual way. But they did not take her up on this and continued to use the polite form of address (with 'Sie') (cf. ibid., lines 374 – 381).

She did not, admittedly, want to overvalue this experience ('*And they can just as easily address me as* Sie*, but that is such a minor distinction*' [ibid., lines 385 f.]). Nevertheless Lara remarks in this context that, until then, she was used to different behaviour as the supervisor of religiously homogenous training groups. That the two Muslims did not accept Lara's offer can be understood in different ways. On the one hand, it is conceivable that they simply misunderstood or did not understand the supervisor's indication that they could address her informally. On the other hand, it is possible that the Muslim students deliberately ignored Lara's offer because, for them, a teacher is a person of authority and in many Muslim contexts it is considered disrespectful to address a person of authority informally. Both versions are conceivable and, given the interview statements, neither can be discounted.

In addition to the question of addressing her informally, the supervisor was especially bothered for a long time by something that happened during the practicum: one of the two Muslims was absent one time because she was sick. The student did not herself report in sick, however, as Lara expected, but her fellow student passed it on. The explosive nature of this situation arose out of the fact that her being reported sick was done only when the sick Muslim's fellow student met the supervisor in the building. Lara was still displeased about this after the practicum was over. That is why she stressed repeatedly that she wanted more engagement from the Muslim students in their communication and more responsible behaviour: '*if someone's sick, it's good to know that beforehand*' (ibid., lines 105 f.). In the interview excerpt, however, it is not clear whether the sick student had prepared a theme for this teaching session and was to have taught in that session. In that sense, Lara was only stating that it had ob-

viously not been made clear to the Muslim students how absence for reasons of illness can affect teaching:

> *Even though I'm flexible enough to change lessons, it would nonetheless have been good not to learn that from a fellow student. But such things can be discussed, what has just been said, so they have to learn things because they aren't aware enough of that.... Right, it's not very clear to them that the school day depends on that. Because I also informed them if a lesson had to be moved and they had to teach perhaps. (Ibid., lines 153 – 167)*

In Lara's group, a subgroup of the two Muslim students developed within the practicum group. Lara traced this back to the fact that '*the Muslim students had perhaps made arrangements before they came into contact with the third member*' (ibid., lines 508 – 511). The drawing of boundaries within the practicum group occurred along religious lines but was essentially less strict and fixed than in the group supervised by Gertrud.

4.2.3 Consequences

The initial structural and personal conditions and the behaviour and interactions that resulted, which accompany the present latent field of tension of the group dynamics within the practicum group, lead to different consequences. In the case of the supervisor Gertrud, an in-group split off. That meant that the Muslim student was able to participate only a little in the practicum and could not flourish in that situation. The supervisor could not balance out the group dynamics. For that student, therefore, the participation in the practicum did not have the desired effect of giving her insight into school life and allowing her to make a first assisted attempt at teaching. Instead, in this group, she fell, as Gertrud expressed it, '*by the wayside*' (IP Gertrud, line 154) and '*was simply overshadowed by her two*' (ibid., line 16) Catholic fellow students. This situation led inevitably to the Muslim student feeling excluded and had the impression that she was '*now, so to say, a fifth wheel*' (ibid., line 131).

Given this experience, Gertrud argues that the composition of the practicum groups needs to be improved in the future. She also states that groups should be homogenous with respect to gender, consisting exclusively of women or of men. Also, she does not consider the size of the group as three individuals to be optimal but difficult – for example for team teaching. She feels, however, that a practicum group that consists of four students would be too large for the classes and the (partly small) classrooms (cf. ibid., lines 522f.).

In Eva's case, the initial conditions and interactions had a different result. The practicum group worked in a harmonious, balanced fashion, and the

group dynamics enabled all members to participate on an equal footing. Nor did a subgroup develop from which the one member of another religion was excluded. What made this balance possible was that there was no gender-specific dominant behaviour in the group (all three members were female). Moreover, the group exhibited less rivalry between university programmes (theology vs. religious education) among the participants than in the group supervised by Gertrud because all students were enrolled in a religious education programme. That the asymmetrical constellation of the practicum group did not lead to a split or exclusion was also due, in Eva's view, to the character traits and teaching experience of the Muslim student. Hence, her activity, open communication, and previous work experience in teaching enabled her to participate frequently and thus avoid being marginalised (cf. IP Eva, lines 26 f., 146). The supervisor said comparatively little about her Catholic fellow students. Notwithstanding that, it can be assumed that the Catholic students were open to the presence and engagement of their Muslim fellow student in the educational context.

The balance of this practicum group allows one to conclude that the group dynamic is not necessarily religiously conditioned. The supervisor Eva represents this position:

> *For me, it depends much more on how the people I supervise relate to each other on a fundamental level, and I believe that is relatively independent of their religion. (Ibid., lines 362–365)*

The religious affiliation of the participants is, according to Eva, not responsible for the group dynamics within the practicum group. Personal character traits, abilities, competences like the willingness to communicate, and interest in or diffidence towards the other are much more important.

As in Gertrud's group, an in-group also developed in Lara's case. Here, the boundaries ran along religious affiliation. Gender-specific aspects did not have any effect, whereby the students did not demarcate themselves from each other like the students in Gertrud's group did. Notwithstanding, Lara did criticise the lack of a balance in the practicum, particularly in the composition of the practicum group. She would like to see an improvement in the group dynamics in the future. She proposes groups of two: '*it would perhaps be simpler*' (IP Lara, line 21) with this group composition.

4.2.4 Preliminary Conclusion

In this synopsis of the first area of conflict in the school setting, the most important findings will be given abstractly. Before we do that, however, we will explain more thoroughly our characterisation of this area of conflict in the introduction to this chapter as '(religious) group dynamics'. The adjective is placed in parentheses because the dynamic within the practicum groups is not triggered and conditioned by religious affiliation. Nevertheless, that category does play an important role subsequently in the directionality of the interactions in the group and in the question of how subgroups or in-groups can form.

In principle, the group dynamics represent a latent field of tension. In many cases, the number of adherents of different religious communities within the practicum group was not balanced, which allowed power imbalances to arise in the sense of the established-outsider problem. As a fundamental mechanism, it could be observed that adherents of the same religious community tended to form an in-group in the practicum group and subsequently also took on the team teaching together because they already knew each other previously because of their studies. This can lead to positive ascriptions for one's own group and negative ascriptions for the other group. That in-groups formed is generally not helpful for the structure of the practicum group, especially not if individual students are excluded and the practicum misses its intended effects – insights into teaching and a first practical step in teaching religion.

Therefore, in the future, conditions should be created for a balanced group dynamic in the practicum groups. The group size will not be discussed now because the previous constellation presents good conditions for an interreligious exchange among the students. If a larger number of supervisors are involved in the education of prospective religion teachers in the future, then the training of teams of two would also be conceivable.

The equal participation of the participants in the basic practicum is helped by agility, activity, and willingness to communicate, especially by those students who find themselves in a minority position. It is difficult to achieve a balanced group dynamic when one of the individuals is shy and introverted.

The activities of the supervisors are not crucial for whether boundaries are drawn or not in the practicum groups. The ideas of the teachers regarding their ideal image of a basic practicum and their attitudes towards interreligiosity, however, did influence the dynamic among the students.

Again, in the future, the drawing of pre-existing boundaries in the practicum groups in the basic practicum should not be reinforced. It is desirable, furthermore, that – by employing strategies for resolving conflict, such as active com-

munication with all participants – the supervisors support the students in participating actively and independently in the practicum.

4.3 Area of Conflict 2: Themes and Methodology

After treating the above field of tension in the (religious) group dynamics, we will now look at the second area of conflict in the school setting. This includes the compilation of the themes that were discussed in the course of the interreligiously structured basic practicum in the school context and the choice of the content of the education. It also includes the prospective Catholic or Islamic religion teachers in the context of team teaching or individually teaching a sequence of lessons and the question of how the themes in the education could be didactically prepared for the pupils. In contrast to the first area of conflict, where dynamics that concerned the students were at the centre of attention, now the focus is on the perspective of the supervisors and the content of the basic practicum.

Both aspects – the choice of themes and the 'didactic forms' – are discussed together within the framework of this area of conflict. This is grounded in the immanent connection between substantive themes and the question of how these can be processed didactically and methodologically in the teaching activity and be tailored to the pupils. Different views, in particular among the supervisors, are revealed above all in the sense of how religious difference is dealt with in the teaching and what themes can be proposed for teaching and in what ways.

4.3.1 Causes and Influential Factors

A structural cause of the area of conflict is found in the history of the basic practicum. As already explained in the previous chapter, this was changed from being a component of a homogenous religious education for prospective Catholic religion teachers to an interreligious one. For the supervisors, this represented not only a change regarding the group dynamics among the students they supervised but also a change concerning the scope of their tasks. The latter was broadened in connection with the requirement to adjust themes and didactics to the interreligious character of the practicum. They had to determine which themes they would discuss in the course of the practicum in teaching and what content the students would treat in their first independent steps in teaching. Admittedly, the latitude for action and the possibilities for the supervisors were limited by the curriculum and the guidelines of the episcopal education authority of the

Diocese of Innsbruck. The university organisers of the basic practicum did not, in turn, provide concrete instructions concerning possible themes and ideas for teaching them.

For the elementary school pupils, interreligious encounters in religious education are something new and rare. In contrast to that, being together with children of different religions at school has in the meantime often become a matter of course, as has already been discussed above. In Tyrol, this is not only the case in Innsbruck. That the children encounter religious difference and plurality within the school is normal, as Eva emphasises:

> *For the children, it has in the meantime simply become a matter of course for them to come into contact with Muslim children and their parents (IP Eva, lines 540 – 543).*

They meet at common school festivities, such as celebrations or carnivals (cf. ibid., line 545). According to Eva, many pupils from different religious backgrounds not only meet at school events but also subsequently form '*mixed religious friendships*' (ibid., lines 548 f.). It is not just a matter then of being alongside one another but one of being with one another.

For Eva, interreligious encounters are not at all in contradiction to confessional religious education. But she does stipulate this: '*and indeed equally for whatever religion it concerns*' (ibid., line 53). She characterises a purely interreligious religious education as '*not my way of thinking at this time*' (ibid., line 47). But there are many thematic points of contact between the different religions, thus also between Islam and Christianity, '*and we can find each other there*' (ibid., line 55). It is part of interreligious learning to find and discuss such points of contact or interfaces. In her practicum group, which consisted of two Catholics and one Muslim student, she observed a great openness to these commonalities (cf. ibid., lines 54 – 60).

Gertrud also showed a fundamental openness to interreligious contributions although the willingness to speak about other religions and to relate one's own religion to others was minimal in the group she supervised, a group that consisted of two dominant male Catholic students and a reserved female Muslim. She even sees the interreligious way of working as the future. Interreligious learning in education will lead to the religious other no longer being seen as strange or foreign; rather, the result will be tolerance (cf. IP Gertrud, lines 631 – 634). That does not in any way make confessional religious education obsolete. Gertrud views interreligious collaboration as a mixing of profiles in education in schools or as a complementary additional offer in confessional religious education. This could contribute to the objectives of Catholic religious education being met in a permanent way as '*values education*' (ibid., line 794) and '*peace education*' (ibid.,

line 787), which she considers especially important. In this sense, the potential for preventing conflict is inherent in the interreligious approach to the basic practicum (cf. ibid., lines 634 – 636).

When Gertrud speaks about interreligious learning, she also speaks about herself and describes how she herself had been invited by a teacher of Islamic religious education at her school to the Sugar Feast (cf. ibid., lines 630 – 634). Discussing interreligiously relevant themes in religious education and during the practicum is also a learning process for her (cf. ibid., line 585). Consequently, we see a certain fulfilment in this interreligious component of Ulrike Baumann's claim[20] that religion teachers can also benefit from interreligious learning since they gain knowledge of other religions. The teachers in question even feel this increase in knowledge to be generally enriching (cf. ibid., line 585).

The practicum supervisor Lara brought another aspect into play that influences the area of conflict as a structural factor. She stresses that religious education has gained in significance. The elementary school pupils hardly undergo any religious socialisation in the family any more or acquire religious knowledge; thus '*they don't learn much at home any more*' (IP Lara, lines 1133 f.), which means that religious education in the schools has gained greater weight. Otherwise, the road to a sound religious education would be blocked to the children. This circumstance should also be considered in the choice of themes for teaching.

Despite many religious didactic differences between Catholics and Islamic religious education, the commonalities therefore, in her view, prevail. Lara is convinced: '*We have the same difficulties with the same special needs of many children*' (ibid., lines 1266 f.). That Catholic and Muslim religion teachers complete the basic practicum together is an important broadening of their horizon in the area of competence in didactic methods (cf. ibid., lines 452 – 454).

Generally speaking, this standpoint was also taken by the students. In this connection, however, they criticise the fact that the practicum was given exclusively in Catholic religious education. In this setting, the Muslim perspective regarding themes and methods was relegated to the background, which was felt to be an imbalance. The Catholic student Klara therefore wished

> *to collaborate [in the practicum] with an Islamic religion teacher or just a class or two units.... Because you do learn through that, if you see how others do it and then you note: 'Yeah, okay, that works, I can see that for myself as well.' Or also: 'No, I can't see that for myself actually!' But already because of that 'No, I can't actually see that for myself,' I do have more of an idea of what I can actually see for myself. (IP Klara, lines 125 – 137).*

20 Cf. *Baumann*, Interreligiöses Lernen in der Aus- und Fortbildung von Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen.

But normally, according to Lara, for all prospective religion teachers, independent of their religious affiliation, their education, religious didactic issues and their practical implementation are a challenge and '*relatively new territory*' (IP Lara, line 50). But the students usually underestimate

> *how much energy and time, substance still actually go into it. ... Because it's very difficult in the beginning. They believe that it can be done with a snap of your fingers and it just happens. But more time is then needed than they can imagine at the beginning. (Ibid., lines 472 – 480)*

What stamps the religious didactic approach in particular are one's own experiences, i. e., what the prospective religion teachers '*have experienced themselves in being educated*' in their own religious socialisation (ibid., line 447).

> *Depending on what you then link up with, you sometimes do something more easily in order to be creative and through imagination try something different. And that the learning process simply lasts perhaps a bit longer, if you can't experience it yourself because whatever is interiorised can indeed be easily implemented. (Ibid., lines 456 – 460)*

Particularly important for the implementation of multifaceted and creative didactic approaches, in Lara's view, is the plurality of methods that the trainees have become familiar with themselves in religious education during their own time in school (cf. ibid., lines 447 f.). In general, however, the adequate implementation in education requires practical experience and trial and error. This is so because '*as long as it remains theory, it is sometimes more difficult, I believe, to actually implement it in teaching*' (ibid., lines 460 – 462).

Furthermore, teaching methods require physical movement. Here, according to Lara's observations, the Muslim students had difficulties. That leads in particular back to the choice of clothing:

> *If someone, for example, is preparing the groundwork (Legearbeit) and is now wearing a long robe, then that person doesn't move as easily. But it's natural, I believe, that the education then also takes a somewhat different shape depending on what one wears.... If I, for example, wear a skirt, then I do not kneel down on the floor that quickly and putter around.... Eh, so it struck me, for example, that the Catholic student had fewer inhibitions about sitting on the floor whereas the Muslim student usually preferred a chair. (Ibid., lines 432 – 445)*

According to Lara, therefore, the didactics/methodology of teaching also depends on the external appearance of a religion teacher. Moreover, one's own experiences as a pupil and the attitudes that develop from that flow decisively into the conceptions of the prospective Islamic religion teachers. In the quote above, it is stated between the lines that the supervisor observed a disparity between

Catholic and Islamic religious education regarding the didactic tradition and abilities.

4.3.2 Behaviour and Interactions

This area of conflict became manifest in the various interactions and patterns that the participating students and supervisors showed in the choice of themes and didactic questions. Behaviours varied according to the constellation of the group.

For example, the supervisor Gertrud deliberately chose themes for the lessons that, in her view, allowed little potential for conflict. She dispensed with Christology, i.e., the doctrine of the person or divine sonship of Jesus because this theme could produce tension with people of other religions. She also used this strategy of avoiding conflict out of respect for the religious other (cf. IP Gertrud, lines 259–262).

In comparison to earlier years, the interreligious composition of a practicum group also required, in Gertrud's view, more intensive preparation of the units to make sure difficult conflictual themes were placed in the background or were skipped (cf. ibid., lines 506 f.). She often approached religious questions in an open and general way. For example, in a lesson in an earlier year, when she had two Muslim students in the group, she dealt with the question '*what is valuable to me in my religion*' (ibid., lines 303 f.). Gertrud clearly remembers that not only did the elementary school pupils themselves profit from these portrayals of the religious others who spoke about important aspects of their religion, but also:

> *My experience was always that the Qur'an is a book that you handle it with care, and the desk has to be empty and a cloth has been laid down. Here, both [Muslim students] dealt with it in a very casual way. The children, they wasted a bit of time and then there was the long break and they first started eating, and the students still walked around with the book in the classroom and explained it a bit. That, that downright astonished me. (Ibid., lines 304–311)*

At the same time, however, Gertrud emphasises that she was limited by the curriculum in her choice of themes that are treated in the interreligious basic practicum. Gertrud therefore involved the students in the organisational preparations as well. She needed help, for example, in the harvest festival celebration because the preparations for that were too much for her alone:

> *So, I celebrate harvest festival with the children in principle now only if the students are present because it is impossible to do it alone. You can't do it.... We prepared it together, asked*

> *the children as well for prayer requests, we did a round, where everyone suggested something for which we could be grateful. Whether that is something that is now on the table or the sun, life, the whole range that fits all religions and then we have in common what we had, shared, and eaten. (Ibid., lines 450 – 466)*

Both quotes above show that the presence of Muslim students in the basic practicum is used and deployed in a very deliberate way – albeit that the prospective Islamic religion teachers make the preparations for the harvest festival easier by helping out or explaining aspects of the Muslim faith to the pupils. This shows a certain self-interest on the part of the supervisor in training the group, for she can benefit from delegating themes and being helped in carrying out projects in religious education that she cannot do by herself.

In the year that this study focuses on, Gertrud was assigned a group that was asymmetrical with respect to both religion and gender. This constellation also influenced the discussion of themes in the class. The (female) Muslim student participated only marginally in the tasks. She did not contribute very much to the thematic shape of the intended lesson sequence and its didactic implementation. One reason for this is probably that both Catholic students in the group formed a strong in-group and thus ultimately made any equal participation by the prospective Islamic religion teacher impossible. The existing power imbalance between the Catholic 'established' figures and Muslim 'outsider' was fixed in place by this. Whereas the selection of themes did not present any challenge, the distribution of tasks and the teaching was unequally divided in the group. Consequently, the Muslim student essentially taught less and was unable to gain as much practical experience in teaching as her Catholic fellow students (cf. ibid., lines 702 – 719).

Like Gertrud, Eva also describes the task of including interreligious units in the basic practicum in the yearly planning a challenge. But Eva does not change her own annual plan, which '*was not conceived of in an interreligious way in that sense*' (IP Eva, lines 270 – 272) because the curriculum does not allow her to do so without further ado. Therefore, she chose areas that can be taken over by the Muslims students and occur at the beginning of the school year. Such themes are '*neutral*' (ibid., line 152) in her view. As an example, she cites '*a story, an environment story, an everyday story that she [the Muslim student] then just told or read aloud*' (ibid., lines 153 – 155). Even though she was successful in choosing themes in which '*all three [students] could participate equally*' (ibid., lines 716 f.), Eva emphasises that '*one would then have to show substantively that something had changed*' (ibid., lines 313 f.) if the practicum lasted longer than four weeks. In this case, it would be appropriate to show commonalities regarding content and differences between the religions on various themes:

> *If you really want to make it longer or to have it last for a semester, then it's obvious something has to change if you look at the themes, to where there can be even more collaboration or make this synopsis. Eh, showing or discovering this commonality or this difference, to what extent it would be a problem for the students or wouldn't change anything, I can't say. (Ibid., lines 322 – 329)*

In the year observed, the choice of themes functioned very well. The supervisor was successful in choosing a field in which the Muslim students in her group could organise a lesson sequence in line with what was required in the basic practicum. Here, Eva used a strategy through which she involved the member of the religious out-group and countered an intensification of the established-outsider problem. The selected theme concerned a comparison of the Bible and the Qur'an. The Muslim student could participate quite a bit here. Following a lesson about the Bible, the Muslim student was able to introduce the Qur'an to the class (cf. ibid., lines 33 – 36).

In addition to speaking about the Qur'an as a theological scripture like the Bible, Eva also considered themes like fellowship and creation (cf. ibid., line 169) as conceivable material for lessons for authentic encounters with the religious other. Here it is important, however, that the themes are linked to the lifeworld of the children. Questions that '*emerge from the everyday life of the children*' (ibid., lines 163 f.) are suitable.

Eva speaks favourably about the didactic preparation for the sequence on the Qur'an and praises the work her Muslim student did. Admittedly, Eva does not specify the didactic method, but some formulations point to the fact that her Muslim student applied interactive and stimulating methods. In a talk with the student, Eva learned, for example, that she had tried methods she was taught in the university courses and in the basic practicum, in her own (Islamic) education classes, which she already offered herself (cf. ibid., lines 198 – 202). There was no difference between the didactic methods of the Catholic students and the Muslim student with respect to either team teaching or setting up a sequence of lessons. '*How all three dealt with the children was impeccable, for there was nothing to criticise and nothing to improve*' (cf. ibid., lines 190 – 192). As a member of the religious out-group, the prospective Islamic religion teacher received a great deal of appreciation and praise from Eva, so that in this constellation the distinction between the established party and the outsiders was at least partially nullified.

That the prospective religion teachers could simply try things out in teaching is not, according to Eva, in any way independent of their fellow students who are also part of the same practicum group. The composition of the group could not contain the conflict potential if the students '*do not dare to do anything in front of*

each other' (cf. ibid., lines 775 f.). But Eva had not yet experienced this in her interreligious practicum group.

Aside from her experiences with the interreligious basic practicum, however, Eva nonetheless describes a clear distinction between Catholic and Islamic religious education. In her view, some fundamental work was still to be done '*with regard to an encounter between ... those teaching*' (ibid., lines 844 – 847), thus between Catholic and Islamic religion teachers. This is necessary because on the one hand the content is '*already very distinct and different*' (ibid., lines 853 f.) and there are '*very serious differences ... that are theological in nature*' (ibid., lines 857 f.). On the other hand, in her view, the teaching approaches differ from each other as well:

> *In Islamic teaching, much attention is paid of course to the word, right? A lot centres on the Qur'an, learning the* suras*, and things like that.... That is not the case with us at all. (ibid., lines 873 – 877)*

The idea that Islamic religious education pays a great deal of '*attention ... to the word*' (ibid., lines 873 f.) is widespread. The other supervisors also refer to this even though they might differ in their choice of words. In the interview, Eva makes clear such didactic conceptions do not appeal to her and that they played no role in current Catholic religious education. She ignores, however, the fact that Catholic religious education was itself stamped by such approaches until the middle of the 20th century.

Here the Muslim student Emine offers some insight into the current didactic methods used in Islamic religious education that she herself experienced in Tyrolean schools in the course of her socialisation in school:

> *For example, in Islamic education, it used to be like this: We were always only given content and not practical experiences.... For example, the teacher, in my elementary or secondary school [Hauptschule] used to only explain, explain, explain. We always coloured or read in books. But it's different now. I also saw now in my practicum that there is now more discussion with the pupils in school ... and they are asked what they think. I really liked that.... Because, earlier, in my time, there was always input, input. But now it's quite different. The books have also changed. (IP Emine, lines 470 – 490)*

Emine's description only partly confirms the assumptions of the supervisor. Thus, the Muslim student relates that she was used to primarily frontal education in Islamic religious education in school. Activating methods were limited to colouring or reading of texts. Apparently, the didactic preparation of themes displayed certain shortcomings at the time. Here the Muslim student sees a need for improvement but also describes positive developments. She does not

offer any opinion on whether the Qur'an or learning *suras* is the focus of Islamic religious education, as Eva assumed.

As explained more extensively above, the supervisor Lara advocates again the position that religious education in the school has to serve the acquisition of fundamental religious competences since the children do not learn much in their family context with respect to this. Accordingly, she also considers the themes included in the curriculum and the yearly planning to be particularly important and should not be compromised in any way, not even by the interreligious practicum. To take this principle into consideration in practice would require an extra investment in organisation (cf. IP Lara, lines 1125 f.).

In choosing themes that the prospective Catholic and Islamic religion teachers prepare for class it is important to find ones that '*fit together*' (ibid., line 42) for the students. Lara generally understands this to mean themes the students can relate to. She gives as examples '*social themes*' (ibid., line 1264) and '*benevolence*' (ibid., line 126), for '*I do not even need to have a long think as to whether the theme fits for both religions. They simply fit*' (ibid., lines 126 – 128).

