

Violence – Religion – Masculinity: German Students' Readiness for Mediation

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ABSTRACT

Religious educators are very often among the first professionals in the schools that are called in situations of escalating violence. Therefore religious educators should be good-enough experts about the role that (different versions of) religion play in promoting resp. preventing prejudice and deviance. Could we base such expertise on empirical evidence? On the basis of 167 students (mean age = 14.5) who between July 2011 and May 2012 participated in a questionnaire study that was administered by researchers associated with the Bielefeld Research Center for Biographical Studies in Contemporary Religion, we are able to present results on the students' experience of and inclination to violence, and their readiness for mediation. Results shed light especially on the dimension that is not well investigated in previous studies on adolescents (at least in the research on adolescents in Germany): the differential role of religiosity. The surprise in the results, however, is the very strong role of the violence legitimizing norms of masculinity. Results are contributions to research on German adolescents – thereby attending to the lost dimensions of religion, but also to the impact of other factors, which are related to aggressiveness resp. the readiness for mediation.

1 Introduction

In a recent extensive study on youth violence including more than 40,000 ninth-graders in Germany, Baier, Pfeiffer, Simonson and Rabold (2010) report that every fifth ninth-grade student in Germany has been victim of physical injury in the past year. 11.7% report to have committed themselves a light physical injury and 2.9% a serious physical injury in the past year.

Also religion and its role in predicting deviance and violence has been assessed and evaluated in this survey. The authors present the result that, for West-German adolescents, affiliation with a Christian denomination along with high self-ratings of being religious goes along with less violence and other forms of delinquency. The authors explain this with and find support in their data for the fact that respondents affiliated with Christianity and scoring high on religiosity experience less violence from their parents, consume less media with violent content, accept the norms of masculinity to a lesser degree, have less delinquent friends, and drink less alcohol. In contrast to autochthonous and allochthonous *Christian* adolescents, the data indicate the opposite for the *Islamic* immigrant adolescents: The higher their self-declared religiosity, the higher the rate of delinquency and readiness for violence. The authors, again, identify social-cultural factors for this result: The more Muslim

adolescents self-declare as being religious, the more they agree to norms of masculinity and consume more media with violent content.¹

Even though the authors should be credited for taking religion into account at all in German research on deviance, the results and the explanations presented by Baier, Pfeiffer and colleagues appear insufficient. It appears justified to raise some questions: How far is 'religion' here more than a group label to distinguish autochthonous – and supposedly Christian – respondents from immigrants who mostly came from Turkey? What exactly is the reason why religion can do both maximize and minimize delinquency? In conclusion: Baier et al.'s study is a prominent example of research on adolescents' readiness for violence in Germany that has included attention to religion, but at the same time, points to a desideratum – a necessity for better and more differentiated instrumentation.

In a previous research report of the same research team (Baier & Pfeiffer, 2007), results of regression analyses are reported in which, besides age and experience of violence in the family, the *violence legitimizing norms of masculinity* (Enzmann, Brettfeld, & Wetzels, 2004) revealed as the strongest predictors for the violent behavior of the adolescents – which outnumbered other predictors for violent behavior. Adolescents with high agreement to the masculinity norms have a four times higher probability to commit criminal acts. From my perspective, this is the most spectacular finding in Baier & Pfeiffer's (2007) study, since it shows that values and attitudes may be most powerful predictors and deserve attention. The role of the violence legitimizing norms of masculinity is considerable also in the most recent report (Baier et al., 2010), but has not been given such prominent role there. It means going only one step further, to suggest that religiosity should be investigated with equal care.

Expanding our horizon to research about religion and delinquency in North America, we find general agreement about the positive, preventive role of religion. In contrast to Germany, there is a longer research tradition about religion and adolescent violence in North America. Even though cultural factors such as community violence, family violence, electronic media and games or substance use stand in the foreground in this research on deviance, attention to the factor religion is well-established (for an overview of older research, see Johnson, De Li, Larson, & McCullough, 2000; selected more recent contributions are: Baier & Wright, 2001; Simons, Simons, & Conger, 2004; Smith, Rizzo, & Empie, 2005; Schreck, Burek, & Clark-Miller, 2007; Petts, 2009; Pickering & Vazsonyi, 2010). The consensus in the research results in the U.S. clearly supports the assumption that religiosity has a negative relation with deviance. It should be noted however that the operationalization of religiosity is limited in most studies to only few variables such as religious affiliation, frequency of church service participation or frequency of prayer. In their most recent research, Pickering and Vazsonyi (2010, p. 97) explicitly talk about this problem, but conclude even after their study that future research should "develop better scalar measures of religiosity."

