Religion, Education and Contemporary Concerns, Vol. 3

RELIGION, EDUCATION, AND PEACE



Proceedings of an Online International Conference Held in March 2021

Edited by Jon Armajani and Wilbert van Saane

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FOREWORD

Rev. Paul Haidostian, Ph.D.
President, Haigazian University

The meeting of religion, education, and peace is easily conceivable in academic conferences, but remains a challenge in the life of all human societies. Still, a conference can be a catalyst for good development and change. Education is an instrument of hope, no matter what.

This publication, the third in the "Religion, Education and Contemporary Concerns" series of Haigazian University Press, followed an international conference and much research. It is part of the ongoing fruitful relationship of many years with the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning at Saint John's University in Minnesota, and I thank Drs. John Merkle and Jon Armajani from the Saint John's University and the College of Saint Benedict for a smooth way together, and Dr. Wilbert van Saane who has worked so hard on behalf of Haigazian University for almost two years of preparation.

I acknowledge the support of HIWARUNA of the European Union, and the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue, and all the panelists for their efforts. I would also like to recognize the involvement of a number of school directors and teachers from a wide range of schools in Lebanon, some of whom have participated in the research project our Social and Behavioral Sciences Department has been conducting in preparation for this conference, with the active participation of faculty members Drs. Nizar El-Mehtar, Hanine Hout and Ms. Shaghig Hudaverdian.

Between religion and peace, it is *education* that creates the passage. Education, where it gives the generations the tools to balance their life and their future, would widen horizons and make inroads into deeper understandings, but education, if seen as an ideological weapon of self-perpetuation and other

cancellation, could create closed systems and hinder the flow of any dignified life.

Religion is inner vitality, with social expression. **Peace** is inner harmony, with outer fruits. But **Education**, somewhere in between, is what may translate religious experience into systems of thinking, acting and especially relating.

PREFACE

John C. Merkle, Ph.D.
Director, Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning at Saint John's University

As with other events on which the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning at Saint John's University has collaborated with Haigazian University, the conference that gave rise to this book surpassed my high expectations. On behalf of everyone associated with the Jay Phillips Center, I am pleased to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Paul Haidostian for his inspired leadership and support of the conference; to Dr. Wilbert van Saane and Dr. Jon Armajani for organizing it with remarkable breadth of vision and notable skill; to each of the presenters and panelists for their learned and enlightening contributions; and to everyone at Haigazian University who helped with various details related to the conference, especially Anita Moutchoyan for so ably and graciously guiding us through it.

The past several years, like all years but perhaps more than most, have been full of tragedies, evils, and untold suffering throughout the world. But they have also been years, again like all years but perhaps more than most, in which there have been countless acts of courage, kindness, and healing. It has been difficult for many of us, probably most of us, to focus as much on these acts of courage, kindness and healing as we have focused on the tragedies, evils, and suffering. The presenters and panelists at our conference, and now as contributors to this book, have done us a great service. While acknowledging the all-too-frequent misuse of religion, the many problems in the field of education, and the widespread threats to and assaults on peace, they have also shown us how religion can be and often is a force for good, how genuine education ennobles people and mends the social fabric of communities, and how both religion and education can be and often are peacebuilding activities.

What the contributors to our conference and to this book have shared with us helps to prevent my dismay from overwhelming my hope. It inspires me to do everything in my power to combat the lethal misuse of religion and, instead, to foster ethically-charged and healthy, life-enhancing religion; to help as much as I can to provide inclusive, equitable, and fruitful educational opportunities for as many people as possible; and to remain ever steadfast in the pursuit of peace. I am in their debt, and I trust many others feel this indebtedness as well — or that they will feel this indebtedness upon reading this book.

INTRODUCTION

Jon Armajani & Wilbert van Saane

This volume contains the proceedings of the international online conference entitled, *Religion, Education, and Peace*, which was organized by Haigazian University in Beirut, Lebanon, the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning at Saint John's University, and was co-sponsored by the Peace Studies Department at the College of Saint Benedict / Saint John's University (CSB/SJU) in Minnesota, USA. The conference took place on March 4 and 5, 2021. The aim of this conference was to shed light on the intersections of religion, education, and peacebuilding in various contexts. While much academic reflection has been devoted to religious education and to peace-education, not many have studied the interrelatedness of religion, education, and peace. The online conference was attended by an audience of scholars, educators, religious clergy, and others, mostly but not exclusively from the United States and Lebanon. It is our hope that this volume will reach a wider audience, perhaps even beyond the countries of the organizers, and that it will be a meaningful contribution to the global discussion on religious education and peacebuilding.