In addition to questions that are relevant for all religions, Christian themes could also be raised that Muslim students could present in teaching, for '*you can also tell a story about vivid church towers if you have the models and the pictures*' (ibid., lines 43 – 45). In practice, however, Lara does not allow Muslim students to speak about Christian themes, among other things, because she thinks that concerns fundamental ideas of confessional religious education and also contradicts the stipulation made by the episcopal education authority. In addition, she draws a clear line at questions that deal with faith as such or religious confessions. In her opinion, such themes should not be presented by people of a different religion (cf. ibid., lines 135 – 139).

In practice, she offers the students themes in the practicum that they deal with in team teaching or individually. When the themes have been chosen, she gives the prospective religion teachers assistance, methodological instructions, and the necessary materials, for '*I don't find it very meaningful above all in the basic practicum if they are left on their own*' (ibid., lines 115 f.). To increase the students' chances of learning, however, it is important to give them their freedom and to encourage them to take independent steps in the didactic preparation of the themes (ibid., lines 118 – 120).

But the choice of themes and their didactic implementation are dependent on the composition of the practicum group. It would be particularly difficult if the students do not treat each other with respect and appreciation – then collaboration on an equal footing would not be possible (cf. ibid., lines 1138 f.). As already discussed elsewhere, Lara doubts whether the collaboration in the group – and thus also the didactic implementation – can flow as smoothly as it did in

previous years, particularly if the group is assigned a Muslim male student instead of a Muslim female student (cf. ibid., lines 174–186).

The Catholic supervisor Lara did not only observe substantive differences from Islamic religious education but also differences with respect to didactic methods. Here she mentions specifically singing together, which has an important place in Catholic religious education but is hardly done in Islamic religious education. This constitutes a methodological hurdle for interreligious collaboration in religious education (cf. ibid., lines 1244 f.).

Even if she herself has no immediate insight into the shape of Islamic religious education, she does nevertheless wonder every so often as to what kind of

> *methodological variety exists for discussing themes in Muslim education [Islamic religious education]. I often have the feeling that there is still relatively great pressure to learn much and to learn it extensively. And the more one can recite, the better one is. (Ibid., lines 1253–1257).*

That is why she cannot resist the impression either '*that I believe there is still more that is tested in Islamic education than with us*' (ibid., lines 1258–1260). Lara does observe – just as her colleagues do – a lack regarding methodology and didactics in Islamic religious education. Hence, she sees that the religious out-group has a lot to catch up on. Thus, Lara has the impression that the teachers in question often have the tendency to convey comprehensive content according to the sense of a material understanding of education: promoting extensive learning and testing this under a certain pressure. How she portrays this suggests that she does not approve of this method of education. She sees the religious didactics of her own group as a positive foil. Who or what sources led to this impression of Islamic religious education was not revealed in the course of the interview, however.

4.3.3 Consequences

The initial structural and individual conditions as well as the behaviour and interactions that constitute the 'themes and methodology' field of tension in the basic practicum at the school setting lead to different consequences. In the choice of themes, for example, Gertrud relegates thematic differences in the background and moves the connecting, reconciling, and mutually agreeable aspects to the foreground. Admittedly, she does emphasise that '*what divides must be given a place as well*' (IP Gertrud, line 843), but in practice she finds it difficult to meet this objective. Gertrud concentrates here mostly on the thematic aspects where the truth claim of the religions are not broached or only tangentially. Mus-

lim students therefore often assume the role in her class of conveying a basic understanding of Islam to the elementary pupils – such as what the Qur'an is, for example – in the sense of a 'learning about religion'.

In the year that was analysed, the choice of themes was complicated by the dominance of the two Catholic students in the group supervised by Gertrud. The inequality in the group meant that the Muslim perspective on the issue of themes and didactics was hardly represented. But because of the vague guidelines – and to decrease the asymmetrical power relations at least partially – Gertrud felt that the choice of themes in the interreligious basic practicum required more attention in principle than the preparations for the lessons in the rest of the school year:

> *Thus, that is already a completely deliberate choice of themes that are discussed, that simply [lead] to little conflict, let's call it that. I mean, in the elementary school it's probably completely different than later, because the feedback of the children is simply different. (Ibid., lines 760–765)*

The strategic transfer of fields of tension is thus, however, also due to the age of the pupils. Gertrud experiences the choice of themes to be a challenge. If she has dealt with them and could bring the interreligious practicum successfully to an end, she is relieved because '*one is then actually grateful when the practicum is over and can turn to other themes again*' (ibid., lines 758–760).

Eva adopted the same behaviour in principle regarding themes and didactic methods as Gertrud. In her choice of themes, she picked so-called '*neutral themes*' (cf. IP Eva, line 152) that all students in the group she supervised could participate in. A manifest confrontation about the didactic methodology for religious content, in which the different views between the prospective Catholic and Islamic religion teachers could come to light, did not occur in Eva's group. That, however, was essentially because of the personal characteristics of her students. Eva was surprised that the Muslim student acted in a developed and reflective way with respect to religious didactics, for she had other expectations (cf. ibid., lines 15f., 44).

For this same reason as well, Eva considers the interreligious practicum to be a success, which not least of all had a positive effect on her pupils. Because the selected themes were presented by both prospective Catholic and Islamic religion teachers, the difference between their own and the other religion became clear(er) for the children (cf. ibid., lines 506–510), and they were given the opportunity to learn something new '*by competent people*' (ibid., lines 1137f.) – thus as the result of an authentic encounter – about Islam. In this connection, Eva remarks self-critically: '*If I speak about Islam, I speak about Islam, but I*

do not speak from the perspective of Islam' (ibid., lines 1124 f.). The variety of religious perspectives and the possibility of identifying with the Muslim students who were present and spoke about the Qur'an made it possible for the children and inspired them to reflect concretely about religious difference and to gain knowledge about the religious other.

But not only did her pupils profit from such interreligious occasions in confessional religious education. She herself, as an established religion teacher with many years of experience, saw a surplus value here:

> *That I as ... a Catholic religion teacher simply because I have to look outside a bit.... And thus not only do my own thing, which I see as important and as good, but nevertheless have to look outside. (Ibid., lines 389 – 393)*

In addition, interreligious collaboration not only had a positive effect on a religious community or on a specific confessional religious education. It also creates a connection between the religion teachers from the different religious communities and they are confronted jointly with the fact that religious education repeatedly faces a '*head wind*' (ibid., line 420). The fellowship that arises in the interreligious practicum thus makes the teachers stronger and in the end benefits all the religions. In Eva's view, the resistance to that collaboration has to be countered collectively in solidarity: '*Precisely that certainly makes us stronger if we stand together rather than everyone individually for him- or herself*' (ibid., lines 424 f.).

A split perspective clearly emerges in the conclusion of the Muslim student Emine about her practicum. Indeed, on the one hand she can profit from the practicum both methodologically and in relation to content:

> *Yeah, the Christian methods in education, you can take that with you. Because we can use many of these things in Islam. Many things actually.... Yet, many things must be changed, for example, in songs they say many times that Jesus is the Son of God. You can say 'he was the prophet'. (IP Emine, lines 523 – 539)*

Here Emine distinguishes between specific Christian and specific Muslim methods. Indeed, according to her, no one-to-one transfer is possible, but didactic methods in Christian religious education can be applied in a modified form in Islamic religious education.

On the other hand, despite the new methodological and didactic stimulation, Emine still does not find it completely fair because the practicum was not carried out in Islamic religious education. If that had been the case, then she would have been able to gain more insight into how it worked in Islamic religious education (cf. ibid., lines 258 – 261). That is why she was critical of the

content and competences that she herself learned in the interreligious basic practicum (cf. ibid., lines 270 – 278).

The supervisor Lara also took up this aspect. She remarks that the system of the basic practicum as such leads to inequality because the Muslim perspectives are less present. She would like to see Catholic students observe and take part in Islamic religious education as well, so that Catholic teacher trainees could complete their basic practicum under the supervision of Muslim trainers (cf. IP Lara, lines 625 – 628). Only then would interreligious learning be promoted by them as well. Otherwise, the practicum remains '*one-sided*' and '*too dominated religiously by our side*' (ibid., lines 633 – 636).

4.3.4 Preliminary Conclusion

It became clear in the analysis that the participating supervisors find it challenging to choose themes for the basic practicum because no clear instructions were given and they had to be arranged in a makeshift way. Teachers encounter difficulties when they are requested to select themes that fit both the future Catholic and Islamic religion teachers and are suitable for both team teaching and the individual teaching of lesson sequences. It became established as the usual strategy that primarily so-called 'neutral' themes or ones that transcended particular religions were to be discussed in the lessons. This way of proceeding is intended to prevent possible differences in opinion. Occasionally, we also see the belief that stories and narratives can also be presented by adherents of other religions in the lessons if there is appropriate didactic guidance.

For the further development in the education of Catholic and Islamic religion teachers, it might be beneficial – in consideration of existing education programmes – to provide a range of themes to make the choice less of a challenge for the supervisors involved. The range of themes should reflect established practice and take it into consideration. There is also the attempt in the training of religion teachers to give the Muslim perspective more latitude by having the interreligious practicum groups, comprised of Catholic and Muslim students, complete the basic practicum in Islamic religious education as well in the future.

Altogether, the area of conflict 'themes and methodology' is, at first glance, less tension-filled and problematic than the group dynamics between the students in the practicum groups. Differences, assumptions, and the potential for conflict are, however, often implicitly expressed when it is asserted that there were striking thematic and didactic differences between Catholic and Islamic religious education. The supervisors – and the students as well to some extent – draw religious boundaries regarding didactics and methodology. Moreover,

they tend to assess the religious didactics of the other group in a negative way while favouring their own group and giving themselves a positive assessment.[21] There are various reasons for this. One of the aspects involves the developmental stages of Catholic religious education or mainstream didactics in Europe, which views content- and teacher-centred forms as out of date. Although no explicit conflict developed from this that was expressed in explicit differences of opinion or disputes, it is clear that the thematic and didactic aspects nevertheless describe a tension that is seen by many supervisors as a challenge for interreligious collaboration.

In this sense, Islamic religious education in school is usually seen as practising an antiquated methodology that does not meet current requirements. But the Catholic supervisors seldom provide verified personal experiences to support this assumption. Their views are often stamped by and grounded in media coverage. The impression of Catholic religion teachers that Islamic didactics are outdated can also be based in the fact that Islamic religious pedagogy is still a young academic discipline. The establishment and professionalisation of thematic and didactic conceptions are, accordingly, still developing. This situation was not taken into consideration by the supervisors.

Despite their assumptions regarding the dominant didactic principles of Islamic religious education, all the supervisors affirm that Muslim students who attend the university programme in Islamic Religious Education do not prepare one-dimensional or outmoded didactic principles (such as the exclusive memorisation of content). It can be concluded from this that the university Islamic Religious Education programme does not perpetuate didactic shortcomings. For the future of interreligious collaboration therefore, it is important to continue dismantling prejudices about the didactics and methods of Islamic religious education.

4.4 Area of Conflict 3: Identity and Confessionality

The third and final area of conflict in the school setting deals with the connection between the interreligious encounter during the practicum and the development of confessional bonds and religious identities. Here we focus on the valuation of confessional bonds and the analysis of the question of what effect participation in interreligious encounters in the basic practicum has on the con-

21 Because the practicum occurred exclusively in Catholic religious education, the Muslim supervisors were unable to express their own perspective.

stitution of the religious identities of children. The field of tension includes the questions: What belongs to one's own religious identity and what to the other's? What exchanges between one's own faith and the other's is appropriate, and where are the boundaries of interreligious encounter in confessional religious education?

Religious identity and confessionality is that area of conflict at the school setting where the sharpest tensions and the largest hurdles for interreligious collaboration between Catholic and Muslim religious education can be observed. The particular focus is the question whether interreligious encounter in the practicum is seen as beneficial and thus positive in general for the children or as destabilising and thus more as counterproductive to the development of confessional bonds and the pupils' religious self-image.

4.4.1 Causes and Influential Factors

In general, Catholic elementary pupils are not completely unfamiliar with interreligious encounters. Such encounters can occur in their ordinary school life at religious festivals and interreligious school events. That the children are taught as well by Muslim student teachers in the interreligious practicum, however, constitutes an especially new situation for them and an exception from confessional religious education. The participating trainers have differing opinions regarding this.

In principle, the supervisors constantly assess the interreligious encounters in the basic practicum in reference to the question whether the religious identity of the elementary school pupils is complete and solidified or still in the process of being discovered. The teachers often consider this question to be a structural hurdle for interreligious collaboration in confessional religious education. For example, Eva says she was critical of this project before the first time it was carried out: she held that confessional bonds among the elementary school pupils had still not formed and that their processes of identity construction were still not complete. Before the first interreligious practicum, she was convinced that the children would not know '*who they are religiously, where they belong*' (IP Eva, lines 475 f.), '*that they are Christians, that they are Catholic*' (ibid., lines 466 f.). Eva here assumes that a mature religious identity is characterised by a stable essential core, a view in which we can hear echoes of Erik Erikson's model. This model localises the development of a permanent essential core of personal identities in childhood and youth.

In Eva's view, the interreligious constellation of the practicum group also demands something of the Muslim students: she expects that they will handle

these givens sensitively and keep them in mind as they become acquainted with the elementary school and with the still undeveloped identity of the children. Eva bases her expectations in her idea that the pupils

> *no longer automatically grow into this religious Christian life. They have already been baptised, that's still okay. Then we go to first Communion, the next time is when we are confirmed in the church, and so on. (Ibid., lines 468 – 472)*

That is why Eva sees it as a central task of religious education to support the confessional bonds of the elementary school children, to convey religious concerns and to show '*what it also means for them*' (ibid., lines 476 f.). This responsibility of religious education thus becomes all the more urgent because of the phenomenon – called the secularisation thesis in academia – with the decline of religious values in society.

To give Catholic religious education at this educational level is thus, according to Eva, challenging right from the outset. Her initial scepticism regarding the interreligious practicum is grounded in the view that, for elementary school pupils in Catholic religious education, '*again, something else came to them, something completely different, that they are not but which they have to deal with*' (ibid., lines 476 – 478). She finds it problematic for an encounter with a religious other to occur when the children still had not developed any stable, uniform essential core as explained in Erikson's identity model.

Lara has a different approach. In contrast to Eva's initial critical attitude, she took a more open position at the beginning. She considers the processes of developing a religious identity among elementary school pupils to be just as important and as unfinished as Eva does. A great deal of respect, openness, and appreciation for the religious other is necessary as a condition for the success of interreligious encounter (cf. IP Lara, lines 740 – 742). In this context, she emphasises, however, that such encounters are constitutive for the development of one's own self-image and their own religious self-placement. Thus, the pupils need

> *an entirely proper foundation of their own … a great deal of knowledge of their own faith and also of other faiths so as not to allow any fears to emerge. (Ibid., lines 743 – 745)*

Lara argues above all therefore for interreligious collaboration in confessional religious education because it helps prevent fears and religious boundaries from being drawn (cf. ibid., lines 744 f.). She supports interreligious encounters as protection against dichotomous antagonistic interpretations. Here we find aspects of an understanding of identity that ascribes a constitutive value to the encounter with what is not one's own. Religious identities could thus develop

through the interaction between ascriptions to the self and to the other. Here echoes of Heiner Keupps' theory can be heard.

A fundamental openness towards the interreligious format of the basic practicum can also be seen among the students. But there is no unanimity here: Does it have an adverse effect on the elementary pupils' formation of their religious identity or not? Among the Catholic students, Klaus, for example, shows no general interest in Islam, Islamic religious pedagogy, or in interreligious learning. But he feels a responsibility for religious minorities '*in Catholic Tyrol in Catholic religious education*' (IP Klaus, lines 753f.). To prevent '*the dominant power*' (ibid., line 757) from pushing other religions into the background, an attitude of sensitivity and caution is needed. Given religious plurality, Klaus considers it to be a primary objective of Catholic religious education to support the children's confessional bonds and the formation of their religious identity (cf. ibid., lines 611–640). He does not think it is relevant that confessional religious education could play a role in encouraging the peaceful co-existence of the different religions.

The Catholic student Klara expresses the strongest endorsement of interreligious encounters in Catholic religious education. In her view, an exchange with adherents of other religions can contribute to deliberately reflecting on certain elements of one's own faith. In connection with her work with Muslim refugees, she remarks concerning this:

> *Here I had simply learned that it was incredibly enriching to exchange ideas. Because there are other aspects to some extent that are introduced, there are also other ideas, so, it's that as well.... But because of the other ideas, aspects in my own faith strike me that I was not as conscious of before. (IP Klara, lines 379–382)*

Klara uses the example of the doctrine of the Trinity: through dialogue and the encounter with Muslims, she became newly aware, in her own declaration, that '*God is truly one*' (ibid., line 389). In connection with this, she spoke with the refugees as well as the instructors of the university course about how Jesus is presented in the Qur'an. In her view, therefore, interreligious encounters could help people '*to reflect once more on what is part of their own faith*' (ibid., lines 441f.). She consequently ascribes surplus value to the encounter with the religious other if the other opens up perspectives for understanding oneself better. In her view, this process is not completed in childhood or youth (cf. ibid., lines 742–788). Rather, she expresses a notion of an unfinished identity that – following Heiner Keupp – is also constantly changing in adulthood as a result of experiences and can continue to develop.

The prospective Islamic religion teacher Elmas also gives a positive assessment of the interreligious structure of the basic practicum. Just like the supervisor Lara, she thinks that prejudices and stereotypes would be dismantled through the encounter with the religious other.

> *The children don't recognise anything at all that they have in common with people of other religions. At least because of the [basic practicum] they could know that they do have something in common. I mean, they say 'They are Christian(s)'; And I mean, they do believe in one God. And then prophets, yes they are there on both sides. So one can recognise things like this they have in common. Because that was not the case with me in elementary school or so. But then, despite this, [people of other faiths] are seen simply as wrong.... And that stands in the way, yes. (IP Elmas, lines 612 – 622)*

Elmas regrets that she did not have any interreligious encounters in her own socialisation by which she could have recognised commonalities and correspondences with those of other religions. Such experiences are important because she has contact with people of other religions in her work.

> *If that's what you learn in elementary school, I think it gets in the way later of becoming integrated somehow when you have a job. ... It is simply given by the mosque in this way. ... I thought in high school, I'd rather, I won't have anything to do with them [those of other religions], not even be friends with them. I didn't even want to be friends with them because I wouldn't be concerned about them later. I'm in school now with people I have to be with, but later I won't be in that situation. But that is not the case. You are always with [them] and you need to work together well with them. Not only because you have to, but it's also necessary – that is how we can learn from each other. (Ibid., lines 622 – 632)*

The space, in her view, where such interreligious encounters should be encouraged is the school. That should begin already in elementary school. If that is not the case, boundaries will be drawn in relation to those of other faiths that will later harden into prejudice. This is also unfortunately supported by the families of the children.

> *Yeah, you somehow become negative towards the other immediately in elementary school because in the back of your mind you're thinking that it's simply wrong. ... You hear that repeatedly in the family.... The parents also say it's wrong. And if we do not even agree interreligiously on this at school and deal with it, how will the child deal with the attitude he has if it is influenced in that way by the family? (Ibid., lines 632 – 643)*

A particularly negative attitude prevailed in Elmas' family towards interreligious encounters. This was considered not only an obstacle to the development – in Erikson's sense – of an essential core of religious identity but viewed in general as detrimental. In addition, a tendency towards a negative attitude towards the

religious other could be observed, particularly outside of the school context. Such views in the family stamped Elmas as an adolescent in a permanent way. It is therefore all the more important for interreligious encounters to occur in the school and in religious education.

The Catholic student Sonja expresses a deeper scepticism. She finds something fundamentally very positive in interreligious encounters, particularly when it comes to the knowledge of the distinctions between one's own and others. Nonetheless, she considers a stable religious identity in the sense of knowledge about the central content of one's own faith to be fundamental:

> *Just take some time at the beginning to really experience at the beginning, at least once, the important pillars and important things in one's own faith. And then people can discover other things and their differences together. (IP Sonja, lines 903–906)*

In Sonja's view, if one wants to strengthen one's own faith, one needs to compare it with other faiths and see the differences. Only in the wake of such encounters does an awareness of the religious boundaries of one's own religion emerge. She herself is very open to interreligious encounters. In view of media and social debates critical of Islam, she thinks these encounters are very important and '*very useful*' (ibid., line 783). But her openness also rests on the fact that she has some expertise in her religion and shows a strong confessional bond that is the result of her experiences in the Catholic youth organisation Jungschar, her religious education in school, and her study (cf. ibid., lines 22–31).

The success of interreligious encounters in the school context depends on the age of the pupils. In general, however, she would '*be a bit cautious*' (ibid., line 932) with interreligious aspects in the elementary school. In her view, the children cannot distinguish between the religions because they had still not developed stable religious identities. The religion teachers had the responsibility here to point out religious boundaries and confessional demarcations. She sees it as the task of education to support adolescents in the formation of their religious identity (cf. ibid., lines 841f.). She considers too much openness and the blurring of religious boundaries to be counterproductive. This hampers the development of the elementary pupils (cf. ibid., lines 848f.).

Accordingly, the central goal of Catholic religious education is first to '*define Christian values clearly*' (ibid., line 882). It is meaningful to invite an adherent of another faith to that education when there are questions that '*one can no longer answer oneself*' (ibid., lines 942f.). Sonja thus welcomes the participation of the religious other above all in connection with themes that the teacher cannot deal with herself. But beyond that, she considers interreligious learning and encounters as something additional to proper Catholic religious education.

4.4.2 Behaviour and Interactions

The interactive behaviour that can be identified in this area of conflict includes various fields. It comprises the naming of others, identity, and confessionality during the practicum and identity and confessionality outside of it, as well as the devaluation of the religious other in the school context. In the next section, we will first look at the boundaries that are drawn between what belongs to one's own religion and what belongs to the religion of the other and comes to light in language.

Behaviour I: Naming the Religious Other

To refer to the religious other, the supervisor Gertrud often uses the term '*Muslim student*' (IP Gertrud, lines 38, 66, 381); at times she also speaks of '*Islam students*' (ibid., line 510). These characterisations are particularly widespread among the participants. This word choice makes religious distinctions between the students. Drawing boundaries between the religious in-group and the out-group are indicated linguistically in a simple way, even though there are no valuations.

Eva displays a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, her references to the prospective Islamic religion teachers in her practicum group moves between neutral descriptions like '*Muslim student*' (IP Eva, lines 193, 263, 280), '*Islamic student*' (ibid., line 79), or just '*the student*' (ibid., lines 15, 42, 95) without any additional specificity concerning religion. Aside from that, she also speaks once of her '*Muslim colleague*' (ibid., line 397) and once of her '*Islamic colleague*' (ibid., line 481), who is active at her school as an Islamic religion teacher. The lines of demarcation between one's own group and the religious other are thus drawn in a clear and unambiguous way without any valuation being made.

On the other hand, in response to the question of what will happen in the practicum, she explains to her pupils '*that now a Muslim will be teaching and not a normal student*' (ibid., lines 122–124). Linguistically, therefore, a boundary is drawn between the Catholic in-group and the Muslim out-group, which can also be understood in a judgmental way. It is exceptional for the prospective Islamic religion teachers to be characterised as students who deviate from the norm. In many contexts, the boundaries between Muslim and Catholic students blur for Eva. This is particularly so when Eva emphasises the feeling of solidarity among the religion teachers and believes that they have to stand together, whatever their religion may be (cf. ibid., lines 424 f.).

The supervisor Lara also speaks primarily of '*Muslim students*' (IP Lara, lines 10, 138), whereas she characterises the prospective Catholic religion teachers as

'*Roman Catholic*' (ibid., lines 10, 656). She also refers to the basic practicum as actually a '*Roman Catholic practicum*' (ibid., line 396). With this, she appeals to its history and refers to the fact that for the Catholic supervisors and Catholic students, it is a matter – following Elias and Scotson – of members of the established group whereas Muslims are given the status of outsiders. What is striking in Lara's case is her possessive style of speech that features possessive pronouns and thus unambiguously indicated classifications are present.

The students' perspective is represented here via the Catholic student Max' way of speaking. He is uncertain about how to refer to the Muslim students. Thus, he uses various terms, such as '*the Islamic*' (IP Max, line 195), '*the Muslim* [adjective]' (ibid., lines 209 f.), or the '*Muslims* [noun]' (ibid., line 222). In all three variants, the adherents of the other faith are each reduced to their religious affiliation. That allows religious differences to come to the fore, religion and religiosity are granted central significance, and boundaries are drawn between one's own religion and the religion of the other. The same tendency can be seen among the other students, both Catholic and Muslim.

In general, the linguistic terms show that religious boundaries and divisions between one's own religion and the religion of the stranger or the other are clearly indicated. But, generally speaking, there was no valuation or disparagement solely through linguistic characterisation.

Behaviour II: Identity and Confessionality in the Basic Practicum

In addition to the concepts by which the religious other is designated, a second area of behaviour and interactions illumines the question of identity and confessionalism in the basic practicum. The participating supervisors described the students consistently as open to interreligious concerns and as stable in their own confessional affiliation – even though in many cases their own presuppositions were disproved.