Looking for a more solid conceptual grounding, we find not only in theology and religious studies, but in the sociology and psychology of religion an account for the ambivalence of religion to generate hostility, violence, terror, and war, on the one hand, and peace, reconciliation and understanding, on the other. This necessitates that a model about the relation of religiosity and violence – as any model about religion – has to be open to positive and negative effects of religiosity. What *version* of religion, what *kind* of religious experiences and beliefs, and what *pattern* of religious-cognitive structures support readiness for violence, respectively for the readiness for mediation? For a model in the psychology of

¹ The authors are cautious enough and do not blame Islam as such for their results, but anyway raise the question whether religious education by rather conservative and poorly integrated Imams is responsible for this problematic development.

religion, we may refer to G. Allport's (1954) distinction between a religion of an ethnocentric order and a religion of a universalistic order.

Our advancement of this conceptual grounding is the translation of these polarities within religion in terms of cognitive schemata. In the construction of the Religious Schema Scale (RSS) (Streib, Hood, & Klein, 2010), which is used in this research, the schema of absolutistic, exclusivist and literal understanding of one's own sacred texts has been operationalized in the subscale *truth of texts and teachings (ttt)*. Two other schemata aim at the identification of and account for the opposites to xenophobia: the schema of tolerance and fairness, and – beyond tolerance – the schema of appreciation for the other as expressed by the concept of xenosophia, of wisdom in the encounter with the alien (Waldenfels, 1990, 1997; Nakamura, 2000). Thus also for the appreciation of the other, a subscale has been constructed in the RSS which is called '*xenosophia/inter-religious dialog (xenos)*.' This scale clearly reflects Allport's (1954) religion of a universalistic order.

The research reported in this text has a focus on adolescents and aims at an assessment of correlates and potential predictors of adolescents' readiness for the commitment of violence resp. their readiness for mediation. Therefore a series of options are considered and operationalized: values and attitudes such as norms of masculinity, the centrality of religion, religious content such as specific images of God, and cognitive structural schemata.

With these aims and assumptions, the study reported in this text takes up the thread of the previous report of the results of the religion-xenophobia relation in the last ISREV meeting 2010 ("From Xenophobia to Xenosophia: New Empirical Evidence"). In the present study, the focus is however more on violence and mediation.

2 Methods

In the following, we present results from a new online-questionnaire project, from new data which have been collected between July 2011 and April 2012 and which have been analyzed in May 2012.

2.1 Sample

The sample consists of 167 adolescents who were 12 to 18 years old when they filled out the online-questionnaire.² Mean age is 14.5 for male and for female participants. With 43.7% male and 56.3% female participants, sex distribution is acceptable. 65.9% reported that both parents are German; 6.7% reported that both parents and 1.2% that one of their parents immigrated from Russia; 5.5% reported that both parents and 3.0% that one of their parents immigrated from Turkey; the rest have an immigration background from other countries. The part of the participants who attend high school is 50.0%; middle school participants are 26.8% and 23.2% attended "main school" (the school preparing for qualified working force jobs, Hauptschule). 50.9% attended 8th grade and 48.5% attended 9th grade. A majority of 75.4% belongs to a Christian denomination, 10.8% identify as Muslims, 4.2% are affiliated with another religion, while 9.0% report to be religiously unaffiliated.

2.2 Instruments

The online-questionnaire contained, besides basic demographic questions for sex, age, potential immigration background and education, many questions about mediation programs in the school and about the evaluation and the attitudes toward mediation programs. Also a

² Out of a total number of more than 400 visits on the online-questionnaire web site (with many visitors not entering any answers), only N=167 usable data remained after cleaning the data following conservative rules for missing replacement and removing cases for which there was no option for missing replacement.

detailed series of questions ask for experiences of violence and violent acts committed in the last year.

The religion section of the questionnaire asks for the *self-identification* of being “religious” and being “spiritual” on 5-point rating scales and has included the *Centrality of Religion Scale* (z-scale) of the Religion Monitor (Bertelsmann, 2009; Huber & Klein, 2009); it asks for the frequency of thinking about religious issues, the strength of belief in God, the frequency of God’s intervention in the world, the frequency of service attendance, frequency of prayer (5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$). Two scales, taken from our previous online-questionnaire of “Youth and Religion” ask for the images of God as Helper (5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$, sample item: “God is a friend in heaven”) and the image of God as judge and redeemer (5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$, sample item: “God is a severe judge who does not allow trespasses”).³ Means, standard deviations and Reliabilities are presented in Table 1.

Another instrument with focus on religion is the *Religious Schema Scale* (Streib, Hood, & Klein, 2010) which has been introduced and conceptually explained above. The RSS consists of three subscales of 5 items each (for original English items, see Streib, Hood, & Klein, 2010, Appendix; for German version, see Streib & Gennerich, 2011); reliabilities of the three subscales in the current sample are: Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$ for the subscale *truth of texts & teachings* (*ttt*), Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$ for *fairness, tolerance & rational choice* (*fr*) and Cronbach's $\alpha = .65$ for *xenosophia & inter-religious dialog* (*xenos*).

The items for *conflict behavior* were taken from the questionnaire that has been used in the research about violence of ninth-graders (Baier, Pfeiffer, et al., 2010). From the 15 items about dealing with conflicts, three scales have been constructed: aggressive-escalating conflict behavior (4 items, $\alpha = .79$, sample item: “I hit out to make myself respected”), active-mediative conflict behavior (6 items, $\alpha = .81$, sample item: “I put myself in the other’s place, in order to understand the other”) and retreating conflict behavior (6 items, $\alpha = .62$, sample item: “I go away to calm down”). Table 1 presents an overview of all scales relevant for this study.