The chapters in this volume analyze religion, education, and peace in various parts of the world in a variety of specific settings including secondary schools, colleges, universities, governmental agencies, and nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations. While the chapters examine policies and actions related to religion, education, and peace in contemporary times, an awareness of the historical roots of various conflicts, and possible solutions to them, are implicit or explicit in the chapters. Several chapters address education in countries that have experienced sectarian conflict in their recent history, such as Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Myanmar, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Others discuss education in other interreligious settings, such as the United States. In light of the chapters' authors' locations and expertise, religiously the chapters focus on Buddhism, Christianity, and/or Islam.

Tensions between different religious groups and violent attacks on houses of prayer and religious communities throughout the world demonstrate the importance of religion and peace in educational settings. Education on issues such as religious diversity, images of the religious other, and mutual appreciation of religious believers continues to be relevant and urgent. The unique and relevant contribution of these chapters are their interfaith and interdisciplinary approaches to issues of peace and religion in educational settings and local communities. The scholars' visions of educational institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities; interfaith learning in formal and informal educational settings; the role of teachers and facilitators in addressing issues of religion and peace; continuing interreligious learning in community education; and the role of governments in education, religion and peace are compelling and hopeful. The chapters' ideas, analyses, and proposals related to religion, education, and peace in various institutions and the implementation of those principles, together with the descriptions of the roles of peacebuilding facilitators, and elucidations of lifelong dialogue and learning in local interreligious communities, provide a foundation for implementing peacemaking in many contexts.

The logic of the order of the chapters in this volume is the following: first invited authors from outside Haigazian University (HU), CSB/SJU, and the Jay Phillips Center; then, authors representing CSB/SJU and the Jay Phillips Center; then, authors representing HU; then, the interview with Nayla Tabbara, which is distinctive because it is the only interview in this volume.

Thia M. Sagherian-Dickey's chapter entitled, "Peacebuilding and Shared Education in Post-Accord Northern Ireland" makes use of intergroup contact theory to consider peacebuilding and education in Northern Ireland, where many

schools have either a predominantly Protestant or a predominantly Catholic student body. More specifically, the chapter focuses on shared education, a program in which separate schools offer common subjects to their students, thereby facilitating meaningful interaction between students from different religious and socio-economic backgrounds on a regular basis. It discusses the benefits, limitations, and future directions of shared education.

Muhidin Mulalić's chapter, "Fostering the Education for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina" reviews the literature on education for peace to assess how it has contributed to interethnic dialogue, reconciliation, the culture of peace, and the potential for building a united, multicultural society. The chapter also examines to what extent education for peace could enhance unity in diversity, social harmony, social solidarity, intercultural sensitivity, liberal, and democratic values, citizenship, and respect for a secular state. The chapter's critical and thematic discussion indicates how education for peace could contribute to peace, reconciliation, and a dialogic culture.

Henry Siang Kung's "Religion, Education, and Peace in Myanmar: A Christian Perspective" was written and presented during the first weeks of the military coup d'état in Myanmar, and the protests against it, in February and March 2021. Kung argues that, if religion is properly understood, religious education can be a force for liberation and peace. If, however, religion is misunderstood, religious education may lead to intolerant and oppressive behavior. Kung describes the pluralistic political landscape of Myanmar, and the oppressive role of extremist, anti-Islamic organizations such as the Nine-Six-Nine Movement. The views of such organizations are based on a version of Buddhism that elevates giving (dana) to a level higher than morality, thereby opening the way for people to "purchase" karma and thus earn salvation (nirvana) regardless of their behavior. Religions, including Christianity, which are prophetic instead of traditionalist or modernizing can contribute to justice and peace. They can do this by promoting education for conscientization, in which learners are empowered and the oppressor-oppressed

relationship is overcome. In this way, people are educated in such a way as to become peacemakers.

Mary Dana Hinton's "Religion in the U.S. Public Square: A Source of Peace or Protest" reflects on the role of religion in the public sphere in the United States, emphasizing its political dimensions, especially its capacity to foster peace and justice. Historically, it is argued, the American public sphere has excluded certain disenfranchised groups. It was only in the twentieth century that the Civil Rights Movement, which emerged from the black church, and, later, the Black Lives Matter protests reoriented the public sphere toward equity and peace. In order for religion in the public sphere to be an instrument of justice and peace, agreement is required on the importance of truth-telling and neighborliness, understood as viewing each other as equals and recognizing each other's loss and pain. When such agreement is missing, religion may take on a destructive role in the public sphere, as was seen in the Capitol riots of January 2021. In the cases of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Lives Matter protests, however, religion fostered truth-telling, equality, justice, and peace in the public sphere.