Lara was struck, in the implementation of the basic practicum, by the joy of the pupils at the presence of the Muslim student teachers. The headscarves that they wore thus played no role (cf. IP Lara, line 218). For the pupils, the interreligious encounter is '*not as special as it is for us [religion teachers]*' (ibid., lines 875 f.). Rather, children encounter the religious other at that age in an open and unbiased way:

> *I simply enjoy it that children are very open and actually see an equal human being in everyone and that they are very relaxed in their religious education and afterwards can sit next to each other as best friends. And for me that's simply completely beautiful what I experience there.... And I think that it's also completely important in Kindergarten that the groups are*

> *mixed and not kept separated for as long as possible and then suddenly come together. I don't think that's good. I don't think it's good for the children, and I don't think it's good for the parents either. (Ibid., lines 1226–1237)*

From secondary school on, the '*defensiveness towards interreligious acting and learning*' (ibid., lines 1221f.) increases, and the openness and tolerance toward the religious other decreases. The role models and ideas that are conveyed to the children at home and become increasingly stronger at every stage of their lives are responsible for this development (cf. ibid., lines 1225f.). In this phase, in her view, religious identities had developed continuously, following Erik Erikson's model, and are to be seen as stable. Thus, there was less openness to the religious other from secondary school on than in elementary education. This is why small children in elementary school should already be having interreligious encounters: '*the sooner you begin, the better*' (ibid., line 1232).

Gertrud confirms the openness of the elementary school children to interreligious encounters in confessional religious education:

> *The children are totally open, and the children love learning about something new. Thus, that didn't cause any problem at all (IP Gertrud, lines 264–266).*

As already discussed in chapter **4.2.1**, Eva showed that she was hesitant about the interreligious basic practicum at the beginning. Stated pointedly, she saw it as putting the development of the pupils' education about their respective religious identity at risk.

> And this was what I thought. Do they take care of it or do I deal with it in such a way that it is clear to the children: 'Okay that's one thing, that's where we come from.' And then there is something else that many of their fellow pupils come from, thus this second other religion. And can we then distinguish between the two? Right. And I believe that it's really not that obvious that children distinguish between them. For older people, it's completely clear, they already know who they are. They may or may not want to belong to it perhaps, that's different. But they know where they belong. (IP Eva, lines 487–498)

Eva sees it as a challenge whether the children are able to deal with the interreligious experience in such a way that their own religious affiliation remains clear to them and Islam is seen as the religious other. She questioned this before the interreligious practicum was put into practice. At that point, she assumed that the encounter with adherents of different religions required already established religious self-images and affiliations. This would protect the development of the pupils' identity. But this assumption was not confirmed after the practicum had been completed.

Her initial reservations thus turned out to be unfounded. She had underestimated how well elementary school children can distinguish between what belongs to them and what does not:

> *But my initial ideas were disproven. Because I simply saw how the children actually deal with it. Right. In my considerations I completely ignored the fact that children approach this from a completely different angle. And that that is of course another opportunity again. (Ibid., lines 500 – 507)*

According to Eva, it is less important to show the children where they belong, for they already had a good sense of that. She did not expect that the children would have their own approach to the religious other. They were able to perceive differences quite well between the in-group and the out-group and managed to use the interreligious encounter in a constructive way for the formation of their own identity. At this age, dealing with the differences between the religions thus contains an opportunity. The presence as such, the encounter as such with a teacher of a different faith, was central (cf. ibid., lines 508 – 513).

Eva's statements reflect Heiner Keupp's ideas. He describes dealing with one's self-image and that of the stranger as well as a constructive encounter with the in-group and the out-group as essential for the formation of identity (see **2.1**). Here, moreover, fixed identities are not assumed, but religious self-images are understood as incomplete, as always needing to be formed anew – including in the encounter with the religious other.

According to the different supervisors, one should always pay attention to the content that is taught in the lessons. Here one's own religious identity and the corresponding identity of the pupils could never occur without explanations of content (cf. ibid., lines 912 – 921). But content and themes place limits on the possibilities of interreligious encounters. Thus, for example, the supervisor Gertrud considers interreligious collaboration to be an important objective. She points out, however, that, because of the interreligious nature of the practicum, for practical reasons she considered choosing themes to which both Catholic and Muslim students could contribute. This strategy was already described in the previous area of conflict, 'themes and methodology' (chapter **4.3**). In that context, Gertrud speaks about an important dilemma for her that the other supervisors do not mention: because of this practicum, the topic of Christology, among other things, was slightly neglected, '*which is not easy for us*' (IP Gertrud, line 501). Gertrud regrets this because she sees this area as particularly meaningful for the development of the confessional bond. There is often too little time left in the rest of the school period to deal extensively with the questions associated with that.

All participants agree that the interreligious basic practicum imposed limitations on content. The view that confessional religious education has to contribute to the formation of religious affiliation and to the bond of the young people to their respective in-group is shared by all the supervisors and the students. None of those interviewed thought it made sense for issues about their own religious affiliation to be addressed by those of another religion. This was particularly clear in the statements made by the supervisor Lara. By no means did she want to have a Muslim student explain the Lord's Prayer '*because that is simply too personal in our faith*' (IP Lara, line 138). With respect to themes, it is clearly defined as to which responsibilities could be assumed by the in-group or the out-group. This also played a central role in the organisation of the practicum. Thus, the treatment of central questions of faith in confessional religious education by adherents of a religious out-group was not scheduled in at all by the initiators of this interreligious practicum. Nor is this planned for future practicums.

Behaviour III: Identity and Confessionality outside the Practicum

In addition to the terms used for the religious other and the question of identity and confessionality in the basic practicum, there is a broader area of interaction and behaviour that relates to the question of identity and confessionality outside of the basic practicum. Here the focus is on religious feasts, divine services in the school, and school ceremonies.

It should be noted here that this was not originally part of the basic practicum but of the religious exercises in the period of education or part of the culture of the educational institution. Admittedly, questions of interreligiosity in the school context are also important at these events, and the experiences in question are partially influenced by the interactions of the teachers. Because the supervisors and the students can speak freely and independently here and these questions are also of interest for the interreligious encounters in the basic practicum, the following section will look at the question of identity and confessionality in connection with religious feasts, divine services at school, and school ceremonies.

The supervisor Lara considers interreligious encounter and collaboration to be important aspects of school life. In her view, this should be promoted or developed even more:

> *As I said, that, with the ceremony culture, what we have in common, I believe, that would be completely important, so for me personally important. Or in team teaching classes as well, where Muslim and Catholic children are taught in the same lessons. For me, that would actually be a future project that I would really quite like to have. Because you would also*

> *have the children together for once and if it is done systematically in the lessons, it can succeed relatively well here because we teach a great deal in parallel, so we could also think of such a project. There would of course be more children attending, but it can be done. That would be my vison. (Ibid., lines 696–709)*

Lara argues for an expansion of interreligious school events as well as for the idea of team lessons. In these classes, Islamic and Catholic religious education would be given by Catholic and Islamic religion teachers together. We can see here that Lara sees the encounter with the religious out-group as very important so that the children can develop a religious identity. Lara does not exclude this 'vision' from being implemented in confessional religious education. An advantage here would be that it would also allow Islamic religious education to experience an '*appreciation*' that it has been '*lacking somehow*' (ibid., lines 691f.). Here we see that the supervisor is aware of the power asymmetry between the established and the outsiders that characterises the basic practicum. With her vision, she shows that she wants to decrease or remove this disparity.

Admittedly, however, Lara also detects '*very many problems*' in '*ceremonies associated with religion*' (ibid., line 644). Here, she reports the experience that Catholic teachers are seldom supported in their organisational work (cf. ibid., lines 645–647) – a team whose members all have equal standing need to be engaged in some balanced work (cf. ibid., lines 651–658). She wanted more initiative and cooperation from the Muslim teachers with respect to this. Lara did not take into consideration the strong embedding of the Catholic religious education in the schools and the traditional central significance of the Catholic teachers – also for the organisation of school programmes – in comparison with the Muslim teachers.

Eva remarks about the challenges regarding content in school celebrations with a religious connection:

> *That getting together for the joint religious ceremonies is quite challenging, yes. Because: What themes do we choose? What texts do we choose? So that we do not step on each other's toes? (IP Eva, lines 892–896)*

The choice of themes and texts is not at all a secondary matter. It also gives rise to criticisms by representatives of their own religion who are not unreservedly open to interreligious dialogue:

> *There are of course critical voices who say, 'Um, what are you doing, everything is getting so mixed up, because it's not that simple!' Right. I hear that from the ranks, from the Catholic ranks indeed, where the first point of criticism is 'We don't pray to the same God!' (Ibid., lines 896–901)*

While there are different opinions among the supervisors about the possibilities of interreligious encounters at school ceremonies and events, the potential for interreligious forms at occasions that reflect one's own religion is usually judged negatively. For example, Lara notes that not every occasion can and should be turned into an interreligious event. If there are too many interreligious celebrations,

> *then I have the feeling that I have to watch out that the religious celebration culture of the one religion is not ... neglected. Because I then only have divine services at Christmas, at Easter. (IP Lara, lines 1108 – 1113)*

In this context, Lara emphasises that it is also important for the religious formation of the pupils in the school to experience the different festivals of their own religion.

> *Here then, I also deliberately say, 'No, I need a certain amount of traditional celebrations, also with my children!' And you must show that suddenly it's not just interreligious because the children still need to be rooted in their own religion and should not have the feeling that there is nothing more than what we have in common.... And you also need to show a bit that you can still live and celebrate your own. But that does not mean that I do not want to celebrate together. (ibid., lines 1115 – 1130)*

Interreligious tasks should therefore be set, according to Lara, but they should not be done at the expense of the traditional celebrations of the participating religions. The supervisor Gertrud makes a similar argument. Aside from her endorsement in principle of interreligious encounters in the school context, she still thinks boundaries make sense, particularly with respect to the presence of those of other faiths at the occasions that are part of one's own religion. To be sure, Islamic religion teachers and their Muslim pupils at her school can be invited, but as yet there is no unanimous decision about their participation. At the present time, it is handled at her school in such a way that the (Muslim) teacher

> *is invited with his students to the consecration of the Advent wreath and he participates in that. Thus, it's really so, um, it has come so far that we suddenly even [celebrated Pentecost] together. Therefore, we have now taken a step back and said: 'No, that's impossible!' So, he's certainly invited to be there with his students, but we can't actually give him any role to perform at Pentecost because it simply can't go that far.... Thus, we have taken, have [taken] more of a step back. (IP Gertrud, lines 620 – 631).*

Gertrud does not consider the presence of people of a different religion at the consecration of the Advent wreath to be a problem. But she does see their active participation in confessional occasions like Pentecost as problematic. She pro-

tests against it because here a line is crossed. The demarcation lines of the in-group and out-group are to be preserved at confessional occasions – also because of the sensitivity to or respect towards one's own religion and for the other. This background also made it possible for Gertrud to arrange for the Muslim student in her practicum group– instead of participating in a divine service – to sit in on an Islamic religious class that was taking place at the same time (cf. ibid., lines 51–64).

Like their supervisors, the students also give voice to an ambivalent attitude towards interreligious encounters in the school context outside of the basic practicum. The Catholic student Sonja welcomes the interreligious exchange in principle because getting to know the other leads to one being more aware of one's own religion and the differences from the religious out-group,

> *which is good on the one hand, that you notice them and become sensitive to them: "Aha, that's what they're like! That's how they do things!" (IP Sonja, lines 113f.).*

Sonja expresses explicit reservations about interreligious encounters at occasions that have to do with her own religion (cf. ibid., line 112). She refers here to a fictional interreligious task: to have both Catholic and Muslim pupils attend devotions together at a Catholic religious event. In this situation, the challenge for the Catholic religion teacher consists in clarifying to Muslim pupils the difference between a divine service and a short devotional, so that they can correctly place the interreligious experience:

> *You can't say: 'So, now we're going to a devotional!' Without explaining to them [the Muslim students]: 'That is not a religious service but a devotional. And that is interreligious and not only for us, but there are also people there from other religions and because of that, one must consider certain things, and so on.' And in that sense, an introduction is simply needed. And you can't simply presuppose that. (Ibid., lines 162–169).*

In connection with this, Sonja says in summary that interreligious commentaries at confessional events require a great deal of preparation time and that '*much time is devoted [to this] that could be needed for another theme or something else*' (ibid., lines 96f.). Moreover, she fears that she will have to justify or explain her own faith in such an arrangement to people of another faith. She considers attending divine services at school in confessional religious education to be especially important so that the Catholic pupils can also witness the traditional celebrations of their own in-group and develop a sound religious identity (cf. ibid., lines 108–123).

The prospective Islamic religion teachers, such as the student Emine, also express similar notions. For Emine, a visit to a mosque is a central element of Islamic religious education. In her view, it is important

> *that the pupils are also included.... And that, for example, they often visit a mosque and like the Christians have Mass, and so on. (IP Emine, lines 498–501)*

To develop a religious self-image and identity, her own in-group needs to participate actively in traditional religious ceremonies following visits to the mosque. Emine considers it out of place to impose restrictions here. She supports interreligious encounters in principle but sees them as conceivable and desirable above all at festive school events (cf. ibid., lines 506 f.).

Behaviour IV: Derogating the Religious Other

The fourth subgroup of interactions and behaviour consists in derogating the religious other. This includes episodes or instances that took place in the classes outside the practicum. Such behaviour does indeed go beyond the basic practicum; nevertheless, these occurrences should be attentively analysed because they stamp the experiences related to the training of the participating teachers and influence their behaviour and activities in the basic practicum in the school. The objects of our analysis are, in addition to a case in which disparagements of the religious other were formulated by the pupils especially critical statements made by parents about interreligious encounters in the basic practicum.

Not all pupils were open to people of other faiths or other religions and could also talk about them in a disparaging way. This can be seen in an example from the daily work routine of the supervisor Gertrud. She holds the view that such disparagements are widespread among the pupils (cf. IP Gertrud, lines 657–671) – both anti-Muslim attitudes among Catholic students and anti-Christian attitudes among Muslim children or youth. Gertrud illustrates this by the following example:

> *And I simply have a Muslim girl sitting inside during the week the fourth year. And I notice very much that she has been influenced: 'You are an unbeliever, you are ...!' (Ibid., lines 643–645)*

This Muslim pupil does not attend Catholic religious education but is present during the lesson in the classroom because no Islamic religious education is offered due to the small number of Muslim pupils at the school. Gertrud holds her parental home primarily responsible for her having such a negative attitude regarding other religions and their adherents. The influence of her parental home

is revealed in how the Muslim pupil grounds her statements: '*My dad says that what you do is all nonsense!*' (ibid., lines 652f.). A fundamental rejection of the religious out-group comes to expression here that – according to the supervisor – leads to the pupil not having any interest in getting to know or encounter others. She disparages the religious other. But the pupil is not solely responsible for her attitude towards the religious other, for she has adopted her parents' point of view.

But the fact that the pupil expresses herself in such a contemptuous way about Catholics and Catholic religious education does not lead Gertrud to doubt the importance of interreligious approaches in the basic practicum. Rather, the episode points to the importance of deepening interreligious learning and illustrates that religious education has to go beyond teaching about one's own religion and forming an affiliation with one's own in-group, for '*if the strange remains strange, then the rejection is much, much greater*' (ibid., lines 661f.). Gertrud also asserts here, however, that the opportunities for (religion) teachers to influence disparagements of the religious other are fundamentally limited, for

> *that is certainly the influence of the parental home. But if the influence of the parental home is there, then the teacher can perhaps relativise it but not 100%. (Ibid., lines 647–650)*

But she did not allow herself to be discouraged by this. In general, such attitudes are the exception. The Muslim students whom she supervised until then were always '*all very tolerant and open*' (ibid., lines 680f.).

Disparagements of the religious other are heard not only in the statements made by pupils but also in those made by adults. In no way did all parents/guardians of the children in question welcome the interreligious encounters. Reservations, criticism, and indignation by the parents regarding the fact that Muslim students would be present in the Catholic religious education during the practicum was taken up in the media and openly debated. We reported on that already in the introduction to this chapter (**4.1**) on the school setting. Such incidents and experiences affect the participating supervisors and stamps their behaviour and interactions with parents or colleagues regarding the themes of confessionality and religious identity in the context of religious education.

The supervisor Eva reflects on the former incidents and experienced similar hesitations herself. She observed that critical voices were raised against interreligious encounter in the basic practicum. This led therefore to

> *resistance to that.... Right, that was not in my school, I should say that. But in a neighbouring community. That was one big hassle. (IP Eva, lines 1027–1032)*

She does not see public expressions of displeasure and questioning of interreligious approaches as exceptions. Critical attitudes are widespread in the population.

> *I do believe that has also been noted, or how it all began. Or how I often also heard from people around me, when there were shared religious celebrations, how strong the criticism still is, eh! (Ibid., lines 977 – 981)*

Eva refers here to a case reported in the media of a father whose child attended Catholic religious education in one of the elementary schools in which the interreligious basic practicum occurred. The father viewed the encounter with the religious out-group as a danger that would stand in the way of his child's development of a bond to his own religion and the constitution of his child's religious identity.[22] He found the presence of prospective Islamic religion teachers in Catholic religious education for four units to be a threat to his established in-group.

Given these critical attitudes, which did not leave her colleagues unaffected, Eva was uncertain as to how far interreligious encounters or joint interreligious school ceremonies could be supported by all participants over the long term. In the future, as she prognosticates thoughtfully, the '*protests against*' (ibid., line 984) it by parents or actors outside the school will constitute a still greater challenge than it is now. Interreligious encounters will then be questioned not only by religious people who see their own religious identity and confessionalism threatened by such encounters, but also by non-religious people and those outside the church:

> *If the questions come, such as 'Why are there now suddenly these religious ceremonies and no longer religious services, like it always was?' And those questions often come from people who do not belong to the church, I'm simply saying it, because I know it. Because I think, what will be asked of us then, eh? If we now seek to make this being with each other in religious education even stronger. Thus, I don't know how this will also be supported in society or even that society will be hostile to it. But that will also be a very huge challenge. (Ibid., lines 990 – 999)*

Based on these reservations and pessimistic perspectives, Eva applies the strategy of communicating openly with as many relevant people as she can – like the local priest, the school director, and her colleagues – and informing them in advance that there will be interreligious encounters in the basic practicum and that prospective Islamic religion teachers will be occasionally present in Catholic religious education. She does this to counter any possible misgivings in advance.

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22 On this, see also the description of this case in the discussion of the school setting in chapter **4.1.**

Eva considers this approach to be essential to preventing the participants from feeling ignored (cf. ibid., lines 1025 – 1084). To deal constructively with the critical voices, it is important, in Eva's view,

> *to start slowly, to take baby steps where that is in any way possible, to communicate accordingly at the important points. Not afterwards hearing the inquiry from the mayor: 'Why that way? And do we really need that? Is that how it has to be?' And in the meantime, indeed we are now making only the first quite small steps. (Ibid., lines 1020 – 1025)*

She communicates with her pupils in a similarly open way. For example, she speaks with them about what their Muslim classmates do during Catholic religious education:

> *We talk about it repeatedly, that the children who are not now present in the religion class have their own religious education with the teacher, and then they also know who that is. Thus, it's not something secret or hidden with us, certainly not. (Ibid., lines 583 – 588)*

In summary, it can be said that Eva chooses active communication with all participants as an adequate way to deal with the disparagement of the religious other in teaching. While she takes their concerns about interreligious encounters in confessional religious education seriously, she attempts to defuse possible tensions beforehand and to see to it that different opinions and latent reservations do not develop into an explicit confrontation. This begins already in her speaking openly with her pupils about the interreligious encounters in the basic practicum and discusses where their Muslim fellow pupils are while the Catholic religious education is being given.

Like her colleague, the supervisor Lara also observes that reservations against the religious other are widespread (cf. IP Lara, lines 876 – 888). Such attitudes became clear to her, for example, at a school festival that took place after the interreligious encounters in the basic practicum had been started. Here the father of a child who was in her Catholic religious education class spoke to her and informed her that

> *if he had known that students with headscarves would come, he would have taken his child out of religious education.... I already noted that there is a great deal of emotion behind that. (Ibid., lines 863 – 868)*

In Lara's view, the fact that the one parent reacted in this way to the interreligious setup in the basic practicum was connected to communication with parents being occasionally difficult. The father in question had therefore not been informed about the interreligious encounter despite her efforts to do so.

> *These are simply people who do not bother to keep themselves informed, hey. But I believe he had not even realized that before, but heard it at some point from his child. (Ibid., lines 868 – 872)*

Lara sees the fact that critical or disparaging attitudes concerning other religions or those of other faiths exist as a social tendency that will be intensified even more in the future.

> *I believe the concerns will not become less but rather even more ... and whether the tendency also will not become partly more of an attitude of rejection than it was. (Ibid., lines 876 – 881)*

Such attitudes are often expressed '*in private*' (ibid., line 886) by people who '*are not well informed and, indeed, become louder perhaps in general at times*' (ibid., lines 886 f.). Here Lara holds the Austrian media responsible as well. How the media reports on Muslims and Islam contributes to an increase in concerns about the religious other on the part of the non-Muslim population (cf. ibid., lines 1020 – 1024). Thus, because of articles in the media, the Catholic majority population as the established group tends to have an increasingly negative attitude towards adherents of the Muslim faith as the outsider group. Lara repeatedly mentions in the interview the example of the presentation in the media of the so-called '*Kindergarten study*' (cf. ibid., lines 1145 f.). This study criticised allegedly radical religious developments in so-called 'Islamic Kindergartens'[23] in Vienna, and Lara says that the provocative conclusions drawn in this study also had a negative effect on her herself (cf. ibid., lines 1148 – 1150).

Also, aside from this study, she hears repeatedly that Muslim women who do not wear headscarves are not given any opportunity to work as Islamic religion teachers. This triggers incomprehension in her and actually contradicts her '*European understanding of religion*' (ibid., lines 1164):

> *If I hear, for example, that a Muslim teacher who is teaching Islam without a headscarf does not actually or almost not have the opportunity to teach at our school, then I think, yeah, what is it then with those Muslim parents, what kind of reservations they have, eh? Because we live in a country where, I believe, one can perfectly well accept wearing a headscarf on religious grounds but can also perhaps decide against it and still be a good Muslim colleague.... Those are the questions that I often have, that I also ask myself. (Ibid., lines 1152 – 1163)*

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23 She is referring here to the study: *Institut für Islamische Studien der Universität Wien* (ed), Projektbericht. Evaluierung ausgewählter Islamischer Kindergärten und -gruppen in Wien (written by Ednan Aslan). Vienna 2016. In: https://iits.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/p_iits/Dateien/Abschlussbericht__Vorstudie_Islamische_Kindergarten_Wien_final.pdf, [last checked: July 02, 2021].

Nonetheless, that the media reports on Muslims gave her food for thought, and she cannot comprehend the reservations of Muslim parents against Muslims who do not wear headscarves, Lara views the spread and presence of disparagements of the religious other as very alarming. Such tendencies make her concerned, and she asks: '*What can I contribute in my field so that I become a bit more sensitive to and combat this in my field of work?*' (ibid., lines 955–959).

It is clear that Lara sees interreligious encounters and learning as important in Catholic religious education. She is also concerned to work against the disparagements or rejections of the religious other. Through her activity she can contribute to weakening current social trends that are directed at drawing boundaries between the established Christian majority population and people of Muslim faith. Unlike Eva, Lara does not develop any fixed 'strategy' for this, such as a certain behaviour regarding communication.

4.4.3 Consequences

On the question of identity and confessionality, the practicum supervisors often take a critical position regarding the interreligious encounter during the basic practicum.

Admittedly, themes transcending particular religions, such as social fellowship by means of stories and narratives can also be taught by people of other religions as well in Catholic religious education, but that is not possible with respect to important confessional issues. If spirituality, one's own faith convictions, religious experiences, or the thematisation of one's own religious confessions are the subject of education, the didactic processing in Catholic religious education should be done by students who belong to the Catholic faith, thus by adherents of the in-group. This represents the boundary of interreligious collaboration in confessional religious education that should not be crossed. This boundary is not questioned by either the supervisors or by the participating students. The participation of someone of a different faith in confessional events or ceremonies also tends to be seen as negative for this same reason. In principle, ceremonies and school events that bring the religions together are endorsed insofar as the traditional religious ceremonies of the in-group can still be sufficiently followed.

Different views were expressed in the interviews on the question of the extent to which the religious identity of the pupils is already stable and how interreligious encounters are dealt with in reference to the formation of religious identity. Some of those interviewed take the position that, because at their age

their religious identity is still fragmentary and uncertain, the elementary school pupils had to be protected from 'too much' interreligiosity.

The other position on this emphasises in contrast the productive effect of the encounter with religious difference and plurality already in the elementary school on the formation of the religious identity of the pupils. This attitude is expressed in particular by Eva. In her opinion, children can already distinguish quite well at their age between their own religion and the religious other. Because of this, they can also participate in religious encounters in religious education. This is not only appropriate for them but interreligious encounters at the early possible time can even be seen as beneficial if the encounter with the religious other can have a constructive influence on the development of the religious self-image of the pupils.