Table 1. Means and Reliabilities for the Scales

| | N | Means | Std. Deviation | Cronbach's Alpha |
|--|-----|-------|----------------|------------------|
| Image of God: Helper | 155 | 3.28 | 1.03 | .87 |
| Image of God: Judge | 157 | 2.42 | .82 | .75 |
| Centrality of Religion (z-Scale, theistic) | 166 | 2.86 | 1.36 | .88 |
| Norms of Masculinity | 167 | 2.09 | .60 | .81 |
| Aggressive-Escalating Conflict Behavior | 167 | 1.84 | .84 | .79 |
| Mediative Conflict Behavior | 167 | 3.24 | .84 | .81 |
| Retreating Conflict Behavior | 167 | 2.19 | .64 | .62 |
| truth of texts and teachings | 167 | 2.76 | .93 | .81 |
| fairness, tolerance and rational choice | 167 | 3.55 | .79 | .76 |
| xenosophia / inter-religious dialog | 167 | 2.87 | .71 | .65 |

³ Translation of sample items are ours. Unless indicated otherwise, the items and scales are available in German language only and are neither based on an English original, nor have they so far been translated into English in full length.

As potential predictors for aggressiveness and readiness for mediation, the questionnaire also contained: a brief scale for personality (BFI-10, Rammstedt, 2007), the 14-item semantic differential of polar questions for values in the tradition of Schwartz (2007) that has been used in the online-questionnaire “Youth & Religion” already, and finally the Violence Legitimizing Norms of Masculinity Scale (Enzmann, Brettfeld, & Wetzels, 2004; 8 items, $\alpha = .81$).

3 Results

3.1 *Frequencies of Victimization and Delinquency*

The students have reported experiences of victimization in all areas which the questionnaire has offered. Table 2 presents the percentages of students in our sample who reported having been victims of violence in school or on their way to school in the past year. The number of students reporting at least one type of offence they experienced in the last year in their school amounts to 54.6% (ignoring multiple offences of the same kind). While physical injury with and without a weapon are relatively low and more reported by boys, the offences against personal belongings such as theft or damaging is considerably higher and mostly reported from the girls. Some girls reported sexual assault. For girls also mobbing plays a major role: 12% of the girls in our sample report “having been made angry to such an extent that they were totally traumatized, cried for help or wanted to leave the class.”

Table 2. Frequencies of Students Reporting Victimization in School or on the Way to School in the Past Year (Percent)

| Victimization* | Female students | Male students | Total |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| Physical Injury with a weapon | 0.6 | 0.6 | 1.2 |
| Physical Injury without a weapon | 1.8 | 3.6 | 5.4 |
| Sexual Insult | 1.2 | - | 1.2 |
| Robbery | 1.2 | 0.6 | 1.8 |
| Damaging my belongings | 8.4 | 6.0 | 14.4 |
| Theft | 9.6 | 4.2 | 13.8 |
| Mobbing in class | 12.0 | 4.8 | 16.8 |
| total | 34.8 | 19.8 | 54.6 |

* Multiple victimizations included

The school as major part of the adolescents’ life world is a place of experiences of victimization. And it is obvious that girls report far more victimization. Reports about the commitment of offences are very low in frequency and do by far not match the frequencies of victimization; probably students hesitate to report criminal acts they have committed in school, which could be due to fear of the participants to report criminal acts and being identified, despite of the assurance by the researchers that anonymity is warranted.

3.2 *Readiness for Mediation*

Looking for the positive, we have asked the students about their readiness for participating in a mediation program. 31.5% of the students (24.3% of the boys, 37.0% of the girls) indicate their readiness for active participation in a mediation program. This indicates that all of the schools in which the questionnaire has been filled out had a mediation program and 97.0% of the students in the sample report that they know that such program exists in their school. Their judgment about the mediation program in their school is rather positive: while 21.2% find the program not helpful, 36.3% find it helpful. But asked for their judgment, if there were any positive changes in the social climate in their school, only 10.1% report that there is a more

peaceful and relaxed atmosphere because of the mediation program. Nevertheless, 21.3% of the student regard the mediation program in their school as important or very important, and estimate that 26.3% of their peers have a positive or very positive attitude toward the mediation program. Active participation as mediators in a mediation process in the past is reported by 10.8% of the students.

Taken together, we see in our data both sides: a considerably strong presence of victimized students, but also a considerably strong readiness for participating in a mediation program and a rather positive expectation about the helpfulness of such mediation program – despite the rather skeptical evaluation of the current mediation program in their school.