Jon Armajani's "Circles of Understanding and Restorative Justice: Muslims, Christians, and Beyond" describes circles of understanding (also known as circles of peace), and their effects on relationships between Somalis (most of whom are Muslims), on the one hand, and non-Somalis and non-Muslims, who live in central Minnesota, USA, on the other. The chapter discusses the (1) biases, which are directed against Somalis; (2) reasons for those biases; (3) migration to central Minnesota; (4) reasons Somalis came to that region; (5) the purpose and content of circles of understanding; (6) participants' responses to those circles; and (7) relationships between circles of understanding, restorative justice, and truth-and-reconciliation commissions. The chapter concludes by discussing principles, which Muslims and Christians share, in that many circle participants in central Minnesota are members of those religions.

Nizar El-Mehtar's, Layan Al Khatib's, Natalie Takadjian's, and Dzaghig Koul Sahagian's "Views of Religion

and Peacebuilding among Lebanese Educators, Students, and Parents" reports on a research project that was conducted at six faith-based Islamic and Christian private schools in Lebanon during the academic year 2020-2021. From an educational perspective, the project aimed at exploring and mapping students', educators', and parents' views regarding the interplay between religion, conflict, and peacebuilding. The chapter presents a concise and focused review of a relevant body of literature to justify the purpose and significance of the research project. In relation to the adopted rationale and associated research questions, the chapter explains the qualitative multi-case design customized for the research project while elaborating on the adopted ethical and trustworthy procedures used for sampling, focus-group data-collection, and thematic data analysis. The chapter concludes with a tabulated summary of preliminary findings and an outline of future directions and milestones of the research project.

Ziad Fahed's and Wilbert van Saane's "Faith and Peace Building in Private Faith-Based Schools: Theological Perspectives from Lebanon" considers religious education and peacebuilding in faith-based secondary schools in Lebanon. The data were collected in seven interviews with administrators and educators who represented different religious groups in Lebanon: Sunni, Shia, Druze, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. The data were analyzed with the help of three theories. First, they were viewed with the help of a well-known typology for the theology of religions, which distinguishes between exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist views. It was observed that educators at faith-based schools in Lebanon generally hold inclusivist or pluralist views of other religions. Second, the peacebuilding praxis of the schools was analyzed in light of a theory for religious education based on revelation through events, persons, and propositions, which led to the conclusion that the schools make peacebuilding efforts on the level of propositions and discourse and personal encounters, but less so on the level of common celebration of religious events, holidays, and festivals. Third, through the lens of specific

pedagogies for religious education, it was demonstrated that the Lebanese faith-based schools pay much attention to curriculum development, but that social engagement and advocacy work are problematic in the Lebanese context, and that the schools are only beginning to work on peacebuilding in more creative ways, in collaboration with artists, musicians, storytellers, and the like.

This volume's final chapter, "The Interfaith Programs at the Adyan Foundation: An Interview with Dr Nayla Tabbara, President of the Adyan Foundation," focuses on that foundation's work, which is the leading Lebanese non-governmental organization for promoting cultural and religious diversity. It was established in 2006 and has developed a number of programs that foster interreligious and intercultural sensitivity and encounter. In this chapter, Tabbara discusses (1) highlights from her journey in interfaith work; (2) challenges related to religion, education, and peacebuilding in Lebanon; (3) Lebanese curricula for religious education and the work that Adyan has done in this field; (4) the work that Adyan has done to defuse tensions and build peace at the grassroots level; (5) her reflections on religion and peacebuilding in the older generations of Lebanese, who have lived through the Civil War, in comparison to the younger generations, who have not had this experience; and (6) her hopes and dreams related to religion, education, and peacebuilding.

This volume's editors extend their deepest gratitude to Paul Haidostian and John Merkle; the conference's moderators, who were Arda Ekmekji, Anita Moutchoyan, and Berge Traboulsi; and Shant Estepan, Moufid Alam, and other colleagues at HU's IT Services.