Both positions, even though they may contradict each other in some premises and conclusions, are agreed in that they see the process of the formation of identity in the elementary school as constitutive for the pupil and in principle endorse interreligious encounter in religious education. The distinction between both views is found in the question as to when it makes most sense to have an encounter with the religious other.

Interreligious encounter in confessional religious education is also seen as particularly relevant because it can make pupils more sensitive to the religious other, to the interests of the out-group and for religious plurality in general already at an early elementary school age. The teachers in question also often express the fundamental wish that interreligious encounter would lead to the decrease of negative attitudes toward the religious other or those of other faiths. Critical and hostile positions were observed by all supervisors as widespread and viewed as problematic. These positions were partly expressed by pupils but primarily by parents or adults in the school environment.

Occasionally, legal guardians and parents of the elementary students in particular are critical of the fact that interreligious encounters occur in the basic practicum and that Muslim students are present in Catholic religious education and express this every now and then through negative comments. In particular, the supervisor Eva attempts, based on previous experiences, in a deliberate way to dismantle such resentments beforehand and to work against them. The articulation of defamatory and vehemently expressed views, which reject interreligious learning and collaboration in the elementary school are to be avoided. Consequently, Eva places a great deal of value and commitment in communicating openly in advance with all participants and to keep them informed as much as possible.

4.4.4 Preliminary Conclusion

The area of conflict, 'identity and confessionality' includes various aspects and is more diverse than the previous fields of tension '(religious) group dynamics' and 'themes and methodology'. The characterisation of the religious other, dealing with religious identity and confessionalism both in the practicum and also outside the school, and disparagements of the religious out-group play a role.

All participating teachers and students argued for confessional religious education and for the traditional ceremonies of one's own religion. The idea of adherents of other faiths speaking on questions of confessional bonds with the elementary school pupils in Catholic religious education on questions of their own confessional bonds is categorically rejected. In their view, the treatment of spirituality, faith convictions, or the confessions of one's own religion is reserved for adherents of that religion. A clear line is drawn here in confessional religious education that interreligious collaboration should not cross.

The significance of interreligious learning and interreligious encounters in the elementary school is, admittedly, defined in various ways. The interviews did not yield any unanimous view as to how extensively and in relation to what themes interreligious collaboration in confessional religious education is possible or desirable. Most of the interviewees argued that interreligious collaboration could indeed be useful as a defence against possible disparaging attitudes towards the religious other, but the fragile and fragmented religious identities of the elementary school pupils need to be protected against all too many challenges. A minority took the position that precisely the encounter with the religious other would be of special significance for the children's development of religious identity and enables a secure self-image. Between both attitudes there is a potential for tension that runs through the entire area of conflict.

This tension comes to light less openly in the views of the supervisors and students than in the statements of parents and legal guardians. They express – often abruptly and unfiltered – their reservations and concerns about the religious out-group in confessional religious education. They see it as a danger to the development of the religious identity of their children in the elementary school. To be able to absorb this latent conflict potential, the supervisors observed that it was necessary to respond to it in advance. An open, transparent communication with all relevant participants is seen and used as the most viable strategy.

5 The University Setting

The basic practicum in the Tyrolean elementary schools is an important element of the interreligious collaboration in the education of prospective Catholic and Islamic religion teachers at the University of Innsbruck. There are two parts: the school practicum and the university course. The focus of this chapter are the areas of conflict that arise in the university setting as a result of the interreligious collaboration in the course.

Three different fields of tension manifest themselves in the assessment of the empirical data material:

- Area of conflict 1: Planning, approach, and expectations (chapter **5.2**)
- Area of conflict 2: Process, communication, and group dynamics (chapter **5.3**)
- Area of conflict 3: Conflict about 'ideal' religious education and recognition (chapter **5.4**).

To contextualise these fields of tension sufficiently, the university setting will be described in section **5.1**. In that section we will introduce the interests and expectations of the participant groups of the university course and the interreligious approach in the education of the religion teachers.

5.1 Description of the University Setting

General Conditions

Muslim students in the Islamic Religious Education (Bachelor's) programme, do a practicum together with Catholic students in Catholic religious education in Tyrolean elementary schools. These initial insights into the educational context of the school are accompanied by a university course. The students who attend this course come from three study programmes: Islamic Religious Education (Bachelor's programme), Catholic Religious Education (Bachelor's programme) and Catholic Theology (diploma programme[1]).

The accompanying course for the basic practicum is compulsory for both Bachelor's programmes. For the prospective religion teachers, attendance and passing the course are required if they want to continue with this programme

1 A diploma degree programme was the standard course of study in Austria (and in Germany) before the introduction of Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes. The diploma programme in Catholic Theology lasts ten semesters. Graduates are qualified to pursue a doctorate.

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of study. For students of Catholic Theology, attendance is not compulsory, but they can fulfil the requirement by taking an elective.

Students are constantly assessed during the course, and they are required to attend. In general, the course work is concluded with a written test that includes both documentation and reflections on the school practicum and on the university course work. The assessment of the written work is not graded but is simply pass-fail: 'successfully completed' or 'unsuccessfully completed'. Given the students' individuality, a more precise evaluation of their performance is hardly possible.

The course is given by an interreligious team of two teachers and is offered only in the winter semester. It is not given over the entire semester but in blocks of four to five units, geared to the practicum blocks indicated in the weekly roster in the schools.

Participating Actors in the Context of the University Course

Various groups play a role in the university setting. On the one hand, there are the university institutes of the University of Innsbruck that offer the programmes and initiated the interreligious collaboration. On the other hand, the instructors who give the course and the participating students who take it play roles as well. These groups and institutes constitute the setting in which the fields of tension at the university setting are embedded or from which conflicts emerge. The participating actors at the university setting are presented in figure 5.

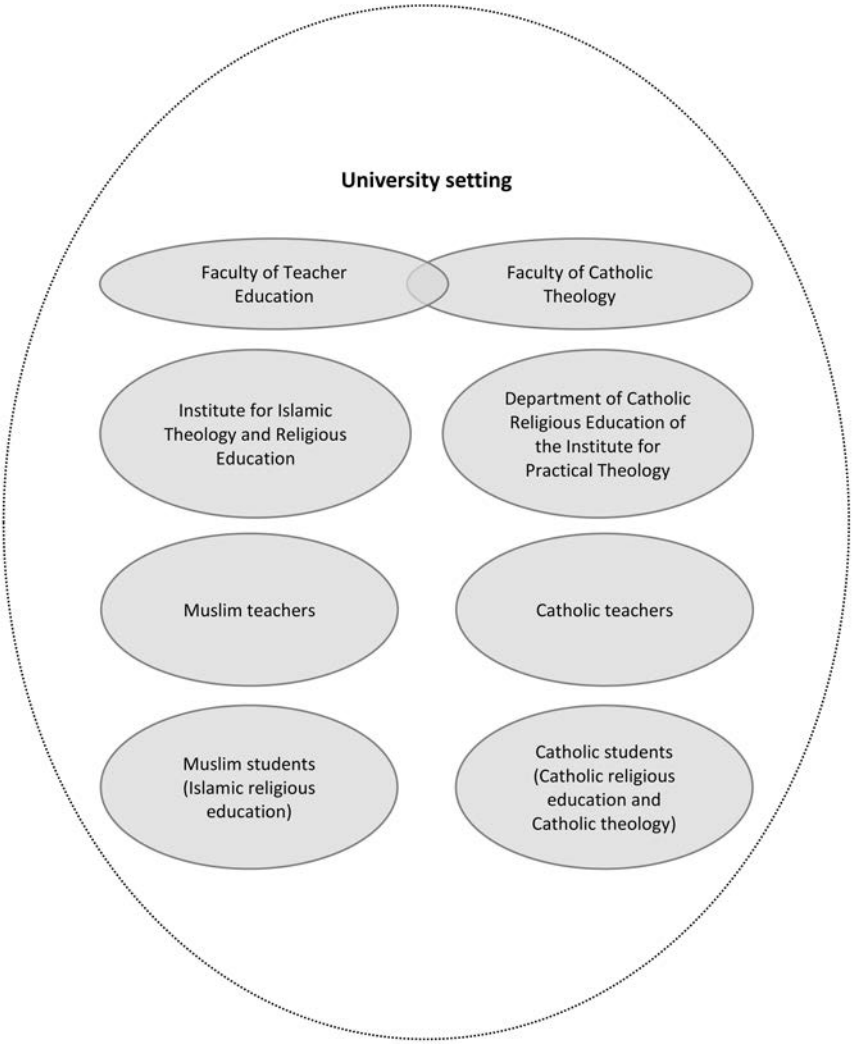

Fig. 5: Participating Actors in the University Setting

The participating actors represent various individually and structurally formed interests, concerns, and perspectives on the events and developments in the university context. In the next section, we will first look at the interests, positions, and expectations of the university institutions (group of actors I) regarding the interreligious setup of the course accompanying the basic practicum. We will

then turn to the teachers (instructors) (group of actors II) and the students (group of actors III).

Group of Actors I: The University Institutes

In the university setting, there is on the one hand the Institute for Islamic Theology and Religious Education, which has existed as an independent organisational unit at the university since 2017 and was previously a department in the Institute for Didactics (then still limited to Islamic Religious Education). On the other hand, there is also the Department of Religious Education at the Institute for Practical Theology. Whereas the Institute for Islamic Theology and Religious Education is part of the Faculty of Teacher Education, the Institute for Practical Theology is part of the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Innsbruck. The Professor of Catholic Religious Education, whose field of activity includes the education and training of Catholic religion teachers, is a member of both the Faculty of Catholic Theology and the Faculty of Teacher Education. The interreligious collaboration thus transcends not only particular institutes but also faculties. This cross-over between faculties is represented in figure 5 by the interface between both faculties.

Since Islamic Religious Education was included in the University of Innsbruck as an academic discipline, there has been close collaboration with the Department of Religious Education. Among other things, the three study programmes already mentioned have been offered by both participating faculties. Interreligious collaboration is carried out in various modules in the education of prospective religion teachers, especially in the basic practicum. This collaboration is embedded in the curricula of programmes in religious education.

Whereas the programme of Islamic religious education contained interreligious elements right from the start, these interreligious aspects have been recently introduced in the curriculum of Catholic religious education and the programmes adjusted accordingly. This transformation can be seen in the basic practicum: before this interreligious collaboration, the concomitant course for the practicum was set up only for Christian students. The interreligious collaboration thus entailed a challenge particularly for the teachers of the course to reshape the course accordingly.

With the plan to give an interreligious form to the modules of the programmes, the professors who were involved at the participating universities sought in principle to create and guarantee the long-term existence of the best possible programme for prospective religious teachers. This decision was made with a long-term perspective and with the conviction ‘that, given the social changes occurring, the future of religious education lies in interreligious collab-

oration.'[2] In the view of those setting up these programmes, the prospective teachers had to undergo interreligious experiences in their own education if they were to be able, as religion teachers, to deal adequately with religion in a pluralistic society in general and with religious diversity in schools in particular. Moreover, it was desired that, through their encounter with the religious other, Catholic and Islamic religion teachers would also look beyond the religious didactic norms of their own religion. The professors involved here on behalf of the departments of religious education of the participating university institutions thus see religious difference as potential that can also be used constructively in the university education of religion teachers.[3] They saw interreligious collaboration and the resulting broadening of the perspectives of the students as positive and as promoting the quality of the programmes. Because becoming familiar with the school as a place of learning and the setting of education is required for both Catholic and Muslim religion teachers, the decision was made that they would work together in an interreligious way in these components of their education and to give them jointly.

Group of Actors II: The Course Instructors

The course instructors[4] take on the role of educating the prospective Catholic and Islamic religion teachers. They strive to make a positive contribution to the university education of these teachers and to pass on important competences and abilities to them. In their position as teachers of the course, they are, moreover, to assess the progress of the prospective religion teachers during the course that accompanies the basic practicum.

The concern of the instructors consists primarily in implementing the learning objectives of the course and to stimulate learning processes that will benefit the students. One stated objective is that the students first undergo supervised teaching experiences at a school as a team and as individual teachers. This includes exploring the educational context of the school in general and the concrete teaching event in the form of observation in the school context and in the actual teaching that was done. The role and practice of religion teachers

2 *Kraml / Sejdini*, Der Forschungskontext, 14 f.

3 Cf. *Kraml, Martina / Sejdini, Zekirija*, Religiöse Unterschiedlichkeit als Potenzial. Innsbrucker Interreligiöse Religionspädagogik und Religionsdidaktik. In: Österreichisches Religionspädagogisches Forum (2015) 1, 29 – 37.

4 Here we refer again to the strategy of anonymisation that we have been using. Because the teachers we interviewed were usually women, and male teachers were a minority, we use only female pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.

are also explored. Moreover, the course work is directed at reflecting on and processing one's impressions of observing teaching and the first experience of teaching independently. Beyond this, the course teachers attempt to provide an introduction to the systematic planning of instruction processes.

In many cases, the accompanying course is not the only course that the teachers give. This can lead to thematic or methodological references to other courses or fields emerging in the interviews or in the participants introducing these references into the course itself.

To be able to teach the course, a professional qualification in religious education or didactics and competences in higher education didactics are crucial. It is not required that one be a religion teacher, but it is an advantage. Most teachers who give the course that accompanies the basic practicum, however, were or are religion teachers.

The praxis in the university course and the experience in teaching at the elementary school are influenced differently by each instructor. Differences between the Muslim and the Catholic instructors that result from the history of the course become manifest here. It can be clearly seen that Islamic Religious Education is a new discipline and that the corresponding programme at the University of Innsbruck has existed for only a few years. While the Catholic instructors have often been teaching for a long time, the Muslim instructors usually have less experience in teaching.

Because of the different initial conditions, the Islamic and Catholic teachers are confronted with different challenges. While the latter do have more practical experience in the implementation of the course accompanying the basic practicum, they were nonetheless entrusted with a new task, i. e., turning a course designed for a homogenous Catholic audience into an interreligious one. The interreligious collaboration was unusual for the Catholic instructors. In addition, they were to give the course in a team with someone from another theological discipline, which was still in the process of becoming established. For their part, the Muslim teachers first had to appropriate the content and methods for the course and at the same time adjust to the procedures of team teaching. The interreligious collaboration was a new experience for them as well.

In general, the course accompanying the basic practicum was given by external instructors. These instructors often have no close connection with the participating university organisations and are hardly embedded in the work of the institution. Their external status can represent a problem for those involved, particularly in new developments at an institute or for recording current dynamics. How the status of the external instructors affects the course, however, differs from person to person.

Group of Actors III: The Students

In connection with the basic practicum in the school, the students as a rule take on the role of teacher for the first time in an elementary school setting. Until then, they have not usually experienced school life and teaching from this perspective. The students expect the course and their teachers to prepare them for that new role and the accompanying challenges. Corresponding to the description and the learning objectives formulated in the course catalogue, the students moreover assume that the experiences they gain at school will be followed up and reflected upon. They want to be actively supported by the teachers in expanding their competences, skills, and knowledge. Consequently, the students see the seminar and the practicum at the school as a necessary step in the qualified education of prospective teachers.

The content that the students concretely expect and want varies from person to person and from study programme to study programme. The following expectations regarding content in connection with the practicum were gleaned from the interviews:

- Learning and trying out methods
- Understanding didactical information and planning teaching units
- Interreligious exchange
- Encounters with the religious other
- The observation of religious education of another religion.

In some cases, however, the expectations are quite vague. The interreligious component is usually assessed on the basis of experiences in the religious education that occurs in their own religion.

The expectations differ according to age and according to the students' progress in their studies. As already stated above, Muslim students in the period we researched attended the university course at an early point in their education, whereas their fellow Catholic students completed the basic practicum in a later semester of their programme. Given their greater experience in studying, the latter are more proficient at expressing their expectations of the course or participating actively in it. Because of this, a disparity developed between the students from different fields, which can be expressed in the course of the implementation of the units.

The perspective of the students on the practicum and the university course is, aside from the aspects mentioned, fundamentally stamped by the fact that it is a compulsory component of the programme. Muslim students who are enrolled in the Islamic Religious Education programme and their fellow students who are studying Catholic religious education have to complete this component in order to graduate. This also applies to students of Catholic Theology who take

the basic practicum as an elective. The fact that the course is not graded does not have any demonstrable influence on the students' commitment or attendance. Both are required by the course teachers with no change.

Having presented the perspectives and interests of the participating group of actors that are important in the interreligious collaboration in the university course, in the next section we will look at the various areas of conflict in the university setting that can be identified in our analysis of the empirical data. We will begin with the first area, which has to do with the planning, approach, and expectations.

5.2 Area of Conflict 1: Planning, Approach, and Expectations

It is clear from the analysis of the interviews that the approaches, planning proposals, and expectations concerning the course that accompanies the basic practicum often included tensions for the interviewees. We therefore included these themes in the first area of conflict in the university setting. Here the following perspectives are central: those of the course teachers and those of the students as the participants in the university part of the basic practicum. In the analysis and categorisation of the interview results, it should be kept in mind that the participants provide their perspective in retrospect.

5.2.1 Causes and Influential Factors

In this section we will look at the structural conditions as causes and influential factors in the conflicts in the university course component of the basic practicum. In reference to the general structural conditions, there is the perspective of power asymmetries in the context of interreligious/intercultural education. These asymmetries represent a central foundation for conflicts.

With their perspectives and concepts, both groups influence in different ways the dynamics of conceptualisation, implementation, and evaluation of the course. Regarding the instructors, one could speak of a direct influence, and with respect to the students, of an indirect, somewhat later emerging, influence. Concerning the general structural conditions, a crucial role is played by whether the course is taught by one person or a team of one Muslim and one Catholic instructor. In this case, it is the challenge of collaboration and the corresponding expectations regarding structure that essentially influence the teaching. Another general influential factor on the part of the course instructors is the fact that both instructors of the course were external instructors and thus not

very familiar with the routine interreligious work done in the university institutes. The dynamics of a course in relation to the number of students enrolled (size of the group) and its composition are more general in nature, and they can have a strong influence on the course. We will outline our assessment of these and other structural conditions on the part of instructors and students below.

The Muslim instructor Mehtap, for example, holds that that basic practicum is structured too one-sidedly in favour of Catholic religious education. The practicum should not only be done in Catholic religious education but also in Islamic religious education:

> *It would be perfect ... if the Catholic students were also present at Islamic religious education. And if they ... could sit in, and it would be fantastic if in both blocks the students sit at the back and in each the student of the respective religion tries out teaching sequences and then reflects on them once more in the reflection section in the university part. That would be the best solution. (IP Mehtap, lines 1902 – 1907)*

The theme of power and power asymmetries mentioned at the beginning can be seen here; they can be noticed quite frequently in interreligious education constellations. The Muslim instructor here observes an inequality and criticises the one-sidedness of the settings in which the practicum occurs.

The Catholic instructor Hilde presents a similar point of view. In this context, she takes up an argument that already played a role in the preparation of the programme plan, namely, that the practicum takes place in Catholic religious education: there are so few adequately educated Islamic religion teachers who had completed the mentor training (cf. IP Hilde, lines 2153 – 2155). Hilde describes the effect of this argument with the words: '*The [Muslims] have not yet got it together*' (ibid., line 2156). Here processes and dynamics emerge that concern the formation of stereotypes and advantages with respect to the out-group.

Mehtap, the Muslim teacher, complains that the one-sided Catholic accent of the basic practicum disadvantages the Muslim students in particular. Because of that, they are confronted with themes '*that have no Islamic connection*' (IP Mehtap, line 1208). When specifically Christian themes were discussed, the claims represented an almost insurmountable challenge for the Muslim students because they '*do not even know the religious language, the elements of the language of the other*' (ibid., lines 1274 f.).

Mehtap describes – as do the students – another unfavourable influential factor: the group size and the alternating presence or absence of Muslim students because of another overlapping course.

> *To my surprise, I discerned that only a few students were present, Muslim students, and the majority were Catholics. I don't care about that at all, but the number should at least be equal. Thus, that really did disappoint. (Ibid., lines 524 – 526)*

Mehtap goes at length into the 'class conflict' that was the cause of the fact that the Muslim students '*were constantly absent*' (ibid., lines 1195 f.). The analysis of the interview showed, however, that this was accepted and not discussed by both instructors, nor did they seek to fix it.

Power and power asymmetries were also observed by the students. An example of this is the numerical inequality that above all the Muslim students Esra and Elmas and the Catholic student Sonja mentioned. '*We were simply, Roman Catholics, we were simply in the majority in contrast to the others*' (IP Sonja, lines 29 – 31).

Many students are put off by the course length of four hours and evaluate it as '*strenuous*' (IP Meltem, line 45; IP Klara, line 15). Elmas remarks that the course was also more geared to the Catholic students (cf. IP Elmas, lines 139 – 142).

From the perspective of the Catholic teacher Hilde, she and Mehtap were left on their own because they were given few instructions concerning the general conditions. Hilde also noticed different initial conditions for the two instructors. She characterises herself as someone experienced in university teaching and in working with heterogeneous groups. She also has, she says, taught the course several times before, once to a group of Muslim-Catholic students. She portrays Mehtap as someone who is still inexperienced in university teaching. Hilde says Mehtap and she are '*simply at two different points*' (IP Hilde, line 1050). Hilde's 'diagnosis' makes clear that she sees the possibilities of being able to communicate or arrive at a common approach as limited because of different preconditions and approaches and does not think that will change.

In the individual and situational conditions, we will first look at the example of the expectations or objectives of teachers and students, as well as their subjective approaches. Of the two instructors, only Hilde speaks explicitly of expectations or objectives. She refers to three aspects. First, she cites as a goal the students understand that they are to '*communicate with each other*' (ibid., line 251). She specifies this further as follows:

> *[T]hey can speak to each other, and they can argue, and they can say to each other: 'That is my point of view, that is your point of view and what can we now do together?' (Ibid., lines 610 f.)*

As a second concern, Hilde distances herself from a pure learning of methods, which she characterises as '*not expedient and actually as pointless*' (ibid., line

861). A third objective she cites is the acquisition of basic competences, without which it would be impossible, in her view, to act in an educational way: unbiased observation and perception, description, and reflection. In Hilde's opinion, a high-quality reflection phase has two important requirements: first, reflection should occur in the group and, second, it should be done against the background of corresponding approaches (cf. ibid., lines 850 – 876). That is why Hilde emphasises unbiased observation and conceptual thinking as central:

> *That is, this reflection, first just this observation, perceiving, speaking about, that is, I think, the basis of, one of the basic bases for teachers, regardless of method. (Ibid., lines 850 – 853)*

Altogether, Hilde's approach to didactics for religion can be seen here. She rejects a 'master-student approach' in which the teacher presents conduct and actions to the student in the form of prescriptions. To her, the challenge lies rather in getting – creatively – from the knowledge made available to one's own professional behaviour.

> *I presented them with parts of a teaching unit and said, 'With the knowledge, with the view, that you now have, look at it, think about it. What's it mean to you? What would you do differently? For me, something like that also belongs in the basic practicum because it's about developing anew an idea of what it is to be a teacher. (Ibid., lines 862 – 869)*

According to Hilde, this didactic understanding and this way of proceeding is what clearly distinguishes her from her colleague: '*Mehtap just wanted to pass on many methodological and didactic points*' (ibid., lines 154 f.). Hilde saw these differences in expectations and approaches as a difficulty already before the practicum began, just like her own uncertainty about the interreligious work and tasks of the basic practicum (cf. ibid., lines 1065 – 1088).

For her part, Mehtap cites, with reference to the structural conditions of the basic practicum, a lack of clarity about the objectives and setup of the course. She is familiar with the concept 'interreligious' from the field of interreligious dialogue, in which she has a great deal of experience. She cannot understand that the goal of an interreligious course should not be interreligious dialogue (cf. IP Mehtap, lines 1665 – 1669). She had given other practicums in the context of the Islamic teacher education programme and could not discern this as a particular objective in the university part of the basic practicum (cf. ibid., lines 671–673).

A second lack of clarity for Mehtap concerns her task as a Muslim instructor and thus her role in the basic practicum:

> *Why, on what grounds? And this question ... was not dealt with sufficiently. We knew someone was needed, but why, for what reason? I believe neither Hilde nor I knew beforehand where it should lead. (Ibid., lines 1935–1937)*

Another – problematic – side of the basic practicum for Mehtap concerns the implicit messages that, in her view, were communicated by the current approach to the basic practicum. One such message was the view that Islamic religious education was still in need of supplementation. Mehtap states it somewhat ironically:

> *This is how it goes, this approach tells me in advance, if I view the concept neutrally: 'Look here, people, we Islamic religion teachers cannot teach very well, we will look at the approach used in Catholic religious education.' And that is how they look at it. (Ibid., lines 2269–2272)*

Here also, Mehtap experiences the power imbalance we have already addressed several times, which is already manifest on the level of planning and approach. The social group dynamics with its conflict potential also becomes clear through ascriptions that given to the religious other. The approach in the basic practicum in Catholic religious education shows Mehtap that Islamic religious education is viewed as inferior (cf. ibid., lines 2272–2276). The didactic strategy in Catholic religious education is given positive attributes, while the approaches in Islamic religious education are viewed as needing improvement (cf. ibid.). Inspired by the conflict theory of social identity, Mehtap is disturbed by the fact that her in-group is discredited and presented in a negative light.