3.3 *Effects of Religiosity, Religious Schemata and Norms of Masculinity on Aggressive-escalating and Mediating Conflict Behavior: The Key Role of Masculinity Norms*

Our question in this paper, as indicated above, is how we may explain both the readiness for committing offences and the readiness for engaging in mediation. Do we find indicators in the attitudes of the adolescents? The special focus of this study however is on the role of religiosity and religious cognition in the readiness for violence resp. the readiness for mediation. For this purpose, we have included in our questionnaire a considerable number of items and scales. And to find an answer to our research question about the key predictors for the readiness of the students for aggression and meditation, we report correlations, but more importantly: the results of structure equation modeling.

Table 3. Correlation between Scales for Religiosity and Masculinity, and Attitudes of Conflict Behavior

| | Aggressive-escalating conflict behavior | Mediative conflict Behavior | Retreating conflict behavior |
|---|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Centrality of religion | -.073 | .054 | .107 |
| Image of God as helper | .112 | -.106 | .021 |
| Image of God as judge | .190* | -.125 | .149 |
| truth of texts and teachings (RSS) | .132 | -.064 | .101 |
| fairness, tolerance and rational choice (RSS) | -.192* | .321** | .110 |
| xenosophia / inter-religious dialog (RSS) | -.104 | .106 | .021 |
| Violence legitimizing norms of masculinity (vlmn) | .397** | -.367** | -.078 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Already correlation analysis (Table 3) and SPSS regression analysis (not reported in this paper) indicate that the *norms of masculinity* as non-religious attitudes and also the *fairness, tolerance and rational choice* subscale of the Religious Schema Scale are significant correlates for both aggressive-escalating and mediative conflict behavior. Interesting is the reversed correlative pattern of both *fr* and *vlmn* with both polar variants of conflict behavior. Noteworthy is a moderately significant positive correlation of the *Image of God as Judge* with *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior* ($r = .190, p = .017$), but also the insignificance of all other measures of religiosity or religious cognition in our data; especially low and insignificant correlations result for the *centrality of religion* – which has a prominent role as key measure for religiosity in many studies.

However, for a comparative estimation of the effects of the predictors and the potential identification of most effective predictors, structural equation modeling is the optimal analytic

procedure, because it allows a comparative estimation of the effects of predictor variables, mediator variables and target variables. For reasons of precision and readability, we limit the report on the models in which aggressive-escalating conflict behavior is the target variable; only a final model will include mediative conflict behavior as target. Structure equation modeling has been done using AMOS 20 software.

In a first model, the effects of one selected key measure for religiosity on aggressive-escalating conflict behavior have been estimated: the Scale for the centrality of religion (z-scale) has been included in the model as only predictors (see Figure 1). The most important fit statistics estimates ($\chi^2 = 225.288$, $DF = 182$, $p = .016$, $CFI = .981$, $RMSEA = .019$, $90\% CI RMSEA = .009 - .027$) indicate⁴ that this model has a good fit to the data. The most important result is the value for Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC), the value in bold italics in the upper left corner of the target variable. With $SMC = .01$, it is estimated that this predictor of *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior* explain one percent of its variance. In other words, the error variance of *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior* is approximately 99 percent of the variance. This indicates – with the power of a well-fitting model – that this predictor (*centrality of religion*) has almost no effect of explaining any variance in *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior*. It can be concluded from this result that centrality of religiosity alone has almost no direct effect on aggressive conflict behavior. Centrality needs to be combined with content (Huber, 2003).

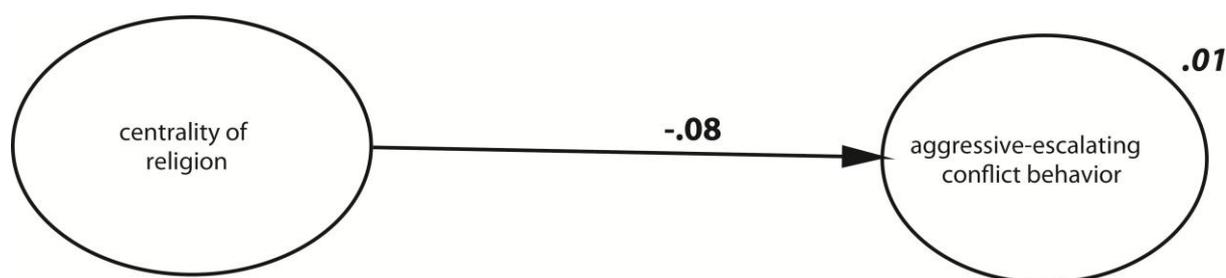


Figure 1. Effects of Centrality of Religion on Aggressive-escalating Conflict Behavior in Total Sample ($n = 167$). Model I.