We also thank the administrators, students, educators, and parents of the schools that participated in the research study: Saint Mary's Orthodox College, Al Kawthar Secondary School, Yeghishe Manoukian College, IRFAN Secondary School Sawfar, Collège des Soeurs Antonines Roumieh, and Secondary Evangelical School in Zahle. Their enthusiasm and commitment ensured that data could be collected, even during a time of political, social, and economic upheaval in Lebanon as well as

Covid-19 related lockdowns. We express our gratitude to the members of CSB/SJU's Peace Studies Department, which includes Jeffrey Anderson, Sheila Hellermann, Kelly Kraemer, and Ronald Pagnucco, for their support.

PEACEBUILDING AND SHARED EDUCATION IN POST-ACCORD NORTHERN IRELAND

Thia M. Sagherian-Dickey

Abstract
This chapter makes use of intergroup contact theory to consider peacebuilding and education in Northern Ireland, where many schools have a predominantly Protestant or predominantly Catholic student body. More specifically, this chapter focuses on shared education, a program in which separate schools offer common subjects to their students, thereby facilitating meaningful interaction between students from different religious and socio-economic backgrounds on a regular basis. It discusses the benefits, limitations, and future directions of shared education.

Introduction

For young people growing up in post-accord Northern Ireland (i.e., post-Good Friday Agreement, 1998), much of their everyday life is still segregated. One consequence of conflict and intergroup tensions is the segregation of social groups, which is a way for people to hunker down in the protection of their own groups and away from the threat of the other. This segregation, however, sustains tensions even after official peace settlements, and can lead to an exacerbation and recurrence of tensions and violence (McKeown et al., 2016). The process of peacebuilding is one that involves political, social, educational, and cultural aspects, which aim for an absence of violence and the establishment of social justice, meaningful trust, and equality (Bar-Tal, 2000; Galtung, 1969; Kelman, 2004). This chapter considers the theory of intergroup contact as an instrument of peacebuilding in education. Specifically, it considers the framework of shared education in

Northern Ireland as a case study for a promising approach to peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts.

Intergroup contact theory

One area in peacebuilding literature that has garnered much attention over the years is intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), developed in part to address racial prejudice in the United States. It premises that, under specific conditions, integration of members of social groups would reduce prejudice and improve relations between these groups. Allport proposed four ideal conditions that needed to be in place for effective contact: intergroup cooperation, common goals, equal status of groups, and institutional support. The theory has generated much research in the years since its definition in the 1950s, and most of what is reported here comes from the Northern Irish context. The research has demonstrated that intergroup contact does indeed have the potential to reduce prejudiced attitudes that people have towards others, but it has also highlighted the difficulties in achieving this. One challenge is that contact opportunities do not always occur in these so-called optimal conditions (Dixon, et al., 2010; McKeown & Dixon, 2017). Thus, any change in attitude is unlikely to generalize beyond the specific context where it has been measured. Although these are important for informing us of what kinds of constructs are related to contact with others (e.g., trust, empathy, positive attitudes), they cannot inform us of any causal changes. A host of intervention-based research over the years has demonstrated the potential of causal changes as a result of contact. The seminal meta-analysis of intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) examined the results of 515 studies across 713 samples. Taking into account the variation in sample sizes, Pettigrew and Tropp concluded that intergroup contact was significantly, inversely, and moderately related to prejudice ($r = -.21$, $k = 515$, $N = 250{,}089$)1. Importantly, this effect was found to be similar in adolescent samples ($r = -.21$, $k = 114$, $N = 45{,}602$), among children ($r = -.24$, $k = 82$, $N = 10{,}207$), and among university students ($r = -.23$, $k = 262$, $N = 46{,}553$). Further, structured interaction programs where the researchers

aimed to meet Allport's optimal conditions showed a stronger effect (average r = −.29) for prejudice reduction than other types of contact studies (average r = −.20).

How does integration of different social groups reduce prejudice? On the one hand, the key conditions for contact that Allport (1954) posited play a role in changing attitudes and behavioral intentions. On the other hand, the type of contact plays a key role in this effect. Having frequent contact opportunities with members of the other group is related to positive attitudes towards the group. The quality of the contact also makes a difference. Qualitatively positive encounters are more likely to lead to positive attitudes toward the outgroup than negative ones, and empirical work has found negative experiences of interaction to have a strong adverse effect on attitudes and behavior intentions (McKeown & Dixon, 2017). The ultimate form of good quality contact that also meets several of Allport's conditions is the cross-group friendship (Hewstone & Swart, 2011).