In contrast to Hilde, for Mehtap, a central concern in the basic practicum is to learn methods, and this also influences her approach to such a course. She grounds this in her view that most Muslim students have only been exposed to the lecture method of teaching:

> *Students who have been educated in various mosques, they know nothing else than frontal education. And I'm also forced in part to introduce them to other methods so that they say, 'Aha, that Islamic religious education at school differs from mosque education.' (Ibid., lines 2218–2221)*

Other than the expectations of the instructors, the students' expectations are mostly imprecise. Most students indicated that they had no concrete expectations or only a few. Esra said: '*I didn't have such big ideas*' (IP Esra, lines 155–157).

Elmas says that she '*herself didn't know what she needed*' (IP Elmas, line 168). A few students – such as Elmas, Emine, Klara, among others – mentioned that what they expected was the construction of a basic stock of methods and

materials. Via the narratives and descriptions, it becomes clear that the students understand methods as far-reaching instruments independent of conceptions and the individual – in the sense of a set of tools or a kind of 'method case'.

Occasionally, especially among the students of Catholic Theology, the subjective approach to educational and didactical courses becomes evident. They take them less seriously than they do the so-called specialised courses, which marked a point of conflict in studies in Catholic Theology. Max said, for instance, that he was '*not a great friend of educational courses*' (IP Max, lines 284 f.) and therefore did '*not have many expectations, relatively speaking*' (ibid., line 284) in the course.

But altogether, the students think that they benefited from the course in the way it was conducted. Meltem says: '*The expectations were low, what is presented, that was high and helpful for us*' (IP Meltem, lines 246 – 248). Klara also expresses herself in a similar way: '*I learned some things that I used later in my class*' (IP Klara, lines 145 f.). Klaus and Max, who were critical at first of educational-didactical practical courses, do say that they are mildly pleased. The statements of the Muslim students especially vary as to whether the methods that are used in Catholic religious education could also be used in Islamic religious education. Elmas says that she occasionally had the impression that '*No, so this method can't be used at all*' (IP Elmas, lines 410 f.).

With reference to interreligious elements, various approaches and ideas are articulated by the students. On the one hand, among the Muslim students the notion that the basic practicum was more geared to the Catholic students (cf., e. g., IP Emine, lines 258 – 261) comes to the fore. In the statements of many students, it is clear that the unequal general conditions created unequal behaviour. Esra says, '*I believe that the Catholic students in this seminar have a great deal more than me*' (IP Esra, lines 155 – 157). She bases her view on the fact that the Catholic students – because of their stronger presence – had more time for small group work than the Muslim students (ibid., lines 158 f.).

For many Muslim students, the course triggered reflections on identity in the sense of specific Catholic or Muslim identity. Thus, criticism is expressed of the too one-sidedly Catholic setup of the university course; its results are viewed as ambivalent; and a more interreligious setup – in any case in part – is preferred or required. While the ideas of what it is to be Catholic are very clear, the criteria for these ascriptions remain uncertain (cf., for example, IP Elmas, lines 139 – 146). Esra thinks: '*For example, we walked the stations of the cross. That was rather Catholic*' (IP Esra, lines 76 f.).

At the same time, however, they talk about the chances and opportunities offered by the interreligious approach:

> *You also learn things from a different point of view. You then have a different perspective.... And you learn a great deal about ... what others think about certain themes and what others think about Islam. (Ibid., lines 229–232)*

Elmas reflects on the perspective from which the analyses of methods are carried out. She states that the question whether most methods are appropriate for Islamic religious education is discussed from the viewpoint of Catholic religious education (cf. IP Elmas, lines 222f.). According to Elmas, the choice of themes plays a decisive role in successful interreligious learning. She cites as a positive example the theme of 'creation', '*where both teachers somehow presented it from both sides*' (ibid., lines 55f.). According to Elmas, methods and content influence each other (cf. ibid., line 143). Using this premise, she compares religious didactical approaches in Islam and Christianity and comes to the following conclusion: '*With us, it is always based on principles, and then it's always stricter because it is now compared to that of the other*' (ibid., lines 223–225). These principles regarding content are revealed in several examples, according to Elmas. Thus, she believes that '*song holds centre stage in Catholic education*' (ibid., line 211) and '*that you are somehow looser, you somehow paint and write poems without content*' (ibid., lines 476f.).

Meltem emphasises in particular the possibility for independent learning in the course: '*And then we have gained more understanding if we ourselves are active than if we sit down and listen*' (IP Meltem, lines 68–71). Klara sees a peculiarity in the religious character of the basic practicum. She evaluates the course on the basis of the '*interreligious staff*' as '*very exciting and very interesting*' (IP Klara, line 14). She finds being together and processing themes together is enriching '*as they can occur in Islam instruction or in Catholic religious instruction*' (ibid., lines 287–289).

From Klaus' perspective, the interreligious part of the course did '*not really emerge*' (IP Klaus, line 100), nor was the dialogue '*really present*' (ibid., line 101). The exchange also dealt more with didactical questions than ones of theological content (cf. ibid., lines 117–120). In his view, there was not much interreligious exchange. Interreligious aspects could certainly be seen in the reflection on selected Islamic or Catholic elements and in getting to know and discussing various methods and materials of the religious education of the other. Klaus does wonder what connections the other elements have for his own educational practice or how they can be made fruitful for it: '*Yes, this prayer is actually planned for Islamic education. Can it also be used for Catholic education?*' (IP Klaus, lines 54–56).

Klaus also sees other interreligious aspects in the compilation of the group (cf. ibid., lines 114–133). Max, whose didactical approach is one of separating

content and method, does not expect any analysis of content in the course but evaluates it as a '*course on tools*' (IP Max, line 533) and adds: '*you don't argue purely methodologically*' (ibid., lines 547 f.). In reference to interreligiosity, Max emphasises that there '*were few elements where that was truly concretely present*' (ibid., lines 226 f.), but the interreligiosity of the course could be '*used more intensely*' (ibid., line 374).

Sonja, whose demands were quite high because of her activity till then in youth work, says that the new methods did not materialise in the way she wanted, and she had learned '*almost nothing new*' (IP Sonja, line 25) beyond the syllabus and the orientation to competences. For example, she wanted more '*input on content*' (ibid., lines 339 f.). Here she mentions the method of didactic reduction (*Elementarisierung*).

5.2.2 Behaviour and Interactions

In this section we will look at the behaviour and interactions of the students and the course teachers with respect to conceptualisation and expectations. One field of tension for the Muslim students arises from the transferability of methods and content from Catholic religious education to Islamic religious education and thus from the interreligious basic practicum to the Islamic specialised practicum. The opinions of those interviewed differ on the question of how extensive the similarities between both types of religious education are. Their conduct in the group and towards the teachers is influenced by their answer to this question.

Emine, for example, goes along with the interreligious learning of methods and opines:

> *Thus, I was very happy with it because we were a mixed group, together with Christians, and we learned a great deal; how, for example, in the practicum – how one should start. How and what methods we will use. (IP Emine, lines 15–18)*

Emine believes that content can be adapted and is thus relevant for Islamic religious education: '*Yeah, the Christian methods in education, those can be accepted. Because ... some things can be used in Islam*' (ibid., lines 523–526). She relates that she took from the university courses what she could use in the religious education in school (cf. ibid., lines 633–639):

> *For example, everyone says what he wants from God and also says what he wants for his neighbours and partners.... And I can use that in Islamic education. (Ibid., lines 541–554)*

Esra is sceptical, however, that she learned methods of Catholic education in the basic practicum.

> *In my opinion, it makes no sense to learn Catholic methods. That's why I ask myself again and again. Why I can't explain, but it seems to me illogical because in the practicum I myself, uh, held classes with Catholic pupils. Because we had made everything possible with team teaching. That's why I found it pointless to make it mixed. (IP Esra, lines 93–102)*

She thinks that the confrontation with methods of Catholic religious education had little to offer Islamic religious education (cf. ibid., lines 287 f.).

For Catholic students, the focus is less on adopting methods than on the question of the allocation of tasks in the team teaching of the course instructors. Sonja perceived a clear distribution of tasks between the two teachers. Questions about the seminar method were not always discussed jointly, such as the question of the absence of the Muslim students:

> *Yes, it was answered in this way, that Hilde believed that 'Yeah, Mehtap is responsible for that, so she has to account for that with her students, thus the Muslim students, and that she manages it, that's the way it is.' (IP Sonja, lines 652–654)*

With respect to interreligiosity, Sonja would like less separation and more joint action, '*more exchange*' (ibid., lines 339 f.) between Muslim and Catholic teachers and students. She sees the intermittent division into intrareligious groups as difficult for interreligious gatherings:

> *So, there was no togetherness: 'Let's have a look at their curriculum, let's have a look at our curriculum.' Or so. But we were really separated again.' (Ibid., lines 71–73)*

A differentiated image emerges on the part of the course teachers as well with respect to behaviour and interactions. Since only a few Muslim students attended the course and the others were absent because of an overlap with another course given at the same time, Mehtap sees herself marginalised by both the circumstances and the themes:

> *I don't get through [to all students] and what's left for me? In a group where Muslims are in the minority and because of a time conflict only a few are present: If I asserted myself, then I would be in a situation then I would talk to students and ... the Muslim students were not even there. (IP Mehtap, lines 1682–1686)*

Mehtap relates that she has resigned herself to this situation (cf. ibid., line 1748). To plan the course, however, she needs information about the group beforehand and a reflection on the course.

> *I always have to imagine what the class situation will be like, then I can form an image of it. I need that. And I always need to reflect with Hilde at the end of these four afternoons. (Ibid., lines 702–705)*

She also needs concrete content. Apparently, she misses this in the conception of the basic practicum: '*I need this "what"…. There must be content in which I can find myself again as a person, what I can agree with*' (ibid., lines 1402–1404).

Hilde refers to the fact that, she '*attempted a mixture in a completely pragmatic way*' (IP Hilde, lines 155 f.) together with Mehtap. From her perspective, the pragmatic mixture was not only advantageous but also stood in the way of the structure and content of the basic practicum: '*And after the course this mixture brought us again and again to the point that it was not clear what the basic practicum should really be*' (ibid., lines 156 f.).

To be able to reach a consensus, Hilde distances herself from her original ideas and tries a more methodical orientation for the course (cf. ibid., lines 1086–1088). Mehtap also relates that she withdrew when confronted with Hilde's approaches and interactions. For Hilde, consideration for the other teacher defined the team teaching. Based on her experience, she attempted initially to give room to Mehtap. Because the course consequently developed in a direction Hilde did not want, she decided later, however, to take over the supervision of the course. Even in the choice of methods, Hilde made sure to avoid content that could stand in the way of the group's togetherness. For example, she mentioned the blessing, which she – for the sake of this togetherness – replaced by 'best wishes' because she wanted '*to be neutral*' (ibid., lines 384 f.).

Hilde relates that in an interreligious setting she became rattled again and again. She traced this back to deficient clarifications regarding the basic practicum. She wonders: '*What could be our role at all within that?*' (ibid., lines 447 f.). As an example of another communication pattern, which not seldom occurs in team teaching settings, Hilde refers to a person acting occasionally in opposition to others – out of the need to create a counterbalance – because this person communicates too self-consciously. Apparently, this communication pattern also occurred in Hilde and Mehtap's interreligious setting.

> *It often happens indeed if two people lead together and someone gives clear answers that the other person takes such a strong counter-position and either begins to dig in or becomes less rigid. (Ibid., lines 1299–1301)*

5.2.3 Consequences

With a view to the first area of conflict, 'planning, approach, and expectations', we should now ask: What consequences do the interviewees draw for themselves? It became clear in the analysis that these consequences are closely bound up with the subjective approach of the basic practicum. In Mehtap's case, this is visible in, for example, the proposals for change. She would like a course in which methods are taught, tested, and reflected upon as well as processed with respect to content. She moors the theological aspect predominantly to the content. According to her, the accompanying university course is

> *not entertainment but something concrete.... And what they [the students] could also almost translate one-for-one. And they can then come in after and say: ... 'They have explained this method to us, which we also tried out, but we noticed these disadvantages.' ... That's how I imagined the university part. That they get impulses ... various methods if I now think only in terms of Islam and that they are in conversation with me as well, and that I also have a part, an area where they can reflect on the role of a practicum supervisor. That is how I imagine the university part. (IP Mehtap, lines 1845–1854)*

Mehtap's description of Hilde's approach, which she associates with 'entertainment' and to which she opposes her own 'concreteness' makes the lines of conflict clear in the sense of an asymmetrical assessment. As the basis for the reflection on method, Mehtap initially proposes a content analysis, from which the methods would emerge. Mehtap sees the theological aspects as very much anchored in this way of proceeding: '*This would truly be an indicator for me, a theological approach*' (ibid., lines 1917 f.).

With respect to the shape of the course, Mehtap would rather begin with reflection on the praxis:

> *I would have nothing against scheduling half a period for reflection at the beginning of the basic practicum. Thus, that the students simply reflect on what they experienced in the practicum, that they trade experiences with each other. That is what ought to have happened in the university part. (Ibid., lines 1577–1580)*

Regarding the interreligious character of the course, Mehtap also prefers a different approach as well. She wants to orient this more to working on theological themes, such as scriptural texts. In what follows she sketches how she imagines what a religion lesson would look like:

> *If interreligious dialogue is to occur, that we get content from the Old Testament, then I get content from the Qur'an, that we present briefly for five or ten minutes and leave it to the stu-*

> *dents, and they should plan a joint lesson or plan methods for development or a phase of deepening or a reflection or a beginning. (Ibid., lines 1665–1669)*

It is clear from this passage that Mehtap sees two aspects as central to the conceptualisation of the basic practicum: work on texts and reflection on the practicum experiences of the students.

Hilde's approach to the basic practicum is more strongly moored to meta-reflection and – concerning interreligiosity – interaction. According to her, the focus of the basic practicum lies on 'coming into contact with each other'. Moreover, she sees the practicum as a process-oriented possibility of risking relatively independent first steps in the school context and less as a precursor of the specialised practicum. Against this background, various differences from Mehtap's view emerge, which is essentially oriented to content. Hilde draws the conclusion – in the sense of a solution to these dilemmas – that the situation can best be resolved '*pragmatically*' (IP Hilde, line 156). The planning of the accompanying course was done with a great deal of mutual attentiveness and perception (cf. ibid., lines 152–157, 490–497). In her opinion, however, '*everything simply changes completely*' (ibid., lines 130–135) if one teacher is absent because of sickness.

Hilde relates that Mehtap raises questions about her role and responsibility in the basic practicum. She herself is less occupied with these topics (cf. ibid., lines 452–467). Against this backdrop, Hilde would like clarity, primarily about the learning objectives. These are not only related to the course but also to the interreligious work in the course. In her view, what was important is '*a confrontation in a large group: what is the objective of mixed interreligious groups and a mixed interreligious teaching team?*' (ibid., lines 2056–2058).

Hilde is convinced that a true confrontation with the different positions of the course teachers is necessary prior to the course. According to her, both teachers

> *agreed to this mixing. And all such mixtures are not meat and not fish, do not have any hands or feet, and I think that we, we have also spoken [in the interview] about having struggled so little with each other beforehand as to what our task is in a mixed interreligious basic practicum. (Ibid., lines 172–176)*

Hilde relates that the effect of the different approaches to the basic practicum is like '*throwing a spanner into the works*' (ibid., line 962). She concedes that it '*was incredibly exhausting for Mehtap to work with me as well*' (ibid., line 1054).

In turn, the students assessed the course as follows: Esra describes the intra-religious part of the course as profitable, whereas she viewed the interreligious

phases as problematic (cf. IP Esra, lines 130 – 133). Elmas has a similar view. Based on her approaches and perspective, the intrareligious specialised practicum was '*much more informative and useful than the basic practicum*' (IP Elmas, line 802).

Emine turns out to be able to adapt some of the methods used in Catholic religious education and holds: '*Many songs and so we can also use them*' (IP Emine, line 101). Aspects of other elements, according to Emine, must be adapted or changed (cf. ibid., lines 534 – 539).

Meltem provides another assessment. According to her, the course can only be accessed via the praxis in the school and be understood only against this background (cf. IP Meltem, lines 23 f.). In contrast to other colleagues, Meltem views the division of themes as balanced:

> *There were no themes, where more weight was given to Islamic themes or Catholic themes. There were themes for both religions there. Appropriate themes, completely plain themes. (Ibid., lines 832 – 835)*

The students give different answers to the question of how they perceived the interreligious character of the course. Klara links up with the concept of interreligious dialogue. She criticises the fact that the group and circumstances led to the Catholic and Islamic parts not being equally present. But that is precisely what interreligious dialogue would suggest (cf. IP Klara, lines 33 f.).

Klaus also expresses the wish for more dialogue in the course units, also independent of the instructors (cf. IP Klaus, line 712). For him, '*interreligious or something of that sensibility*' (ibid., line 744) has become important. He views an interreligious supervision team to be a major opportunity because it gives the possibility of splitting the group when a theme concerns only one religion or faith (cf. ibid., lines 448 – 451).

Max did not perceive any tensions between the students in the course. In his view, the potential of the interreligious group had not been exhausted. He recommends that the teachers in the course teach targeted religiously mixed small groups. If they had done so they would then have been better able to carry out the supervision (cf. IP Max, lines 166 – 175).

Sonja judges in retrospect that the course teachers taught alongside each other rather than in conjunction with each other. In her view, there were few agreements and understandings on common grounds (cf. IP Sonja, lines 67 – 73). For example, she brings up how they greeted the students: the Muslim instructor '*greeted everybody one after the other with a handshake*' (ibid., line 703), while the Catholic teacher '*stood in front and said "Hello"*' (ibid., line

713). Sonja saw the division into preparation and supplementation as an approach by their teachers:

> *Thus, one simply prepared the theme and the other always interposed something in the meantime or simply supplemented whatever still seemed to her to be appropriate. (Ibid., lines 671–674)*

She expresses the wish for much more thoroughly mixed groups that are guided by the course instructors, so that '*simply more emerges, i. e., a co-existence*' (ibid., lines 327 f.).

5.2.4 Preliminary Conclusion

In this first preliminary conclusion, we will look at the following questions: What most characterises the course? And what models or approaches do the individual participants endorse regarding the goal and task of the basic practicum? Here we focus especially on the instructors of the course.

The students have different expectations and approaches regarding the meaning of the designation 'interreligious'. Particularly in connection with ideas of what the basic practicum should achieve, differences between the course teachers emerged that had a mirror image effect on the students.

Conflicts between the course teachers became visible and palpable above all in the behaviour of university teaching. Altogether, it is also clear that the teachers could not resolve the conflicts on their own but by focusing on their own respective approaches and assessments became incapable of acting.

The conflict between the teachers was also perceived by the students. For the Muslim students, who were focused on the specialised practicum and the learning of specific Islamic methods, intrareligious learning in the basic practicum was very demanding. For them, the preparation for the specialised practicum and thus the specific character of Islamic religious education or the methods that many Islamic students saw as allegedly specifically 'Islamic' were the focus of their interest. These ideas were furthered by the approach of the Muslim teacher.

Altogether, numerous themes come to the fore in this area of conflict that go beyond the concrete context of the basic practicum. It is clear that the lessons, especially the team teaching, can cause conflicts. In the planning, the course instructors could arrive at a certain degree of agreement. But in their actual teaching a kind of play acting took shape in which the themes of majority society – minority society, majority religion – minority religion, in-group – out-group,

the familiar – the strange, competence – incompetence were negotiated more implicitly than explicitly, and a certain dynamic developed.

All in all, a series of aspects become profiled in and around the course that could be viewed as a reflection of social conditions writ small. Here, Muslims are ascribed the role of an ethical and religious minority. The discrepancies that are felt and the imbalance between the Islamic and Catholic parts of the course also reflected a socially established power imbalance here. These observations lead to the next area of conflict in which the processes and interactions come more strongly into view.

5.3 Area of Conflict 2: Process, Communication, and Group Dynamics

In the area of conflict just discussed above, we focused on planning, approaches, and expectations. Now we want to turn our attention in this section to another field of tension. This one is concerned with the processes, the course, the communication, and interaction as well as the group dynamics in the university setting. In the thematic area, 'group dynamics', so-called 'intergroup conflicts' will be examined. At the centre of these conflicts, according to Tajfel and Turner, we find the negotiation of social identities and social status.

In the course of the interviews, it became clear that this area of conflict is a large one. To analyse these group dynamics, we will examine the perspective of the course teachers on the course, the general conditions, their own activities and their team teaching, as well as the perspective of the students on the group, the teachers, the general conditions, and their own interests. There is a complementary and at the same time contradictory/conflictive picture of actions and reactions, interactions, approaches and counter-approaches, and their own perspective as well as the perspective of the other.

5.3.1 Causes and Influential Factors

Our presentation of the causes and influential factors begins with the structural conditions from the point of view of the teachers of the accompanying course. As already explained, both teachers in this research period were hardly involved in the university since they were external instructors. In contrast, they were experienced and acknowledged in other professional fields. The Muslim instructor was familiar with interreligious work in schools, whereas the Catholic teacher had little experience in interreligiously oriented education.

The communications dynamics show distinct patterns. On the one hand, the course instructors communicated with each other and then informed the group either jointly or individually. On the other hand, situations are sketched in the interviews in which the Muslim teacher spoke only to the Muslim students and the Catholic teacher spoke only to the Catholic students. Conversely, the Muslim and/or Catholic students communicated jointly or individually with the Muslim and/or Catholic teacher. Because of that, a communication triangle arose: 'third' persons or groups dropped out of the communication or were not included in the information exchange or in the agreements.

The teachers are not to be seen here as individuals, but they were acting a specific role and were perceived with their own religious affiliation. Regarding the establishment and social recognition of both religious communities, there are great differences and unequal conditions that also influence the interactions and ways of looking at the other. The Catholic Church is essentially established in Austria; it has more members and enjoys – although decreased because of secular development – social recognition. The Islamic religious community is structured differently, has fewer financial means at its disposal and is less recognised in society – sometimes, it is subject to defamation by the majority society. It is especially relevant to take these power relationships into consideration in analysing conflicts and conflict potential. Theoretically, the question of power relationships can be situated in the model of a '*struggle for recognition*'[5] that looks at power asymmetries as well as various social positions, particularly those of status. The 'established-outsider paradigm' formulated by Elias and Scotson also presents a helpful criterion for analysis for understanding the dynamics at the bottom of this.

Another structural influential factor, which was raised primarily by students, is constituted by the irregularities we already mentioned regarding the attendance of the Muslim students. Klara holds that the Muslim students were present '*most of the time*' (IP Klara, line 190), but they were repeatedly absent. This had a negative effect on the sense of Catholic and Muslim students being together in one group:

> *But they were simply often not present, which was noticed because the groups, if you spend four hours together, you're expected to grow together somewhat, even if it is only for four units. But there was a group dynamic, and if two or three people always leave and then return an hour and a half later, that is simply noticed. (Ibid., lines 190–196)*

5 Cf. *Honneth*, Kampf um Anerkennung.

Here Klara regrets that there was little commitment and common ground to be seen because the general conditions favoured a high degree of not binding to one another.

Max perceived unequal treatment of the Muslim students and was critical of this ('*Equal rights for all!*' [IP Max, line 423]). His starting point was that the Catholic students were not permitted to be absent so often. They, according to Max, had to decide between the courses that were given in the same time slot. The repeated absence of the Muslim students had an effect primarily on the small groups (cf. ibid., lines 391–431). Sonja also describes this situation as burdensome and difficult (cf. IP Sonja, lines 28–31). In-group/out-group dynamics become clear in this context. Thus, the Catholic students felt that an injustice had been done, as the above example shows, not towards individuals but towards the group that they identify with.

An essential factor in the context of the individual and situation related conditions is the definition of and dealing with supervision. Many open questions, problems, and conflicts between the course teachers became manifest, but were not discussed and processed by them. The instructors were not apparently able to take a metaperspective on their own and shared situation and to reflect critically on their own and other approaches.

A conflict around teaching and the understanding of teaching becomes clear. Thus, for Hilde, communication and interaction are central. She characterises the basic practicum as a place where students can become acquainted with each other (cf. IP Hilde, lines 124–127). Communication and asking questions play an essential role for Hilde also with respect to faith. In her eyes, faith has '*something to do with examination*' (ibid., line 1173). She articulates this as follows: '*I can't understand it now. Help me understand it. Or help me to comprehend it*' (ibid., lines 1174 f.). It is also obvious to her '*to call God into question*' (ibid., line 2553).

Hilde observes increasing frictions and disagreements in her relationship to Mehtap. Initially, during the preparation, they had '*a very good personal relationship within the framework of work*' (ibid., lines 411 f.). But this changed after their joint teaching: the relationship between her and Mehtap is now '*no longer that free of tension*' (ibid., line 416).