In a second model, we test a similar pattern with solely religious predictors: this time with the subscales of the Religious Schema Scale (Figure 2). Fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 250.806$, $DF = 146$, $p = .000$, $CFI = .880$, $RMSEA = .066$, $90\% CI RMSEA = .052 - .079$) indicate that this model still has a reasonable fit to the data. Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) are with .11 higher than in the Model One, but still low. From this it can be concluded that also the three religious schemata of the RSS have rather limited power of explaining variance in *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior*. Regression weights of .22 for *tnt*, -.22 for *ftt* and -.10 for *xenos* are moderate; they indicate a pattern: stronger agreement with the truth of the text and

⁴ As fit statistics for the models we report a selection of the most important indicators: Chi square (χ^2), degrees of freedom (DF), probability level (p), comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and RMSEA with 90% confidence intervals (90% CI RMSEA). According to the cutoff criteria suggested by Hu and Bentler (1998, 1999), a ratio between χ^2 and DF of about 3:1 or below is regarded as indicating an acceptable fit (which is in this case is $\chi^2/DF = 1.352$). The CFI should be higher than .90 for indicating a reasonable fit and higher than .95 to indicate good fit. For the RMSEA, a value of less than .08 is suggested by Browne and Cudeck (1992) for reasonable fit.

teaching of one's own religion positively relates to *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior*, while both *fairness* and *xenosophia* have negative, preventing relation with aggression.

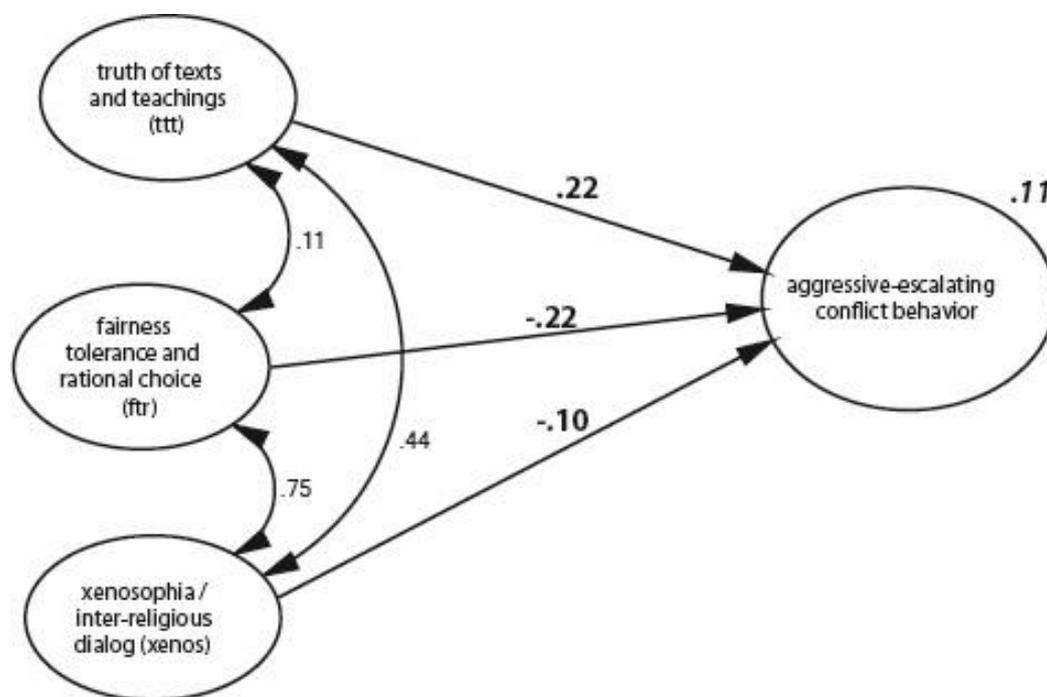


Figure 2. Effects of the Religious Schema Scale on Aggressive-escalating Conflict Behavior in Total Sample ($n = 167$). Model II.

The third model includes a new, non-religious scale, namely the *violence legitimizing norms of masculinity (vlnm)*. This changes the picture considerably (see Figure 3). The fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 660.327$, $DF = 434$, $p = .000$, $CFI = .930$, $RMSEA = .028$, $90\% CI RMSEA = .024 - .032$) indicate that this model has a good fit to the data. With a value for Squared Multiple Correlations of $SMC = .34$ it is estimated that all predictors of *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior* explain a relatively high percentage (34.4%) of its variance. It is safe to assume that such increase of explained variance is due to the inclusion of the *vlnm* scale. This is also demonstrated by the regression weights: with $.59$, *vlnm* has an effect on *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior*, while *centrality of religion* has a much lower (and negative) effect. Interesting is also the effect of *centrality of religion* on *vlnm*: with a regression weight of $.16$ and a SMC of $.03$, this effect is estimated as being very low. We may conclude from this that the centrality of religion as basic measure of religiosity does not have much predictive power and influence on the norms of masculinity. In this model instead the masculinity norms are the most powerful predictors for aggressive behavior.

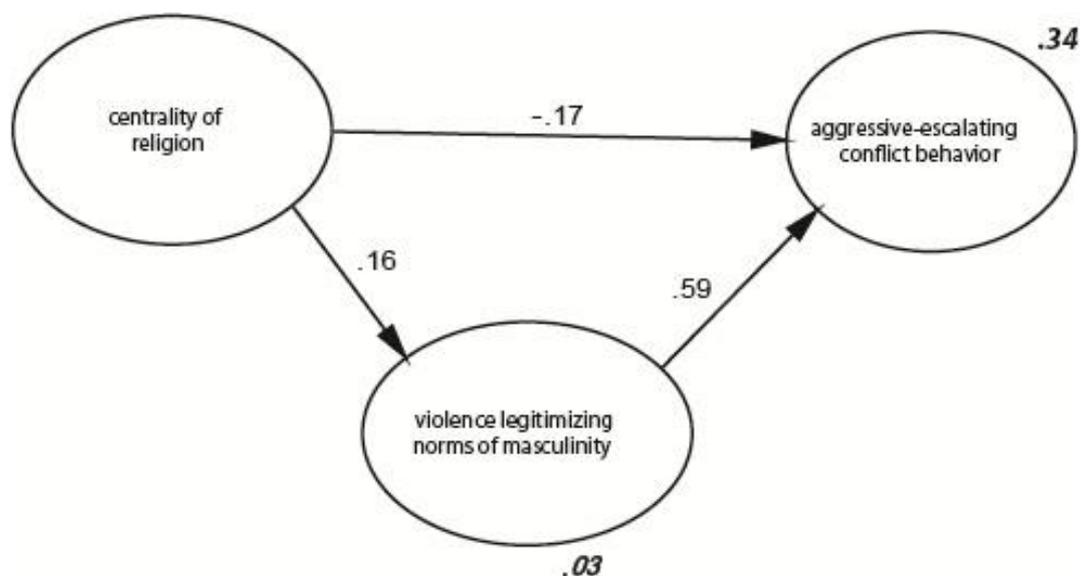


Figure 3. Effects of Centrality of Religion on Aggressive-escalating Conflict Behavior Mediated by Norms of Masculinity in Total Sample ($n = 167$). Model III.

Finally, we present a fourth model in which we – again as in Model II – include the three subscales of the Religious Schema Scale (*ttr*, *ftr* and *xenos*) as predictors and *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior* as target variable, but *vlnm* as mediating variable (Figure 4).

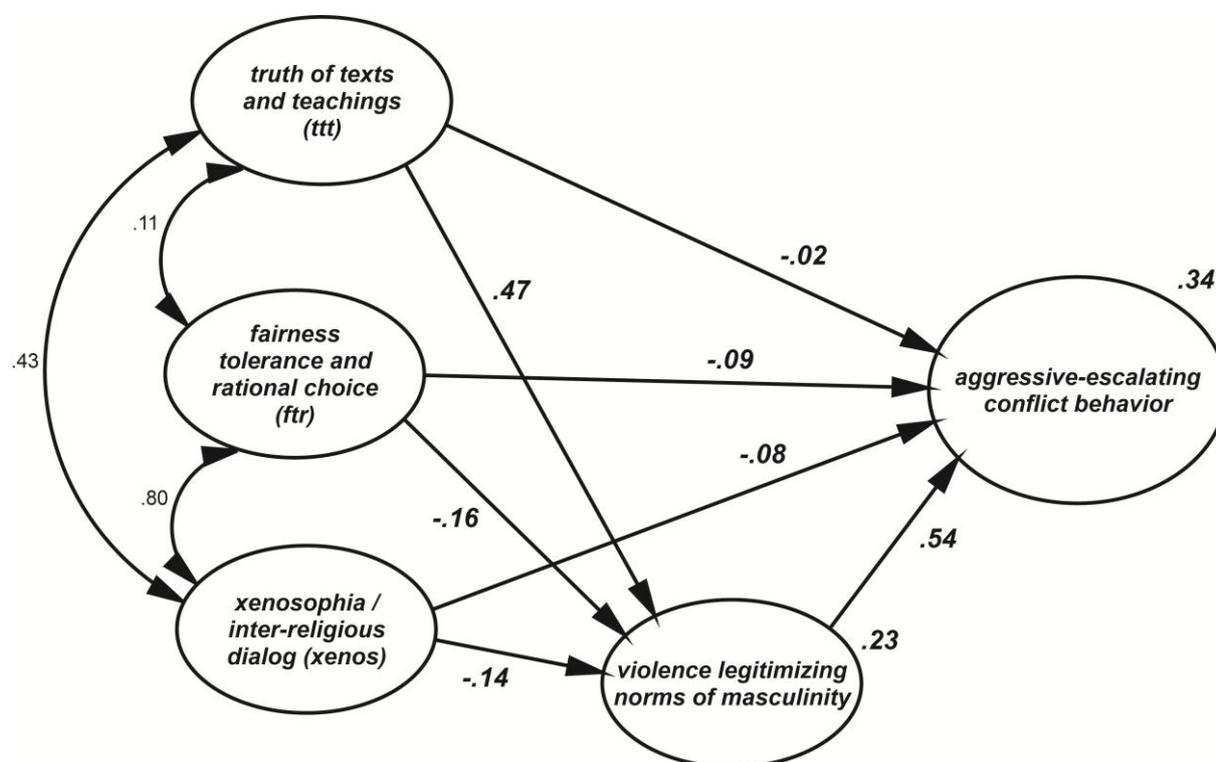


Figure 4. Effects of Religious Schemata on Aggressive-escalating Conflict Behavior Mediated by Norms of Masculinity for Total Sample ($n = 167$). Model IV.