Hilde judges the communication between the students as ambivalent. The Muslim students had found themselves in a kind of '*diaspora situation*' (ibid., line 426). According to her, there were also '*two groups ... within this one large seminar group*' (ibid., lines 254–256). Hilde relates that tensions between Mehtap and the Catholic students increased, in which neither party felt they were taken seriously by the other (cf. ibid., lines 1091, 1096).

Various facets of the individual conditions emerge from the statements by the students. On the one hand, we also see the idea here that the university part of the basic practicum should serve learning (new) methods (cf. IP Klaus, lines 371–374). On the other hand, reference is made to interreligious learning, respectful treatment of each other (cf. IP Esra, lines 649–656), a basic attitude of openness (cf. IP Elmas, line 237), and personal preference such as, for instance, teaching in elementary school (IP Emine, lines 698–700).

An important influential factor here is also appraising the attitude to interreligious dialogue. For Meltem, it is imperative in a dialogue to have sound knowledge of one's own religious content:

> *It is too painful for me, if I simply don't know many things and I have to learn them first so that I can communicate them to the kids sometime. Or communicate the interreligious aspect – thus in the groups of the other students, the Catholic students. (IP Meltem, lines 1164–1168)*

Meltem sees potential in this situation for personal development: '*Because people still have to find their own way, how to manage*' (ibid., lines 441–443).

For the Catholic students, it was above all the polarisation and block formation between both groups that were structural influential factors on learning conditions. Thus, the borders drawn between Catholic and Muslim students were also spatial. Klaus refers to a block formation in the form of segregated seating arrangements that developed during the course. According to his depiction, the Muslim students sat together in one part of the room and the Catholic students spread themselves over the rest of the room. Thus, in his view, a '*them and us or us and them*' (IP Klaus, line 133) formed. Klaus sees the thematisation of the formation of this group as a difficult undertaking because the basic practicum was too short to create a '*common atmosphere*' (ibid., line 141). This group formation was not initially intended as such, but it hardened into a dichotomous juxtaposition.

Like Klaus, Max also locates a block formation and adds that he saw the '*clear block formation*' (IP Max, line 398) as normal at first, but then he noted that it did not dissipate. Because of that, in his eyes, not much interreligious togetherness occurred (cf. ibid., line 412). Moreover, Max saw the Muslim students as very reserved and '*not very communicative*' (ibid., line 412).

Sonja also speaks about the polarisation between Muslim and Catholic students. This became manifest, according to Sonja, in the spatial divison: '*Thus, in principle it was a U-form, with us on the one side as Roman Catholics and on the other side the Muslim students.*' (IP Sonja, lines 33–36)

Klara experiences the block formation as inappropriate and describes her search for strategies to overcome it. To try to break down this positioning, she

took a seat – in a demonstrative way – on the side where the Muslim students were. She has a positive and open attitude towards them, knows them from previous semesters and is '*very happy*' (IP Klara, line 90) that she completed the basic practicum together with them. She is also very encouraged to initiate and continue communication and interaction. Here communication with the Muslim students happens mostly in the breaks: '*Again and again a few dialogues arose in the breaks, also with Muslim colleagues*' (ibid., lines 18 – 21).

Klara is interested in Islam and used the opportunity afforded by a religiously mixed group of students in the course to clarify, with the help of the Muslim students, certain questions about Islam: '*Because I then had questions again and again that they answered willingly*' (ibid., lines 38 f.).

In general, an entire seminar group should be a reference group for the students. Nevertheless, boundaries between Muslim and Catholic students were revealed in the students' accounts that divided them into two groups. The identification of individual students happened in the first instance not via the joint group in the course but via a more or less 'fictitious imaginary we'[6]. Here, religious adherence becomes an identification marker. The sub-groups that arose could hardly be broken apart, as can be clearly seen from this example. Rather, a dynamic delimitation and exclusion of the religious other arose.

5.3.2 Behaviour and Interactions

What is striking is that when Hilde speaks of the other/the others, she uses the term 'students' when she means the interreligious group. She distinguishes between the students by adding the adjective 'Muslim' or 'Catholic': '*And there was no distinction between Muslim students and Catholic students there*' (IP Hilde, line 810). Occasionally, Hilde also uses the substantive expression 'Muslim person' or 'Catholic person' (cf. ibid., lines 1335, 2099 or 2020).

In the interaction between the two course teachers, conflicts manifest themselves that were often not dealt with. Mehtap, for instance, felt she was not taken seriously by Hilde but did not discuss this (cf. IP Mehtap, lines 1781 – 1783, 1391 f.). A particularly impressive example became manifested within the framework of the joint planning of a course unit. During this planning, Hilde offered to write up what they agreed and to send it to Mehtap for feedback. When Mehtap received the documents, she saw that there were parts she could not identify with. She did not give any feedback about that but did not use those parts in

6 Cf. *Eickelpasch / Rademacher*, Identität.

her teaching (cf. ibid., lines 766 – 772). According to Mehtap, passages written by Hilde no longer corresponded with what they had agreed. She felt ignored but did not communicate this:

> *After our meeting, the plan was already written; it was done by her [Hilde], writing it down. I accepted it then because the group was so small ... and because I believe that the Catholic students are also entitled to appropriate supervision where they can ask questions, thus they have the right to talk to an expert. (Ibid., lines 1653 – 1657)*

Hilde, however, was rattled and annoyed that she did not receive any feedback and did not know how she should deal with Mehtap's way of proceeding (cf. IP Hilde, lines 1466 – 1478).

Another conflict concerning the understanding of teaching, as well dealing with teaching in a practical way became visible elsewhere. Mehtap voices discomfort about the quick or spontaneous taking over the lead in the team teaching of the course and discloses that in principle she cannot manage with the approach:

> *'Yeah, you can't just take over?' I have a problem with that. I can't agree with that. And I then, after those four afternoons, I understood how that approach works, how it's implemented,... I don't want to be there. (IP Mehtap, lines 1405 – 1409)*

There are major differences between the teachers of the course and their approaches and diverging concepts and – corresponding with that – normative anticipations or expectations. Because of the limited possibilities of and willingness for communication, a series of entanglements in the constellation of expectations of the first and second order (expectations and expectations of expectations) emerges.

Mehtap has this intertwining of expectations in mind when she characterises herself, with respect to the interaction with both her colleague and the students during the course, as an accurate observer: '*You can learn a great deal from someone's body language*' (ibid., line 1126). Another important aspect for her is eye contact:

> *For me, eye contact is extremely important. And I have noticed, while I was teaching, that many did not even look at me, others were very appreciative and asked for my personal opinions, experiences. (Ibid., lines 1131 – 1133)*

For Mehtap, the perceived rejection is exemplified in a Catholic student by whom she felt ignored. She noticed that but did not bring it up. In the interview, however, she devised a number of 'theories' about what could have affected his be-

haviour. She is very vague about it, saying, '*Perhaps it is something else*' (ibid., line 1045) or '*Perhaps he was to finish his sentence now*' (ibid., line 1050) or says, '*There could be so many different factors ... that must not concern me personally*' (ibid., 1108 – 1110). After longer reflection, however, Mehtap concludes that the student's disgruntlement affected her. She did not speak to the student, for she considered her possibilities of action to be limited because her personal understanding of the course saw her as being responsible only for the Muslim students and Hilde for the Catholic students (cf. ibid., lines 1163 – 1225). Starting from this conception, Mehtap sees her speaking to and reprimanding the Catholic student would, in her mind, be an intrusion into Hilde's area of competence. A competitive situation between the two actors becomes clear above all in Mehtap's statements. For her, the question that arises is that of who 'occupies' which field of action. She insinuates that she can understand the students asking Hilde more often for information because the setting required the knowledge a Catholic teacher would have. Here Mehtap anticipates the perspective of a Catholic student:

> *I would not ask me either ... if I know that I have to prepare the beginning of a lesson on Caritas by next week, I will not ask the Muslim teacher. She will not be informed. ... What would I ask her? (Ibid., lines 1263 – 1266)*

Mehtap relates that she withdrew increasingly from taking the lead in teaching. As reasons for this, she says on the one hand that she taught the second unit by herself because Hilde was sick, and she wanted this to be balanced in the third unit. On the other hand, she says that her role was made obsolete by the absences of the Muslim students (cf. ibid., lines 1805 – 1807). Mehtap reveals that she is unsatisfied with how the course went but does not say this to Hilde. Overall, an image of Mehtap as acting in a passive and inconsistent way emerges.

Hilde, in turn, is uncertain in the interreligious teaching team about what behaviour towards her Muslim partner and towards the Muslim students is at all allowed in Islam. She asks: '*To what extent is it permitted in Islam [to question the existence of God]?*' (IP Hilde, line 2560). She attempts to produce an explanation when she asks Mehtap about this and learns that, personally, Mehtap can allow herself to doubt but has reservations about talking about this in religious class (cf. ibid., lines 2588 – 2590). Hilde can understand this idea to a certain extent because she herself is occasionally confronted by conservative parents who see her teaching as '*not Catholic*' (ibid., lines 2599 f.). Hilde places her own convictions over against this criticism. She has '*very many supporting arguments that say very clearly – including the curriculum: "That is very Catholic indeed"*' (ibid., lines 138 – 140).

One of the problems that stands out here for Hilde is her own uncertainty about the purpose of the basic practicum. She talked with Mehtap about this repeatedly '*for quite a long time*' (ibid., lines 135 f.). Hilde relates that she often had intense conversations with Mehtap in connection with the course so that she was late getting home after every session (cf. ibid., lines 446 f.). Hilde criticises Mehtap's teaching style above all for the fact that she – from Hilde's perspective – did not treat the students as equals but instructs them (cf. ibid., lines 1225 – 1232). In the course of the interview serious difficulties became manifest in the communication between Hilde and Mehtap. According to Hilde, '*they were both careful ... so that it did not lead to conflict*' (ibid., line 2441). In Hilde's description, there was

> *something between the lines. And perhaps it also had something to do with the fact we were not clear about our task, thus our job as teachers of the course together in this mixed setting there. (Ibid., lines 427 – 433)*

Hilde also wonders whether this change in her relationship to Mehtap could have something to do with '*competition*' (ibid., line 1206) in the teaching aspect in the course.

Especially with respect to the interaction with the students, it became clear that Mehtap did not feel she was taken seriously – particularly by the Catholic students – as '*an expert*' (ibid., line 1115). In turn, Hilde felt obliged to preserve the '*perspective that Mehtap so wonderfully brought in*' (ibid., lines 554 f.), when she '*withdrew and retreated*' (ibid., line 1107). Hilde believes that Mehtap willingly stepped back – she said to her twice: '*I'm happy that you are taking part in teaching this course*' (ibid., line 1500). Considerable differences in Hilde's and Mehtap's perceptions become visible here. Moreover, the respective discontent is not articulated in a way that makes processing it possible or inevitable because the course teachers do not talk to each other about their perceptions and wishes.

From the students' perspectives, it becomes clear that the role change (students – interns – assuming the pupil role experimentally) were not easily kept separate from each other and thus the teachers were sometimes also unaware of this role change. For example, Hilde cites a Catholic student who, in the feedback round, declared in a statement expressly directed at Mehtap, that he '*had often felt like an elementary school pupil*' (ibid., line 1129). Hilde responded to that by diplomatically answering: '*Thanks for the feedback. We will take it into consideration and discuss it*' (ibid., lines 1131 f.).

Power imbalances can be seen regarding the activities of both course teachers and those of their chosen strategies. It thus becomes clear that Hilde emphat-

ically took the more active role and sought conversation more than Mehtap did. Although interpersonal aspects, which can be traced back to the psychological dispositions of the actors and social factors, are to be taken into consideration as well, socio-political power dynamics are also a factor here. These become part of intercultural contexts to the extent that representatives of groups that find themselves in positions of political power also assume positions of power in intercultural educational contexts. Macro-social behaviour is accordingly mirrored in the micro-processes identified here. Altogether, power asymmetry emerges clearly to the extent that – aside from organisational problems – a discourse of domination on approaches, understandings, teaching experience, transparency, the victim role, competence, etc. occurs.

If we look at the interaction and communication between the students, we can state that concrete perspectives and actions mirror the following themes or discourses: majority/minority relationships, domination, competence, familiarity and strangeness, epistemological themes like right-wrong discourses, etc. The space accorded or denied someone to be present with one's own views gains a special importance.

Esra articulates the various perspectives in the discussions between Catholic and Muslim students and clearly stresses how often these were bound up with a fear of being misunderstood. In her view, the cultural differences represented a barrier that required a particularly precise language from the Muslims. She recognised the fear of being misunderstood and the need to justify themselves to many of her Muslim fellow students:

> *Yeah, they wear headscarves, for example. Quite simple. Most people think we are oppressed. All kind of things. And if a student comes and says: 'Yeah, my mom wanted me to wear a headscarf.' That feels much differently for us than in the interreligious group. (IP Esra, lines 452 – 472)*

Likewise, Esra is also concerned with questions of knowledge. She checks herself closely to avoid mistakes or unpleasant situations. '*I rather withdraw … above all from the students. Before I say anything wrong, I would rather say nothing*' (ibid., line 241). Given this background, she also develops a positive relationship with the Muslim teacher. For Esra, Mehtap is more familiar and more competent than Hilde as far as Islamic religious education is concerned: '*Also, if you are in the small group, it was simply better because she [Mehtap] also has more practical experience*' (ibid., lines 61f.).

Esra characterises the relationship between the Catholic and the Muslim teacher as '*normal*' (ibid., line 493) and unremarkable. With respect to the division of the students, she relates that a block formation could be detected, but

they worked repeatedly in religiously mixed groups so that '*interaction or rather communication between us … was already there, yeah*' (ibid., line 197). Moreover, Esra reports about discussions on themes in which they exchanged perspectives and thus came to an understanding

> *because we simply discussed more, but it was not bad. It was … actually also good. … It was simply a theme in both Catholicism and Islam. From their point of view and from our point of view: there was no problem. We were certainly able to finish talking. (Ibid., lines 204 – 211)*

Esra sees a difficulty that arises from the Christian character of religious education: the pupils are familiar with Christian content and the Christian way of proceeding. In this context, Esra feels it is difficult to take over the role of Islamic expert. Sometimes, Esra is not prepared above all to answer the questions she is asked and gives an example. During the basic practicum, she was given the task, together with a Catholic student, of explaining the significance of angels in both traditions. One pupil asked for more precise information, but she was unable to give him any answer. She felt it was too much.

> *For us, yes, there are angels that are responsible for hell. Zebani … that's what they are called. I also said, 'There are angels who are responsible for hell.' And then he asks, 'But if they are angels, why are they in hell?' (Ibid., lines 750 – 755)*

For Esra, one difficulty in dealing with this question seems to lie in the idea that she has too little knowledge of the background of the Christian tradition to understand the question and to be able to answer it adequately. Here a Catholic student could take a mediating role. All in all, the examples portrayed show dynamics that make clear that interreligious team teaching is challenging.

Another Muslim student, Elmas, often thematised the role of the Muslim teacher and the interaction of the students. She places the numerically small Muslim student group in relation to the role of the Muslim teacher and therefore sees her possibilities to influence the course as limited or placed in question.

> *Mehtap could not intervene because there were only the four of us. I mean the others were only Catholic students.… The questions came much more out of this direction (IP Elmas, lines 139 – 141)*

From Elmas' point of view, the Muslim course teacher was not properly able to fit in with the interreligious course setting '*even though she is a very open person*' (ibid., lines 145 f.). Although Elmas is of the view that the teachers '*had a good agreement before then*' (ibid., line 530), she emphasises that Hilde stood '*more at the centre*' (ibid., lines 530 f.). In reference to the inclusion of the Muslim

students, Elmas relates that working together '*actually worked well*' (ibid., line 245). From her point of view, one characteristic had a limiting effect:

> *Now that's simply how it is for us. We do not intervene, unless ... if we must, then we intervene and if not, that will do. But they were also like that, I believe, that was not so only from our side. (Ibid., lines 245–248)*

Elmas did not observe any serious conflicts between the Muslim and Catholic students. She herself held that the uneven proportions in the discussions had levelled out, and she avoided becoming involved in the education activities. Here as well the dynamics, which we detected more often, that rest on structural inequalities are clear. The internalisation of power relationships become evident through Elmas' passivity and conflict avoidance strategies.

Elmas' fellow student Emine discusses the relation between the students and the course teachers and characterises this relationship as friendly: '*as a relationship of friends, thus not as teacher and pupil*' (IP Emine, lines 446 f.). Aside from the practicum group, she had contact with the Catholic students only within the group. She preferred to get together with her fellow Muslim students during the breaks (cf. ibid., lines 218–228). Both groups profited from each other with respect to both content and didactics:

> *So we have learned much from them, they have also learned from us. It was good to be together.... For example, they knew little about Islam. They know more now. And we have learned how they, in the classes, what they all do. (Ibid., lines 179–184)*

The Muslim student Meltem emphasises the balanced and relaxed atmosphere that she observed in the course. The interreligious phases gave her confidence:

> *If questions arose where one never dares to ask them, then you could ask Mehtap. Because it is also a group where you say, 'Okay, there I feel a bit better.' (IP Meltem, lines 804–810)*

From her point of view, the course teachers got along with each other '*very, very, very well*' (ibid., lines 846 f.). They led different parts by turns and were expected '*in any case to continue in the same way*' (ibid., line 854). Here, Meltem wishes that the teachers '*approach [the students] in quotation marks*' (ibid., lines 856 f.). She proposes that they

> *discuss, speak with the students, to show an interest in them, go to them and say: 'So, do you have any questions? What do you envision about that? What do you think should have been conveyed?' Talk more with the students. (Ibid., lines 859–864).*

Klara indicates initially that no serious conflicts arose in the course:

Thus, there were no major difficulties that became a topic for the whole group, and the minor difficulties – naturally, I can't observe all of them. (IP Klara, lines 224 – 227)

Regarding the interaction between students, Klara talks primarily about the interaction with the Muslim students. In her opinion, the course offered numerous opportunities to '*ask each other questions*' (ibid., line 42). She could talk to the Muslim students about '*issues*' that '*people do not usually talk about*' (ibid., line 45).

But Klara also detects a fear here as well of asking '*dumb questions*' (ibid., line 47). She relates that initially there was '*fear of contact*' (ibid., line 180) between the Muslim and Catholic students in the course. She does not, however, see religious affiliation as the reason for this reticence, '*that's also the case if a group meets in the course that has already dome something together and then there are new people there*' (ibid., lines 181 – 183).

During the course, however, the atmosphere '*loosened up*' (ibid., line 186), and an '*exchange*' (ibid., line 186) developed among the students. According to Klara's descriptions, the Muslim course teacher said – allegedly primarily when she taught alone – repeatedly that she lacked competence in the area of specific Christian themes. Klara did not consider that problematic, however, because, in these cases, the Catholic students could answer the questions asked by the Muslim students (cf. ibid., lines 155 – 159). Klara experienced the course teacher as '*very open*' (ibid., line 142). She emphasises that it is better for people to talk to each other if there are questions or problems. That is why she did not hesitate to let them know if she '*was not happy with something*' (ibid., line 144).

In reference to the relation between students and teachers, Klara speaks of good interaction. She did not observe a '*typical*' case – '*the professor high above and the student somewhere below*' (ibid., lines 236 – 238). From her perspective, the teachers and students had a much closer relationship, expressed in the German word *Miteinander* (togetherness) (ibid., line 240). This close *Miteinander* was also promoted by the invitation made by the teachers to be addressed by the students as *du* (the familiar form of address) (cf. ibid., lines 240 – 245).

Following Turner and Tajfel's theoretical approach to social identity, we see in-group and out-group dynamics that can be described as the fusion of in-group and out-group constructions between teachers and students into a common 'we' (see chapter **2.1**). This also has a positive effect on the relation of the students among each other and on the group cohesion. Through common goals, interests, and interactions within the framework of the course, the existing (religious) group boundaries and identification patterns break down.

Altogether, Klara judges the atmosphere in the course to be '*good*' (ibid., line 242). There was a problem, however, in her practicum group once that the teach-

ers could have helped solve. She did not provide any additional details on this incident.

The Catholic student Klaus thinks that Mehtap identifies primarily with the Muslim students. With respect to this, he remarks critically that Mehtap busied herself one-sidedly with the Muslim students; '*So, yeah, we belong together anyway, yeah, a little bit like this*' (IP Klaus, line 189). Klaus has the impression that Mehtap saw herself as being '*on an equal level*' (ibid., line 194) with the Muslim students and '*we the Catholics*' (ibid., line 196) 'simply tagged along', with less attention being paid to them. He also noticed relationship problems between the Muslim teacher and the Catholic students and felt resistance on her part. In his view, Mehtap was not '*not open*' (ibid., line 658) to them, which became clear to him, for example, in the conversation about the Christian-Catholic rite of lighting candles:

> *And for her that was, yeah, actually all she knows about Catholics is [lighting candles] and is not really interested in what else we have to say. (Ibid., lines 212–214)*

For Klaus, the problem consists not only in Mehtap's rigid position but also in the fact that she did not take the expertise of the Catholic students seriously. He does not think it is appropriate for Mehtap as a Muslim teacher, to speak about a Catholic ritual solely from an external perspective. He claims that only he and his own group can speak authentically about what is part of his religion (cf. ibid., lines 204–216).[7]

Max also speaks about this theme and states that Mehtap had no regard for the knowledge of the Catholic students about the advent wreath celebration. She explained to the Catholic students how the advent wreath celebration was organised and was confronted with alternative ideas that she, according to Max, did not accept. Max interprets her behaviour as arrogant: '*it is just as she says, that's the only correct way*' (IP Max, lines 87 f.). He questions the competence of the Muslim teacher:

> *And it is just then that I think, 'Then don't ask us or research it differently beforehand.' But then to just to present it and say, 'I know it, and that's how it is and must be' is difficult, simply when it's a question of things that have to do with her religion indirectly. (Ibid., lines 87–92).*

7 A similar field of tension concerning competence and teaching authorisation occurred in the school setting in the area of conflict 'identity and confessionality' (cf. chapter **4.4**).

Max considers this incident to be the starting point of a visible conflict between the Muslim teacher and the Catholic students. In the wake of the incident presented above, there were differences of opinion between Mehtap and the Catholic students, especially Max and Klaus. Thereupon both wrote an email to Hilde. When Klaus speaks of this incident in the interview, he appears uncertain or ashamed. Also, the unstated purpose of the email was to go around Mehtap and, during the still unresolved conflict, to inform Hilde or possibly to win her for their own side.

> *Yeah, the two of us then – it was above all in the class where she had taught alone the whole afternoon – thereupon we wrote Hilde an email and told her what happened. Yeah, but then it settled down a bit. So then, then it was only one additional unit, I believe, and we did indeed say, 'Yeah, we, we will talk it about once in the group' or so, but somehow .... So she [Hilde] did not write back and said: 'We'd better discuss it then in the next class.' And anyhow it settled down and the seminar was then done and, yeah. (IP Klaus, lines 223–236).*

Klaus observes Mehtap's reaction and notes that in the next unit, which Hilde led completely alone, Mehtap came late and was present only '*marginally*' (ibid., line 328), '*more as a listener*' (ibid., line 330).

The content of the email was no longer discussed in the framework of the course. In the interview with Hilde, there were no indications that she was fully transparent about this topic to Mehtap. A possible reason for this could be a conflict avoidance strategy on her part.

This example shows how existing power asymmetries can be reinforced by the intervention of the Catholic students. The symbolic power of the representatives of the majority society, as set out by Bourdieu, is visible in the Muslim teacher who subjected herself to those dynamics and power structures. In the further development of this conflict, in-group and out-group dynamics became evident through the identification with one's own group and the simultaneous devaluation of the other group. Although the conflict was no longer discussed within the course, according to Klaus, the Catholic students felt that they were '*often not taken seriously by Mehtap*' (ibid., lines 246 f.). He deduces from this that the Catholic students consequently had difficulties of their own in taking Mehtap seriously (cf. ibid., lines 219 f.).

Max sees the university part of the course as characterised by resistance in the interaction with the Muslim teacher. He feels Mehtap treats him '*like a little elementary school pupil*' (IP Max, line 51). Max traces this back to her continuing to act like an elementary school teacher (cf. ibid., lines 133–143). For him, this is clearly shown in trying new methods in the role of pupils and the subsequent reflection as students. Max observes an '*underlying tension*' (ibid., line 455) between Mehtap and the Catholic students since the second unit, in which the

Catholic teacher was absent because of illness and the differences in meaning discussed above concerning the lighting of candles occurred. Here he characterises himself as '*someone who endures high tension*' (ibid., line 457) and declares that the Catholic students '*had their fill of "We're elementary school pupils"*' (ibid., lines 438 f.). Max sees the feeling of not being taken seriously as a student and the belief that the time of the course could have been spent better as reasons for this tension: '*I should still be doing that, doing that, doing that, and now I'm sitting here and letting myself be treated like my little brother*' (ibid., lines 458 – 460). What is striking from our research perspective is Max' aggressive word choice in sketching his view of the events.

5.3.3 Consequences

We will now discuss the consequences of the interaction dynamics of the basic practicum, starting with the perspective of the course teachers. From Mehtap's point of view, the role of the instructor is a central topic, but there was no adequate clarification of that role.