The model fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 373.058$, $DF = 219$, $p = .000$, $CFI = .865$, $RMSEA = .065$, $90\% CI RMSEA = .054 - .078$) indicate a reasonable fit, except that the CFI is somewhat

below the expectations.⁵ Again with .34 the value for squared multiple correlations is considerable indicating that 34 percent of the variance for *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior* is explained by the other variables in the model.

One of the differences to Model III is that in Model IV the *vlnm* variable has a SMC value of considerable size (.23) – indicating that *xenos*, but more so *ptr*, and most of all *ttt* contribute to the explained variance of *vlnm*. Thus in Model IV, the relations between direct and indirect effects are remarkable: While *xenos* has rather weak direct and indirect effects, the direct effect of *ptr* on *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior* is with -.09 much lower than the indirect effect (-.16) that is mediated through *vlnm*. This difference in effect size however is very high for *ttt*: while there is almost zero direct effect on *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior*, the indirect effect through *vlnm* is .47.

Finally, we present Model V – which is the same as Model IV with the only exception that *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior* has been exchanged with *mediative conflict behavior*. The model fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 431.261$, $DF = 264$, $p = .000$, $CFI = .864$, $RMSEA = .062$, $90\% CI RMSEA = .051 - .072$) are similar to Model IV.

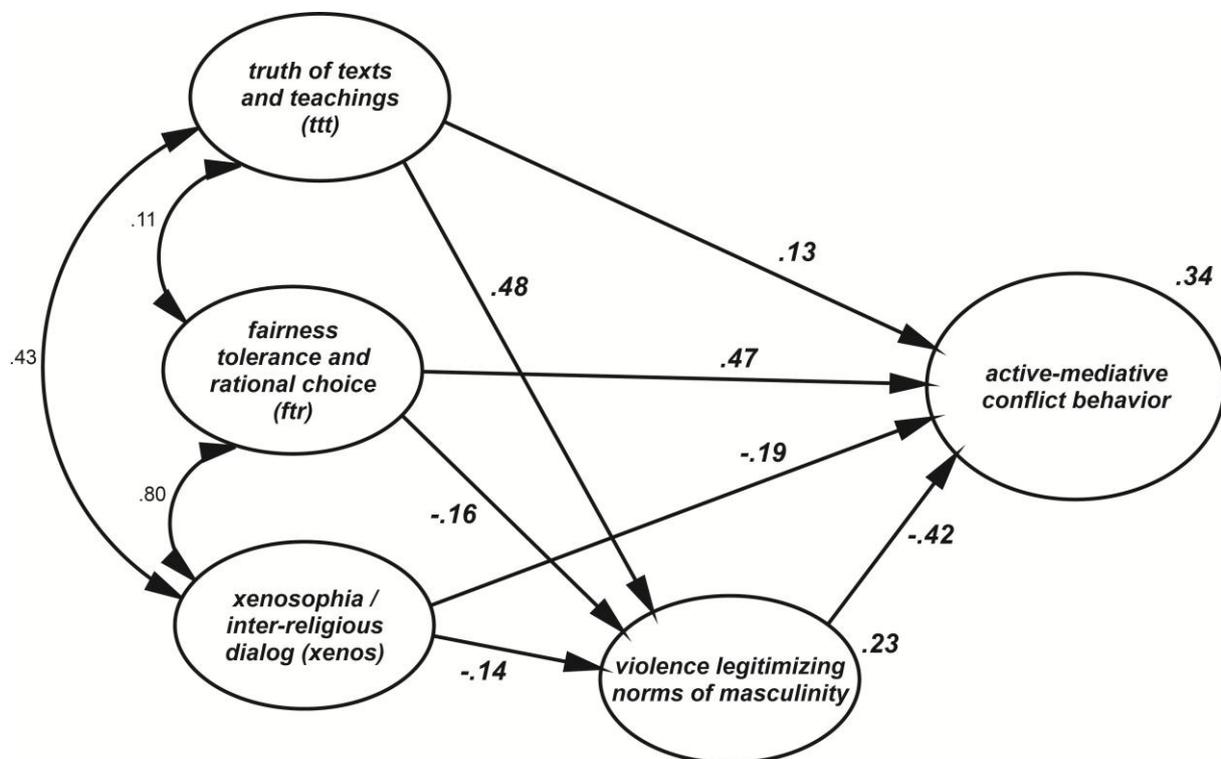


Figure 5. Effects of Religious Schemata on Mediative Conflict Behavior Mediated by Norms of Masculinity for Total Sample ($n = 167$). Model V.

Relations between the RSS subscales and *vlnm* remain the same. The remarkable difference is that *fairness, tolerance and rational choice* now has a much stronger direct effect (regression weight = .47) on the target variable *active-mediative conflict behavior* and, related to this, *vlnm* has a lower regression weight of only -.42 on this target variable. This demonstrates the effect of *ptr* on mediative behavior and reflects the correlative pattern which is presented in Table 3.