> *There is no tension now, but I ... have two options: Either I accept it that way, either I'm there as a guest and watch how Hilde teaches, how she deals with the students, but I purposely didn't want to be in that position and say: ... there are different methods, you can learn from each other in a group. (IP Mehtap, lines 1163 – 1167)*

In her self-assessment, Mehtap sees herself in the role of representative, a perception that can be traced to symbolic power and power asymmetry, as has already been demonstrated several times. She has the impression that she took on an active role only when the Muslim perspective was explicitly sought or if Hilde was absent. That is why she feels she is in a subordinate, outsider position.

> *In a group where I am present as an outsider, take on an observer role, only made use of when it is necessary, so to speak, I can also agree with the instructor and say: 'Ok, we'll do it the way she wants.' (Ibid., lines 1788 – 1790)*

In this context, Mehtap also comments on her further role in the basic practicum. Because of the current situation, she would not take on the role of course teacher again because she cannot identify with it: '*I do not do that. I don't do that.... I have to be able to find myself again. And that's not the case*' (ibid., lines 2141 – 2145)

Hilde is irritated by Mehtap's lack of response to their joint planning. She describes her as '*always slightly insecure when [she] does not get any feedback*

on such a change' (IP Hilde, lines 1477 f.). As a result of their working together, Hilde concludes that difficult themes should have been addressed. In her view, there was not enough clarification of the purpose the basic practicum was intended to serve. Likewise, not enough attention was paid to the fundamental questions concerning the goals, content, and roles in the practicum (cf. ibid., lines 144 – 147). According to Hilde, an understanding of the opportunities or the added value of interreligious work is needed (cf. ibid., lines 2294 f.). These include the following questions:

> *What is the role, what are the roles in the basic practicum? Whether I feel responsible for one group or [for] the whole group, somehow. (Ibid., lines 1120 – 1122)*

It also takes time, space, and encouragement for change and joint learning (cf. ibid., lines 975 f.). Hilde holds that understanding in the form of a bilateral encounter is not expedient; rather, clarifications with the instructors of interreligious courses and with the university institutes would be necessary (cf. ibid., lines 2056, 2446 – 2449).

As a further consequence of leading the basic practicum, Hilde would like to take a less dominant role. At the same time, however, she believes that withdrawing from the last session would not have made Mehtap become more involved in leading the course (cf. ibid., lines 506 – 528). But Hilde also asks herself the fundamental question of whether she does not automatically have an intrusive effect on the Muslim group through an adopted leadership role and that this prevents the development of independent Islamic religious education (cf. ibid., lines 2496 – 2501). With Hilde, self-doubt and uncertainty remain: What is possible and allowed? Where are the limits? Where does one hurt others?

With respect to the students, the consequences focus on the group work within the framework of the course. From Esra's point of view, the interreligious course offers the students the chance to get to know each other and find common ground:

> *You also learn to see things from a different point of view. You also have a different perspective then. ... And you also learn a lot ... what they think about certain things and what they think about Islam. (IP Esra, lines 229 – 232)*

It is striking that Esra speaks here in a distancing way and refers to the Catholic students as '*they*'. During the interview, Esra emphasises that the group work is an appropriate instrument for creating commonalities (cf. ibid., lines 182 – 197).

Elmas is also convinced that, compared to other social forms, group work makes it possible to learn together: '*The problem is that you don't talk if it's not necessary. But if we are to work together, then it fits*' (IP Elmas, lines 237 f.).

Emine emphasises in particular – in addition to the various tasks that are performed in group work – the importance of relationships: '*The relationship, that exists in the group work*' (IP Emine, line 620). Basically, she assesses the interreligious character of the basic practicum as positive: '*And that is so good to be in a mixed group in the university part*' (ibid., lines 599 f.).

In Meltem's assessment, social forms like group work were important for the success of interreligious learning. This experience was '*super*' (IP Meltem, line 152) for Meltem, and she would like to have such experiences '*on occasion*' (ibid., line 153). Regarding the procedure, Meltem recommends that

> *the professors explain the task to them at the beginning, and then you sit down in mixed groups. Then it just takes shape perhaps – also more interpersonally – you also take a lot of the other religion with you. (IP Meltem, lines 485–489)*

Meltem states that a special result of the course is that, because of her interaction with others, she was stimulated to reflect on herself, and this is accompanied by an increased interest in her own faith. So she says that she began to read the Qur'an in Turkish, '*so that I understand it*' (ibid., line 1191).

For Klara, listening to each other is important. In her opinion, students should have the opportunity to explore the other religion by asking questions. A religious mixture in the learning group is a basic condition here for her (cf. IP Klara, lines 79–86).

Klaus concludes from the course that he and the other students '*want to be perceived as academic people or as students*' (IP Klaus, line 286). He criticises the 'role reversal' that Mehtap had initiated. In addition, he accuses Mehtap of not being able to distinguish between reflective and methodological and practical levels (cf. ibid., lines 247 f.). As a result of this conflict, Klaus wants to bring his view of the situation '*into the evaluation*' (ibid., lines 347 f.). He regrets that he did not address the conflict in the group. At the same time, however, he admits that he has chosen the – for him – more 'pleasant' method: '*and somehow I've been able to avoid addressing it personally*' (ibid., lines 354–356). Moreover, it becomes clear that Klaus chooses the means of power available to him in his position (the evaluation) to resolve the conflict in the end to his own satisfaction.

Sonja, another Catholic student, views the practicum group as a place of interreligious exchange (cf. IP Sonja, line 463). She also identifies a conflict between Catholic students and the Muslim course teacher when they talked about interreligious celebrations. Sonja criticised such celebrations because of the great effort they would take and the likelihood of it being confused with a Mass. This led to a discussion between her and the Muslim course instructor

in which several Catholic students gradually became involved. Sonja reports on this event as follows:

> *And then suddenly several people were standing near me and then there was this stupid situation with the others just listening and standing around like that. And then there was just a bit of a bad situation; she was facing us, and then suddenly all the Roman Catholic students were standing around us and that was a bit difficult because then she felt she was being attacked even more because we were all standing around her. (Ibid., lines 194–201)*

On the one hand, Sonja sees the conversation with the Catholic students as a '*dialogue*' (ibid., line 204) and at the same time talks about aspects that point to '*slander*' (ibid., lines 249 f.) against Mehtap. Sonja's way of expressing herself here seems ambivalent. She appears to be caught in a dilemma, and some of her statements give the impression that not everything that happened in the conflict was honest and transparent. One suspects that on the one hand there was a taboo against speaking about it – it seems they were not permitted to talk about the conflict openly. On the other hand, this may, at bottom, even involve a distinct question of power, i. e., that some strong parties are committed to ensuring that the topic is taboo and that the roles and parts played by individuals did not become obvious. This example makes it clear that one consequence of unresolved conflicts can be that students could subsequently resort to problematic strategies such as non-transparent action.

The tensions identified in this area of conflict reflect power relations, based theoretically in the 'struggle for recognition'. These constellations are to be regarded as the result of social positioning, social status, and corresponding negotiations.

5.3.4 Preliminary Conclusion

The team teaching and thus the question of leading the course as well as its effects on the students and the dynamics of the groups lay at the centre of the field of tension of 'process, communication, and group dynamics'. Because she felt primarily responsible for the Muslim students, the Muslim course leader also answered their inquiries regarding the course's scheduling conflict with another course and their concomitant absence. But she did so privately with the Muslim students and settled on the solution described above without discussing the problem with the entire group and with Hilde. This approach annoyed the Catholic students.

Altogether, based on our findings, it seems necessary to work together with the course instructors to develop a concept of interreligious leadership and to

communicate it in a transparent way. Here the clarification of responsibilities is important. It also seems advisable that at least one course teacher has a permanent position at the Institute of Practical Theology or the Institute of Islamic Theology and Religious Education.

Another central area concerns the perception and processing of conflicts. The conflicts were not openly addressed by either the students or the course teachers. It is clear that, for course instructors, good interpersonal collaboration turns out to be a prerequisite for addressing and dealing with conflicts.

To be able to communicate successfully with each other in an interreligious context, the parties involved need to live with ambiguity. This entails the ability to tolerate 'disruptions' and contradictions and, if necessary, to process them. This includes the knowledge that problems and difficulties can arise. To deal with this, it is important that no blame be assigned, but that a joint attempt is made to analyse the situation, to understand the concerns, and to target possible solutions.

Joint planning with all course teachers in interreligious courses is recommended. For the further development of the course, the feedback should be obtained from the departments to promote exchange and growth. The communication of goals and tasks of the interreligious courses by the department heads is central to this process.

5.4 Area of Conflict 3: Conflict about 'Ideal' Religious Education and Recognition

The third area of conflict in the university setting is comprised by the different views of the participants regarding successful or 'ideal' religious education. Closely associated with this are the social recognition of one's own religion as well as the social and religious status of religious education. Accordingly, this area of conflict also affects the perception of public discourse and its effects, which form the background of the university course.

This field of conflict is directed more inward and examines – more intensively than the previous fields of tension do – what expectations do the religious communities themselves and parents have of religious education. Starting from this, in this field of conflict the two settings of school and university are linked through religious education. The belief of the religion teachers and the course instructors in their self-efficacy takes on central significance. When religion teachers or university teachers see that they are effective in their teaching and communication in the corresponding educational contexts – especially in the school setting with respect to the various representatives of the school com-

munity (headmasters/mistresses, colleagues, pupils, parents, society), their motivation and determination to act professionally increases.

The social filters through which teachers perceive themselves or from which they have to identify with or distinguish themselves play an important role in the development of and the lack of belief in their efficacy. This means that, as in the previous chapters, social, religious, and political power and power asymmetries that contribute to the understanding of conflicts in interreligious dynamics must be taken into account.

5.4.1 Causes and Influential Factors

As with the other areas of tension, we turn first to the structural conditions in this area of conflict.

The course instructors display inequalities regarding religious education that can point to power asymmetries and relations of inequality on the one hand as well to general conditions on the other. These conditions often reflect social conditions – and thus equal or unequal social treatment. Mehtap reports that Islamic religion teachers have to teach at several schools to gain sufficient teaching hours to meet the obligations of their appointment. In addition, the teaching times in the afternoon prevented the Islamic religion teachers from being integrated into school life and the school community:

> Our teachers teach in at least four or five different schools. And they don't feel integrated one hundred percent into this ... school; nor can they be integrated ... because they teach in the afternoons. (IP Mehtap, lines 221–223)

Mehtap sees another difference between Catholic and Islamic religious education in the group of pupils with no religious background who prefer to attend Catholic religious education. Mehtap, who also works as a religion teacher, assumes that the parents' interest in certain values being conveyed plays a role here, which they see Catholic teaching as providing:

> *And in Catholic religious education, as I understood from my colleague, the children with no religious background enrol in that education again because ... secular parents find it important that certain values be transmitted. (Ibid., lines 336–339)*

Another circumstance that Mehtap sees as having a detrimental effect on Islamic religious education is the fact that Islamic religious teachers are exposed to greater pressure due to the concepts and ideas of parents, the religious community, and internal professional aspects. In particular, parents are a non-negligible

influential factor in Islamic religious education. Their idea of religious education is, according to Mehtap, often oriented to religious education in mosques. This fact is decisive in whether they enrol their children in the class. The competition between mosque education and religious education at school becomes clear from Mehtap's descriptions:

> *At least that's how I learned that parents have a certain [understanding] of Islamic religious education. The parents have ... expectations.... An example would be memorising the* suras. *As a teacher, you can say ... I refuse to do that, but you will notice ... that the parents are not satisfied or they either send their children to the mosque as competition ... or ... they say ... 'I'm just taking my child out of the course.' (Ibid., lines 236–238; 255–259)*

Mehtap's observations suggest that discussions and exchange about the concerns, goals, and content of contemporary religious education are not possible here. Mehtap relates that, as a religion teacher, she must '*keep up with this religious socialisation of the parents*'; she also speaks, however, of the fact that parental ideas '*also ... differ from each other*' insofar as '*the same understanding*' (ibid., lines 476–478) of religious education does not always emerge.

These expectations by Muslim parents, who, according to Mehtap, often want religious education in the sense of religious instruction, represent great challenges for religion teachers. In this context, Mehtap draws attention to the fact that this places very high demands on the ability of Islamic religion teachers to differentiate, which also results in high demands on Mehtap as an instructor in training.

> *From the point of view of a teacher, they ... come from different religious backgrounds. ... Each religion teacher among us ... depending on their origin ... has a different understanding of Islam, which means that it must also have some influence on their Islamic lessons. That's the reality. (Ibid., lines 229–234)*

According to Mehtap, flexibility regarding the themes in religious education is also required by the general temporal conditions of the lessons. In their opinion, time is limited, especially because of the changes in locale (classrooms or schools) the teachers need to make, which means that the implementation of a wide range of topics is hardly possible:

> *I have only ... 50 minutes.... Of these 50 minutes I have to count on losing 5 because I have to pick up the children, another 5 minutes because I have to bring them back, and for another 5 I need to ask if they have learned* suras *... here, for two or three minutes, they have the opportunity to learn the right pronunciation. ... Time is running out for me. ... And if I still have to take into account that after the lesson ... I have to teach in another elementary school. (Ibid., lines 427–445)*

Aside from the time limitations placed on her teaching, Mehtap sees Islamic religious education as challenged by the issue of the language of education. As a particular difficulty, Mehtap mentions the problem that some Muslim students do not want to pray in German:

> *I also have students who say, 'Well, we don't do a dua, we don't do prayers in German. Instead of praying in German, I will recite a* sura*!' ... Last week ... I had a student who said: 'I will recite an* Amena Rasulu.*' Imagine that ... he memorised that. The student said, 'I don't want to pray in German.' (Ibid., lines 1508–1512)*

Mehtap explains that children's religious language is tied to their mother tongue and that it is a particular challenge to learn the content of their faith in German.

> *And on top of that, the religious language 'felt' by the children is still their mother tongue ... and I can only slowly prepare them step by step so that they can also express themselves in German. (Ibid., lines 1506–1508)*

Even for the students, Mehtap says, it is difficult to speak in German, since their religious language contains many metaphors that cannot be easily translated:

> *Yes, this metaphorical language.... Last year I also noticed that the Muslim students even had to become familiar with the language, with the religious language, with German, so to speak. They're even having trouble. (Ibid., lines 1544–1547)*

Hilde's perspective complements Mehtap's impressions. She also describes the pressure on Islamic religious education, which she observes impacts Mehtap in a particular way (cf. IP Hilde, lines 927–946). In her opinion, children and young people are strictly educated or socialised by mosques and families, and therefore encounters with other conceptions or religious traditions trigger feelings of being threatened. This has a considerable influence on religious education and also has an effect on the situation of the basic practicum:

> *And maybe it's still the case that those who come to study now have been very socialised by the family or by the mosque communities, and for them this range is sometimes also a danger and a threat, and they lose what belongs to them then, right? (Ibid., lines 2640–2643)*

According to Hilde, the challenges for Islamic religious teachers are above all to learn to deal with the pressure of mosque communities and families. Also, there is great heterogeneity in the Muslim classes, and the German language skills of many pupils are inadequate (cf. ibid., lines 914–927). What is remarkable about Hilde's statement is that she speaks in more detail about Islamic religious education than about Catholic religious education. She merely notes that, from her

point of view, less pressure is exerted by the family and the church (cf. ibid., lines 946–950).

In principle, the example of the Islamic course instructor shows particularly clearly in this section that the school represents a network of relationships or expectations in which conflicts can arise due to the non-fulfilment of such expectations by one or more parties in the school community. From the point of view of the Islamic religion teacher and course instructor, the conflict between religious education, religion teacher, and parents is particularly striking. Religious teachers are involved in this context of expectation and cannot escape it. They cannot freely determine their teaching activities themselves but must gear them to the expectations of the individual actors of the school community. This is especially true with regard to parents. They are obviously the largest source of conflict for the Islamic religion teacher and can threaten various sanctions, including taking their children out of religious education.

5.4.2 Behaviour and Interactions

This section looks at the behaviour and interactions triggered by the initial conditions described above. We will start with the perspective of the course instructors.

In our comments up until now, it was stated that there are numerous constraints to which Islamic religious teachers and Islamic religious education in particular are exposed. Mehtap describes how she feels pressured by the expectations of parents and the religious community:

> *If I go there as an open-minded teacher and say ...: 'I am planning lessons where the children will be stimulated to think, but detached from religious content', then sooner or later I will lose my students. It's about securing my job. If I don't meet the expectations of the parents, there will be consequences. (IP Mehtap, lines 357–361)*

Mehtap relates that she is reluctant to make the lessons more playful. She experiences the negative reactions of parents who want the 'classical' form of education that has existed up to now as a kind of 'control' (cf. ibid., lines 404–410; 422f.) – which also becomes visible when classes are cancelled:

> *So, I can only say this: I have not been able to teach on two Mondays because of these holidays. ... And I was approached by the parents about just what is going on because they have not had any religious education for two weeks. I am 90% sure that the content I pass on to the children ... will be told to them and the parents will listen to it, they say yes, or ... they question it. (Ibid., lines 369–374)*

The interest of parents in the content of religious education that becomes visible here is not to be regarded as negative in principle. But Mehtap experiences it as a limitation. Whether the constraints described actually exist cannot be clarified beyond doubt – but it is important in this context that Mehtap subjectively perceives the reactions to her teaching in this way and that this leads to real approaches and consequences.

The above statements refer to intrareligious conflict dynamics that can be interpreted from the perspective of symbolic power. Thus, in the context of their religious communities, Islamic religion teachers find themselves in dynamics that point to 'internal' power asymmetries. Since Islamic religious education has only become established in schools in recent decades, teachers are challenged to negotiate their social status and recognition – both within and outside their religious context – and to assert themselves in the face of resistance. Honneth's concept of the 'struggle for recognition' represents a possible analytical framework for recording and interpretation of interreligious and intrareligious conflicts.

Mehtap's statements show that Islamic religious education (and in particular how parents view it) is still largely characterised by a material understanding of education that focuses on content and pays little attention to the individual pupil or the learning group. In this respect, Mehtap also sees herself as limited, compared to her Catholic colleague because of the content requirements she has to fulfil as a religion teacher. Here her image of Catholic religion teachers becomes clear, which she uses argumentatively as contrast persons: the Catholics could work much more freely with content and also include current contexts in their lessons. Mehtap thinks that, in principle, these options for action are not available to her because of the prescribed content:

> *And I, as an Islamic religion teacher ... I am bound to the content. I can't talk about anything I want or address anything about politics or what's in the media, I can't do that. (Ibid., lines 345–348)*

It becomes apparent here that Mehtap sees no room for contemporary themes under the general conditions of Islamic religious education. She feels pressured by various circumstances and unable to prioritise others beyond the prescribed content.

When selecting strategies and behaviour for her own religious education, Mehtap often asks herself the question of how to deal with the diversity of understandings of faith without becoming arbitrary. She proposes a standardisation, which she finds in the curriculum:

> *Yes, to avoid the problem that every religion teacher ... teaches whatever he or she wants ..., what he or she feels closer to, so to speak, there is the curriculum.... This has the advantage that all religion teachers, there are over 400 of us throughout Austria, have to adhere to the curriculum. (Ibid., lines 314 – 330)*

Regarding the curriculum, Mehtap strongly emphasises its normative role and points out the great differences between the Islamic and Catholic curricula: '*and if you have looked at our curriculum ... it is very different from Catholic religious education*' (ibid., lines 316 f.).

From the analysis of the interview texts, it becomes clear that Mehtap has concerns about numerous aspects of the curriculum, such as a possible lack of standardisation, too much relativisation, or too much openness. Against this background, she possibly sets limits for herself as to what she can do and say, which in turn makes it difficult for her. Again and again, Mehtap emphasises that the Catholic curriculum grants more latitude to teachers and religious education as a whole compared to the Islamic curriculum. She emphasises that the Catholic curriculum is '*detached from ... any content*'; there are '*only these ten competences left*' which represent '*freedom for the teacher*' (ibid., lines 331–336). The freedom that, from Mehtap's point of view, characterises Catholic religious education tends to be problematic for her, since it also includes wilfulness and arbitrariness. She says that much of the Catholic approach to teaching is left to the individual teacher. At the same time, however, her statements show that she wants more freedom for herself in religious education.

The Catholic course instructor Hilde advocates a contrary opinion in this context. She refuses to adhere to teaching principles that are too strict. Instead, she argues for a more creative, informal approach to content and methods than Mehtap. She bases her stance on a theological statement: she places the notion of the loving gaze at the centre and thinks that one can '*trust that this God looks lovingly at us and that we ourselves look lovingly at ourselves*' (IP Hilde, lines 2650 f.).

Basically, the views of the teachers differ in that Mehtap is more strongly influenced by a didactic concept based on specifications and reproduction and focuses on the question of concrete methods and instructions for action. This entails a controlling approach. Hilde, on the other hand, raises thematic and methodological possibilities and leaves it to the students to choose independently among them and to develop their own teaching style.

Compared to Mehtap, Hilde hardly comments on the challenges of Catholic religious education. She describes her view of the role of religion teachers in general, using the metaphor of a package:

> *I get a package ... from my religious community.... That's the content, that's my package. I take the package, open the package, look inside, peruse it, and ... also with a view to the students: What can they use from the package? – ... I try to work with it. (Ibid., lines 986 – 990)*

Hilde sees Mehtap's role and attitude as follows:

> *I get a package, I take the package and pass that package on to the students. (Ibid., lines 984 f.)*

Hilde refers implicitly here to an instructionalist teaching and learning paradigm in which the teacher controls the learning process. The teacher is active, and the students are passive recipients of the content or subject matter to be learned. In this paradigm, learning is a 'one-way street' from the teacher to the student. Hilde's metaphor of the package illustrates that in such an understanding of learning, the students have no opportunity to participate or be involved in the formation of the content since it is pre-structured according to what the teachers or the religious community wants. According to Hilde, the instructionalist teaching and learning paradigm that she observes in Mehtap not only concerns religious education in school but is also reflected in the focal points that her colleague places in the accompanying university course. Thus, Mehtap sees it as her task to protect the students from hostility and from '*interference by the mosque communities and the parents from these different currents and cultures*' (ibid., lines 935 f.) by providing them with '*a specific procedure*' (ibid., line 937) and giving them clear instructions. The description contains echoes of 'master-apprentice didactics', in which the apprentice follows the instructions of the master but does not develop his own professional qualities.

Power asymmetries and the resulting insecurity felt by Islamic religion teachers are clearly perceived by the course instructors: Hilde describes it as a '*huge shortcoming*' (ibid., line 2067) that the practicum only takes place in Catholic religious education. She would like to see the Islamic religion teachers show more courage in opening up their religion classes with the attitude: '*This is how it is in our case, and this should be examined and then you can develop something from it*' (ibid., line 2169).

The students display different perspectives on Islamic or Catholic religious education and on the connection with the basic practicum. These perspectives focus on the social recognition of their own religion as well as on ideas of religious education. Although the Muslim student Esra criticises the orientation of the basic practicum to Catholic religious education, she does emphasise the possibility of comparison, which she sees as an opportunity for dealing with other perspectives (cf. IP Esra, lines 291 f.). She enumerates the various dimensions,

requirements, and methods of religious education that, in the case of Islamic religious education, for example, relate to content ('meanings') in particular:

> *If someone can do it, good, but the [Catholics] don't have any* suras*, verses, meanings, they don't have to do any of that. But, with us it's like this: a lot of importance is put in the school part on the fact that the students learn this with meaning. If you can convey this interreligiously in a proper way, then why not. ... But I believe that it is then somehow ... not necessary for the others, for the Catholics. (Ibid., lines 343–355)*

These insights into Catholic religious education in the basic practicum mean that Esra perceives great differences between the intrareligious Islamic specialised practicum and Catholic teaching:

> *Now during the specialised practicum, you can see that they are actually completely different worlds. The two religion classes themselves, but they are already different worlds. ... So they do it all playfully, you can't say that – but still differently. And for us, it's more about the information; to get the information across well. That's why it was a bit different. (Ibid., lines 105–108)*

The different approaches to religious education, to faith, possibly also to revelation can be illustrated by the example of Esra. In her interpretation of Islamic religious education, the focus is on the transmission of information, i. e., content. Esra cannot clearly define the approach in Catholic religious education, but she does notice the playful element.

Elmas, another Muslim student, also believes that the two approaches are different. For her, the goal of a successful teacher education programme is to learn how to make children think:

> *But I just noticed, not only through these lessons – we have now had the basic university part. We have didactics, we also have a specialised practicum with Mehtap and because of that I can just say: 'We learn how to make the children think.' And if you can really do that, then it's a success, I think. (IP Elmas, lines 555–559)*

With regard to the perception of Islamic religious education, Elmas reflects on her own religious socialisation and stresses the one-sided emphasis on learning content: '*We only learned, learned, learned content*' (ibid., lines 665 f.).

Elmas expresses concerns about the interfaith components of the basic practicum. For her, this raises the question of why she should learn methods from Catholic religious education at all (cf. ibid., lines 222 f., 410 f.). In this context, she makes an argument similar to the one made by Mehtap. Keeping the parents in mind, she does not think that they can just take over everything from Catholic religious education:

> *There is also pressure from the parents ... because if you don't learn anything from the class on Islam and go home, and the children, let's say, did nothing but paint, that doesn't go down well. (Ibid., lines 487–490)*

Nevertheless, she is fascinated by the calm character of Catholic religious education: '*There's no hurry; it's not hectic, and I've never done that before*' (ibid., lines 590 f.).

The student Emine observes other differences between the different forms of religious education. She pins down the differences between Catholic and Islamic curriculum in the focus on competence and goals:

> *For example, that the students can also think for themselves after the classes, and if there is a problem, they can solve it. That they learned in class. ... But our curriculum doesn't quite have that; it just says, for example, 'Pupils should be able to do this and be able to do this.' (IP Emine, lines 585–595)*

Emine also wants to encourage pupils and teachers to visit the places where religion is lived, i.e., mosques, within the framework of Islamic religious education.[8]

Meltem, another Muslim student, attaches great importance to '*motivation*' (IP Meltem, line 893) for successful religious education. She repeats several times the importance of the motivation she perceives in the feedback of interested children and illustrates this with examples. For example, she heard a child ask: '*Can we do another lesson in religion?*' (ibid., line 942). These are things that motivate Meltem as a religion teacher.

In addition to motivation, being qualified in her own Islamic theology also plays a central role for Meltem. But insights into Christian theology are also of great importance in her basic understanding of herself as a religion teacher: '*If you want to be a religion teacher, then you have to be able to compare religions*' (ibid., line 639).

The Muslim course instructor (Mehtap) and the students have similar views of the university course. All of them focused more on teaching methods and less on didactic questions. The student Emine, for example, is satisfied with the '*information ... on how to design lessons*' (IP Emine, line 129).

This orientation is also very popular with Catholic students. For example, Max '*even perceived the [teaching] event as a tool event*' (IP Max, lines 532 f.). At the centre of the course, there was the will to help the students

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8 See the remarks in area of conflict 'identity and confessionality' in the school setting (chapter **4.4**).

> *reflect on our path as teachers, that we do not get upset about things that have nothing to do with it now because these theological disputes are of relatively little use to us in school. (Ibid., lines 537–540)*

For Max, school is not an appropriate place for theological disputes. His concept of religious education is similar to Mehtap's. For both, methods are particularly important for bringing religion-related content closer to pupils in religious education.

Klaus also wanted to learn from this course how to deal with religious content and topics in the classroom on a '*practical, exemplary level*' (IP Klaus, line 249): '*I have a toolbox like that and I was able to throw a little something into it again*' (ibid., lines 371–374).

There are differences, however, in their views of religious education as to which methods are appropriate or inappropriate for the respective religion. Mehtap's desire to focus on methodological questions in the basic practicum – as the previous examples show – is more oriented towards the Muslim students. This is also advocated and appreciated by them. For this reason, however, some Catholic students criticise Mehtap's communication style: she focused on conveying to the students what had been predetermined and planned but did not enter into a critical self-reflexive dialogue with them, even when she spoke about Catholic beliefs or rituals as a Muslim course teacher (cf. ibid., lines 193–220). This approach, which could well be interpreted as a more instructionalist approach to religious education, led to tensions with Catholic students (see chapter **5.3**).

In turn, in looking back on the course, the Catholic student Klara emphasises – in contrast to her fellow students Max, Klaus, and Sonja –the focal points that correspond to Hilde's idea of ideal religious education. Although she generally welcomes both '*practical relevance*' and '*tools*' (IP Klara, lines 105–110), which she learned in the course and which she can apply in concrete lessons, in her opinion interreligious learning is primarily a feature of high-quality religious education:

> *Well, just the fact that I can take a position or form an opinion for myself personally about interreligious dialogue, about Islam perhaps, in exchange with people from that religion, this of course also enriches my lessons because I can then also convey this approach perhaps, which I have discovered to be right for myself. (Ibid., lines 346–352)*

Klara therefore describes a type of learning that goes '*beyond the actual learning in the course*' (ibid., lines 331f.). Particularly important here is the opportunity to develop one's own view in exchange with people from other religions. Consequently, she represents a concept of religious education that does not convey strict content or truths but rather initiates a personal examination of religion-re-

lated content – even outside the school context. As for Hilde, there is '*a different kind of learning*' (ibid., lines 335 f.) at the centre for her, which takes place in contact and togetherness.

In general, it becomes clear from this section that religion is a central building block of identity. Elements emerge that point to the theoretical construction of a 'fictitious imaginary we' in which the dynamics of stabilisation inwards and demarcation outwards from the religious 'other' are manifested. This entails considerable conflict potential for interreligious educational processes.

5.4.3 Consequences

Points of view that refer to social power asymmetries become visible here as consequences. Theoretically, these refer to the concept of Honneth's 'struggle for recognition' as well as the established-outsider theory described by Scotson and Elias.

The course teacher Mehtap mentions the German language as a challenge in Islamic religious education. She also always has to do extra preliminary work so that communication is possible. This also applies to the students, who are responsible for 'successful' communication during the practicum and have to cope with the problems the majority society has with Muslims. Mehtap cites the headscarf as an example from her own private sphere and describes the challenges and inconveniences that she associates with it as a Muslim woman. She emphasises how often she is asked about the headscarf in the university course and elsewhere.

> *I know what I struggle with as a Muslim woman with a headscarf. I am always confronted with prejudices.... I have to overcome these hurdles ... so that normal communication between me and my interlocutors is at all possible.... I have always dealt with this hurdle in advance. (IP Mehtap, lines 756 – 759)*

Mehtap also observes this problem among Muslim female students. She tells of a student who could not achieve her career aspirations because of her headscarf:

> *Some lack theological knowledge because they are forced by society to do this study now. I know a woman from last year who contacted me three to four years ago and asked me ... if I could help her because she absolutely wants to be an architect. Then I said: 'Is it so difficult for you to find a job now?' And she told me her problems because of the headscarf, and she started to study Islamic religious education with us last year. (Ibid., lines 926 – 931)*

Mehtap also makes it clear that Catholic and Muslim students have different reasons for studying religion (cf. ibid., lines 935 f.).

Hilde feels that Mehtap's approach and desires concerning content are strongly influenced by the social situation of Muslims. She describes '*Mehtap's desire … to pass on a lot of methodical and didactic knowledge*' (IP Hilde, lines 154 f.) and attributes this to Mehtap's concern about an unreflective transfer of Catholic didactic and theological culture to Muslim students. Hilde believes that Mehtap fears that Muslim students will adopt Catholic methods without reflecting on them because they seem to be good or appealing (cf. ibid., lines 185 – 188, 319 – 322). Hilde is disturbed by Mehtap's concepts and wonders if she is too dominant with her own approach. Hilde resolves this dilemma during the interview by articulating her annoyance and holds Muslim religious educators responsible: '*Damn, that's your job, to see for yourself what you have to do. And why are you taking up an image that may not be yours?*' (ibid., lines 2531 f.).

Hilde seems to have fallen into a 'double-bind' situation in her role: she cannot give up her own convictions and at the same time her own convictions are not compatible with the attitude of Mehtap and some Muslim students. So, she reflects on this and looks for solutions. Eventually, the only possibility she sees is that of not becoming a course teacher in the next academic year:

> *I think, Hilde, you have to get out of the project because what you're doing isn't doing any good for the students, it isn't doing any good for the Muslim students. There is something that goes against much of what they experience and think in their socialisation, in their culture, or then just how they experience religion … and think. (Ibid., lines 2733 – 2740)*

The consequences for the students can be summarised as follows: the Muslim students are very much taken up with the question of whether to follow Islamic or Catholic methods. This differentiation is characteristic of their point of view and has far-reaching effects on their assessment of the basic practicum. It becomes clear that there are major differences in the view of the Muslim course teacher and the students on the methodology and didactics of Catholic religious education. As an example, we can cite the example of Esra. Esra thinks that the basic practicum should take place in Islamic religious education since she cannot implement the methods learned:

> *But you still have pictures of Catholic, of Christian, things. You have candles in the seminar and, yes, we don't really have that. And I can't put a candle in the middle of an Islamic religious class and light it; yes, hallelujah, I can't do it. (IP Esra, lines 164 – 171)*

As another consequence for religious education, it becomes clear that Esra, who has a more substantive understanding of religious education, attributes less con-

tent-related learning to Catholic religious education (cf. ibid., lines 346 – 348). In addition, she also recognises great differences from the Christian religion. She illustrates this by the example of the Jesus story:

> Isa, *alihi salam, for example. We have a different view of him, and they have a completely different one. So, they have a very, very different story.... It is – yes, what I think everyone has done now – it's good that you hear it once. But from the Islamic point of view, it doesn't do much good, I think. (Ibid., lines 277 – 288)*

Emine, on the other hand, sees fewer problems in adopting methods from Catholic religious education for Islamic education (cf. IP Emine lines 101, 534 – 539).

Meltem questions the concept of religious education in school; in her view, it is '*boring*' (IP Meltem, line 899). She is convinced that interreligious collaboration at the university and in schools must continue. She considers the fact that '*Muslim students teach Christian, i.e., Catholic, children or vice versa*' (ibid., lines 218 – 220) important and underscores this approach: '*In any case, this must happen*' (ibid., line 220). Meltem would like to see not only a continuation of the project but an expansion of it in which in future Catholic students attend Islamic religious education.

5.4.4 Preliminary Conclusion

Power and power asymmetries are also evident in the third area of conflict, in which the social recognition of one's own religion and religious education as well as the struggle for an 'ideal' religious education are central. The Muslim respondents especially observe the current discussions on this and address them. Dynamics that point to established-outsider constellations also become visible.

The course teachers' statements on Catholic or Islamic religious education reflect the societal context of the Christian/Islamic religion or Islamic/Catholic religious education. Hilde hardly brings up the challenges of her own religion or Catholic religious education – especially in relation to the attitudes of parents. Mehtap, on the other hand, faces many difficulties and challenges. From her point of view, she constantly needs to explain herself, feels pressured by the parents above all and points out her relationship of dependence (the possibility of parents withdrawing their children from the class). She also feels concrete pressure from the religious community. Whether these implicit or explicit requirements are based on an actual background or whether they influence Mehtap's approach and guide her actions in the sense of self-fulfilling prophecies is not clear from the interviews.

Regarding the acceptance of religion and religious education, Hilde describes Mehtap's problems but hardly talks about her own difficulties and challenges, either in Catholic religious education or in the Catholic religious community. Nor does she describe feeling pressured by parents. The reasons why she does not talk about this are not easy to discern. They can stem from the constitution of the majority society as well as from the lesser importance that the majority society places on religion. Last but not least, Hilde's self-image and her belief in her self-efficacy can also play an important part in this question.

The different ideas of what constitutes 'ideal' religious education have a great impact on the area of conflict. Here, the didactics and ideas about content differ widely between the two course teachers. For Mehtap, content and methods are central; for Hilde, it is sensitivity to context and interaction. But the two teachers also have fundamentally different views about what one should or should not do in religious education. Reading between the lines, one can detect a fear repeatedly expressed by Mehtap of an inadmissible mixing of Islamic religious education with Catholic. She finds it important to maintain the boundaries. For Hilde, these boundaries do not exist with respect to didactics. But she feels very unsettled by Mehtap's approaches, and this makes interreligious encounters and team teaching more difficult for her.

Synopsis and Stimuli

6 Perspectives for Interreligious Education

The evaluation of the empirical material revealed different areas of tension in two different settings: the school and the university. Three areas of conflict could be identified and examined in detail in both settings.

The first area of conflict in the school setting, referred to as '(religious) group dynamics', covers the tense implications of asymmetric initial conditions, religious boundaries, and the formation of inter- or intrareligious subgroups. The second area of tension 'themes and didactics', focuses on the question of the themes to be dealt with and their preparation and reflects challenges and difficulties in the area of didactics and methodology. It also looks at what is possible in settings of interreligious teaching and learning. At the heart of the third area of conflict in the school setting is the theme of 'identity and confessionality'. Among other things, the boundaries of interreligious collaboration in educational contexts are negotiated, and the extent to which encounters with the religious other are considered appropriate or counterproductive for the pupils' identity formation is explored.

The university setting revealed three areas of tension as well. The first source of conflict – 'planning, approaches, and expectations' – focuses on the conceptualisation and objectives of the university course and reveals different and sometimes contradictory expectations and desires in an interreligious setting. The second area of conflict concerns the 'process, communication, and group dynamics' and shows explicit tensions between course teachers as well as between course teachers and students, which were ignited by communication dynamics, competences and responsibilities, or by leadership issues. The third area of conflict focuses on the 'conflict about "ideal" religious education and recognition'. Here, discrepancies and divergences between the participants were expressed regarding the questions of what constitutes successful religious education, what tasks a religion teacher has to fulfil, and which expectations of the school community need to be met.

In the overview of the empirical data, themes that contain conflict potential emerge. They overlap to some extent in the settings, taking up aspects of the sources of conflict and bringing them to an abstract, general level. For the following analysis, seven complex themes were selected:

- interaction in interreligious settings
- teaching interreligious processes
- didactic and methodological approaches
- finding and developing themes
- interreligious learning in a confessional context

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- the significance of the religious
- binary spaces – Third Spaces
- conflict and communication.

To make the results accessible to as many people as possible who are involved in interreligious work in education, the following discussion largely dispenses with the concrete contexts of the study, school, and university. The focus is on the question of the central fields of conflict in interreligious educational work.

Interaction in Interreligious Settings

A challenge and a possible area of conflict in interreligious contexts and mixed religious groups is group dynamics.

- The composition of an interreligious learning group has a special impact on the possible conflict potential in that group. Depending on the context, the proportion of members from individual religious communities cannot always be controlled. The composition can lead to unbalanced and asymmetric group relationships. The challenge consists in taking these circumstances into account in the didactic and methodological conceptualisation of education. Didactics should be understood in a holistic and multi-perspectival sense, in which the individual/biographical approaches are taken into account as well as the dynamics of the group, the context or facts and content.
- In addition to the composition, the differentiation in the group is an important factor. The intrareligious in-group formations are particularly relevant. In-group formations can create a dynamic of exclusion. The resultant exclusion of individual group members from participation in the overall process would jeopardise the aim of the educational processes. Our research shows that the instructors of educational processes have a significant influence on the formation of (religious) subgroups. Both the interactions and role models within these subgroups as well as interactions with or from the group members can strengthen or decrease them – this becomes clear, for example, in team teaching. At the same time, we were able to prove that, although the formation of subgroups occurs along religious boundaries, the motivation here is not necessarily religiously based. Factors such as personal competences and characteristics as well as the question of whether (some) participants of the learning group already know each other in advance and thus have well-established communication habits play a decisive role here.
- In situations where asymmetry is inevitable (e. g., due to the general conditions), the balance in group dynamics is served if the participants, especially

those who are in the minority position, compensate for this through flexibility, activity, and a willingness to communicate. But this is associated with an effect typical of heterogeneous groups that can increase the asymmetry and power relations: compared to the participants in the majority position, the participants in the minority group must invest extra effort in this communication dynamic in advance. This can be perceived as a burdensome obligation to contribute to successful communication.

– A particularly delicate communication dynamic becomes visible in connection with the actors in interreligious learning groups. In the case of mixed religious teaching, this can form a 'triangular communication': both the mixed religious participant group and the mixed religious teacher group are intra- and interreligiously oriented. The individual actors or groups do not necessarily act in harmony with each other but – depending on the combination that is formed – sometimes heterogeneously or against each other. This results again and again in a triangular constellation in which two actors communicate without involving the third party or parties.

Teaching Interreligious Processes

As already became clear in the previous section, the mixed religious teaching is very prominent with regard to conflict potential in educational processes. The understanding of teaching in a team or team teaching and how to deal with it are central concerns here. Teaching styles and personality traits have great influence.

– Theological, didactic, methodological, and personal views and approaches play a significant role in the emergence of conflict. These views usually have a pre-reflective character, usually encounter each other directly, create incompatibilities and contradictions and implicitly control the actions of the persons involved. Based on this conflict potential, it becomes clear what significance the (self-)explication or (self-) explanation of subjective concepts should have individually and collectively in the training and further education and professional development of instructors. This also applies to individual understandings of roles and tasks that are not discussed.
– Leadership or team teaching entails a new constellation. It involves more than merely 'adding' two or more teachers. Even previously experienced instructors can encounter a new teaching situation/team teaching situation in which previously clearly defined competences or responsibilities have to be clarified anew.
– Asymmetries can also arise within the teaching team concerning evaluations and assessments (competences, approaches, responsibilities, etc.). Against

this background, dominance/marginalisation constellations can emerge that often correspond to or are strengthened by the societal relations between majority and minority groups. Sometimes, however, the majority and minority groups, or the established and outsider relations in such settings can also move in the opposite direction from societal conditions.

- The mutual evaluation of the persons involved in teaching and/or team teaching also contains conflict potential. This assessment can relate to theological, didactic, or methodological approaches, teaching and learning practices and action strategies as well as personality traits. Comparative dynamics, mimetic and competitive relationships play a central role here. Education and continuing education and development in teaching/team teaching can make a significant contribution as well to improving the individual, social, and contextual conditions for joint teaching of educational processes. This can be done by strengthening personality and role awareness as well as by paying attention to the shared task.
- It also became clear that the teachers in team teaching should be guided individually and in teams by their supervisors or project managers. The subject of such guidance can be both self-reflection and reflection on patterns of communication and action. Moreover, meetings in peer groups and the practice of mutual feedback are of central importance. In addition, sensitivity to the perception of oneself and the other as well as identification and mirror phenomena are central. These can be traced back to the fact that people can simulate and anticipate the emotions and actions of others.

Didactical and Methodological Approaches

The present empirical study clearly shows that, for both the course instructors' team or team teaching and among the participants, the question of the quality of the teaching and learning approaches or – as far as the context of the school is concerned – the quality of religious education is present and contains far-reaching conflict potential. The probability of and the nature of the manifestation of conflicts or their intensity obviously depends on the fields of interreligious education. Thus, it can be assumed that conflict potential in settings of adult education, community work, or in volunteer groups is lower than in compulsory groups in school or – in a qualified sense – university.

- From the analysis of the empirical results, it became clear that, in interreligious learning settings, especially in fields of action at schools, conflict potential can develop around the conception of didactics. Approaches that are more focused on content and have a more instructionalist emphasis are op-

posed to those that focus on participant and context orientation as well as creativity. Both concepts are advocated with normative claims.
- In some contexts, third parties or groups of people with their ideas and demands have a (usually indirect) influence on the instructors and thus also on the teacher's didactic and methodological design of the teaching and learning processes.
- In the debate on didactic approaches, religious authenticity is sometimes also mentioned. From the perspective of instructors or others, there is a normatively constituted connection between the respective religion and the nature of the didactical approaches.
- Similar normative connections are sometimes also noted regarding the choice of methods, which means that in the interreligious conceptualisation of teaching and learning processes, sensitivity to the different approaches to the choice of methods is central.

Finding and Developing Themes

Finding and developing themes in an interreligious context is central to interreligious education. The choice of theme is considered a particularly sensitive aspect.
- The widely applied strategy for finding themes is based on the criterion of so-called neutrality. This generally refers to anthropological or social themes or themes on Islam and Christianity that allow an external perspective, sometimes comparative themes as well. This criterion is often based on a narrow conception of religion or theology. Themes that are more broadly defined are sometimes not recognised and identified as religious or theological.
- In general, it was found that the process of finding themes is difficult and requires the negotiation of topics and content that are suitable for collaboration (team teaching). It also became clear that the instructors of interreligious groups need to be guided in finding themes.
- Furthermore, it became clear that a shared framework – a kind of shared way of life and encounter – is needed in which all actors are involved and within which understanding is possible. A didactical approach is also needed on whose basis themes can be developed together and competencies formulated – for example through the didactic analysis on and reflection on context, group, one's own approaches and content. In addition, the didactic understanding of the methodological and content-related structuring of the themes is also central to interreligious education.

– Another important aspect that emerged from the empirical study is the importance of working on concepts. Here, it is particularly important to keep in mind that the same concepts can have different meanings in the respective religious traditions. This can often lead to misunderstandings because the same or similar concepts are interpreted differently. Therefore, the explication and differentiation of the concepts is essential. Only in this way can interreligious education be made productive. Defining concepts will also make it possible to prevent unnecessary difficulties and misunderstandings by defining concepts.

Interreligious Learning in a Confessional Context

– Another thematic area that is central to interreligious work and at the same time susceptible to conflict unfolds around the examination of the question of what interreligious learning means in a confessional context. This study revealed that teachers faced difficulties with regard to the interreligious division of labour in the areas of 'religiosity/spirituality', 'beliefs' and 'religious experience'. There was a clear position here on both sides that the treatment of the spirituality, beliefs, or creed of one's own religion – in a confessional setting – was reserved exclusively for members of one's own religion/in-group.
– This attitude was reinforced by the general ecclesiastical and confessional conditions. The positive effects of the interreligious encounters were strongly identified by the instructors in their own confessional area, especially in the sense of enriching the Catholic denomination.
– At the same time, the learners were characterised by an openness to interreligious encounters. They showed an interest in people of other faiths and indicated that they can classify the encounter with a religious other who is different from them religiously accordingly.
– New perspectives regarding identity models can be derived from this empirical study. Early interreligious encounters can make a positive contribution to the development of religious identity. Prejudices and the formation of stereotypes are also counteracted by encounters with people of other faiths. In general, it can be stated that interreligious collaboration and encounters within the framework of denominational religious education have both a positive effect on one's own fears and reservations regarding one's religious other and those of other faiths, as well as a preventive effect on the possible resentment of those who adhere to a different religion.

The Significance of the Religious

Interesting perspectives came to light regarding the visibility or invisibility of the religious.

- The interviews made it clear that religious education (in school) is perceived as an important factor for the religious socialisation of children and has thus gained social significance in the eyes of teachers or educators.
- Religious education is seen by all participants as very important and central to the identity development of children.
- Differences arise as to whether the encounter with the religious other is considered constitutive or destabilising for the religious socialisation of the pupils. For example, some parents vehemently opposed interreligious collaboration because they saw the children's development of religious identity as endangered.

Binary Spaces – Third Spaces

Another complex of topics concerns the spaces and framework conditions of interreligious educational processes.

- One's own religious space is thus initially perceived as the familiar space and the space of the other as strange. This can create a binary structure in which alternatives are construed in a dualistic sense as either-or.
- Spaces can also have asymmetrical conditions. The space of the religious other is perceived as a challenge since there is little knowledge about the content and practice of the other religion and neither the points of contact nor the boundaries are known.
- In some situations where the interreligious relationship tends towards binary spaces or dual concepts or develops in the direction of dualistic either-or specifications – be it in private relationships or in public, religious community or educational contexts – opening up to other possibilities is necessary. This can mean opening up other spaces ('Third Spaces')[1]. An example of the development of other ('third') possibilities can be found in rituals that mixed confessional or mixed religious couples or families can perform. To avoid being fixed on the customs and rituals of a single religion, new ('third') forms develop again and again in these relationships and families that cannot be clearly assigned to one religion or the other. In such a space of further possibilities, the school or – as in the case of the establishment of the Islam-

1 See chapter **1**, footnote 32.

ic religious education programme – the university can represent other possibilities.

Conflict and Communication

Conflicts can arise in interreligious collaboration in school contexts among the different groups of people involved (parents, school directors, colleagues).

- The strategy of open communication with all parties involved has proven its worth in preventing possible areas of tension.
- When planning interreligious projects, it must be kept in mind that concrete information is being passed on to those involved in the run-up to implementation.
- This anticipatory communication should involve not only adults but also the pupils so as to create the conditions for them to adequately reflect on interreligious experiences.
- At the same time, we were able to point out the importance of exposing power asymmetries that manifest themselves in interreligious education. To be able to plan lessons on an equal footing, it is important to identify these asymmetries, name them, and counteract them. Since Islamic religious education in Austria is a relatively young academic field, interreligious educational collaboration faces numerous challenges, as this study has demonstrated. Religious education or religion also reflects social dynamics here.

If we look back on this study about conflicts and conflict potential in interreligious educational processes, the intensity and differentiation in this research process becomes clear. The work was carried out strictly within an interreligious research team. The empirical data have been subjected to this dual perspective in numerous discussions. With respect to content, many areas of tension have been demonstrated, patterns of thought and action have been identified, perspectives have been related to each other, and effects have been named. A wide field with an immediate need for action regarding education has opened up.

We consider the need to continue interreligious teaching and research and, in particular, to deepen it to be a central conclusion from our findings. Thus, the next steps will be dedicated to basic research. A review and systematisation of the existing interreligious theories and concepts is urgent in view of the increase and importance of interreligious collaboration in research, teaching and practice at various locations. Given this basis, the conceptualisation and development of interreligious educational processes should be carried out in both theory and practice – especially in the areas of religious education and school culture as well as in teacher training and the further education of educational leaders.

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