⁵ The model is respecified by controlling the covariance between error terms for items RSS 12 and RSS15.

4 Discussion

The results of our analyses presented above can be compared to Baier et al. (2010) results in regard to the frequency of offences and criminal acts in school, even though our results are somewhat lower than the statistics reported by Baier et al.; this may be due to regional differences or to the relatively small sample of our study. Nevertheless, the situation is still alarming in regard to the experiences of violence in our schools. Especially mobbing appears to have become a widespread and frequent phenomenon; our data document this in regard to victimizations and reported commitments of such offensive behavior. But our study has the advantage of having engaged also in the assessment of the positive side, of developments that work for the minimization of violence: we have asked for readiness for mediation – and found considerable agreement, we also found positive attitudes toward and readiness for active engagement in mediation programs in schools.

We are also glad being able to present results on the potential factors for the positive, mediative developments – among them, in the first place, a differential portrait of the role of religiosity, religious cognition and religious schemata. Our results generally indicate that religiosity can have a considerable effect on conflict behavior and the readiness for mediation, if and only if religion has an influence on attitudes such as the norms of masculinity which legitimize violence. In itself, religion appears to have little or no effect on conflict behavior. This almost zero effect is indicated for religiosity as measured with the centrality of religion scale, but also for the image of God as judge scale.

Thus our results only indirectly confirm (and, taken religion as sole factor, they contradict), for German adolescents, the tendency of research in the U.S.A. which demonstrates, as Baier & Wright's (2001) meta-analysis and also most recent research (Pickering & Vazsonyi, 2010) show, a significant impact of religiosity on the prevention of deviant behavior. The reason for our different results can be ascribed to a cultural difference: for German adolescents, in contrast to people on the American continent, religion may have more ambivalence – generating violence *and* peace. Another explanation could be seen in the relatively weak operationalization of religiosity in previous studies. Calling our results into question – third explanation – would call for further research and testing.

In regard to the extant German research on deviance and youth violence (Baier et al., 2010), our results confirm the heavy impact of the violence legitimizing norms of masculinity, an effect which has been powerfully demonstrated in Baier and colleagues' (2007) analyses. The analysis in this study adds to the findings in Baier and colleagues' study considerable precision, because we have tested norms of masculinity together with religiosity using structural equation modeling. But, at the same time, our results contradict the simple reduction of deviance and aggressive behavior on the factor religiosity as in Baier's and colleagues' (2010) report. Religion, simply measured by self-identification of being religious or religious affiliation (Baier et al., 2010), but also as measured simply by the items of the centrality of religion scale (our study), does not predict aggressive behavior or deviance, when modeled, as we did, in a model that is sensitive to the difference of effect power. Instead, the violence legitimizing norms of masculinity have emerged as the most powerful predictor for *aggressive-escalating conflict behavior*. This leads to the conclusion that only if these norms of masculinity can be changed, there is a chance to change aggressive behavior. In regard to religion and religious cognition, this means that we primarily rely on the minimizing effect of religious cognition on the norms of masculinity in order to minimize aggressive behavior and nurture mediative behavior.

In this regard, our study differentially demonstrates the effects of specific religious cognition. Here especially the differential assessment of the Religious Schema Scale reveals that religion is not a coherent phenomenon, but may consist of various facets and may be associated with a variety of religious cognitions that may have even contradicting effects. This leads to two conclusions: First, corroborating our findings in the previous “Youth & Religion” study which has been reported at ISREV 2010, the RSS subscale *fairness, tolerance and rational choice* has discriminating power in regard to the types of conflict behavior. The *ft* subscale has some direct and discriminating effect on aggressive-escalating conflict behavior also in the present study. Second, of the three subscales of the RSS it is especially *truth of texts and teachings* and *fairness, tolerance and rational choice*, which have strong effects (regression weights) on, and thus explain the largest part of the 24% variance of, the *violence legitimizing norms of masculinity*. Here it is especially *truth of texts and teachings* with its very high regression weight, which may have the most promise for change.

Limitations of our study consist in the small overall sample size. Because of our small sample, the percentage of allochthonous, Muslim respondents is too small as to allow for valid comparison with autochthonous adolescents.

The conclusions for religious education from this study finally are these: Religious cognitions and religious schemata can and need to be transformed in such a way as to promote nonviolence and readiness for mediation and xenosophia. *Fairness, tolerance and rational choice* and *xenosophia / inter-religious dialog*, as they are constructed in the Religious Schema Scale for the purpose of empirical investigation, could serve also as aims of education. But, concluding from its relatively strong effects in our study, special attention has to be given to the schema *truth of texts and teachings*: The fundamental truth of one’s religion has to be taught in such a way as to contradict aggressive conflict behavior. In a nutshell: The conclusion of this study for religious education has some parallel to a feminist approach: There is need in religious education for ethical reflection which deconstructs, with explicit reference to religious truth claims, cultural established norms of masculinity.

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