Positive interactions between different social groups also facilitate key factors that are crucial for peacebuilding. A meta-analysis of 60 samples examining contact and intergroup trust (Sagherian-Dickey, 2019) indicates that this relationship is positive and moderate in magnitude. Further, contact facilitates trust more strongly in contexts of violent conflict than non-violent ones, be it direct contact experiences or cross-group friendships. Thus, contact with outgroup members may indeed be important for peacebuilding, and it achieves this partly by building trust across social groups. Trust toward members of other groups is important because it allows for meaningful relationships to be established. Research in Northern Ireland has found that contact with people from the other community group (Catholic or Protestant) facilitates trusting relationships such that they influence "approach" behavioral tendencies (Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2009). Trusting the outgroup in this context predicts a greater likelihood that people will want to find out more about the other community group, and be willing to spend time with them or talk to them. Contact and trust also reduce negative tendencies, such as wanting nothing to do with

them (Tam et al., 2009). It is not only direct contact experiences that have this effect. Sometimes even having a friend or neighbor who is a friend with a person of the other community group is enough to facilitate trust and positive behavioral tendencies (Tausch et al., 2011). This extended contact in and of itself can be a powerful tool. It operates on everyday experiential levels, and can encourage people to move into a "mixed" neighborhood comprised of residents from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds (Stevenson & Sagherian-Dickey, 2016).

Creating the opportunities for these kinds of positive interactions is an important part of peacebuilding. In a survey study of Catholic and Protestant respondents, positive contact was a strong predictor of positive attitudes towards the other group, above and beyond their experiences of intergroup violence in post-conflict Northern Ireland (Tropp et al., 2017). Positive interactions have an effect on more than just attitudes. In this same study, Catholic and Protestant respondents also reported greater trust towards the other community as a result of positive contact, again above and beyond the effect of subjective experiences of intergroup violence. In direct relation to peacebuilding, positive intergroup contact strongly predicted reconciliation efforts. This effect was somewhat stronger among Protestants than Catholics. Protestants were optimistic about Catholic members' intentions as a result of positive contact, more so than how Catholics felt about the other group's intentions (Tropp et al., 2017). These community differences are in line with other research suggesting that the positive effects of contact are weaker for disadvantaged groups compared with those in a more dominant position socially (see Binder et al., 2009; Dixon et al., 2012; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

The effects of contact have implications for policy change as well. Positive experiences of contact predict people's willingness to support policies that will benefit the other group (Dixon et al., 2010). In Northern Ireland, specifically, contact has predicted people's support for an earlier removal of the Peace Walls2, for integrated education, and for mixed (i.e., Catholic and Protestant) residential housing.

Northern Ireland context

Northern Ireland endured several decades of civil war, known as the Troubles (1969–1998), a period of intense and violent warfare marked by Catholic and Protestant sectarian division (McBride, 2017). Several causes for the conflict have been proposed and analyzed by scholars over the years, when in reality the roots of the conflict lie in a complex mesh of national and religious identities, historical injustices, and social inequalities (Cairns & Darby, 1998). Although the division in Northern Ireland is along religious lines of Catholic and Protestant communities, it is important to note that theological ideologies are among the least important of the root causes of conflict. Thus, the term "religious identity" encompasses ethnic, social, and political identity as well. The peace process was officially marked with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998 (McKittrick & McVea, 2012); yet, the impact of intractable conflict was evident in children and youth several years after the peace accord (Muldoon et al., 2007; Muldoon & Trew, 2000). The consequences of the Troubles are still felt today, as much of Northern Ireland remains segregated in various sectors (e.g., housing and education). Intermittent bouts of violence in the years since the Agreement reflect the challenges that peace and reconciliation efforts face when addressing issues of land and religious sectarianism, as well as sociopsychological dynamics of identity and collective memory (Bar-Tal, 2007). These challenges of division and prejudice are maintained and reproduced through a sense of victimhood and memory of the conflict (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006). Although shared community is generally promoted and supported, often, even within shared spaces, people gather in single identity pockets in residential areas (where social identity changes from street to street) or in social networks (Huck et al., 2019; McKeown et al., 2020). At the same time, peacebuilding strategies have made significant efforts in post-Accord Northern Ireland, evident in young people's changes in attitudes and support for peace-related measures (Lloyd, 2020; McKeown & Taylor, 2017). However, these changes should be contextualized

in the ongoing issues that are as real as in 1998 (Devine & Robinson, 2018).

Education in Northern Ireland

The education sector remains largely segregated in Northern Ireland. Most schools (94%) have either a majority-Catholic or majority-Protestant student body. Based on laws dating back to the Education Act in 1930 (Donnelly, 2012), Catholic schools are funded and managed by the Catholic Church, while schools with majority-Protestant student bodies are state-funded but unofficially recognized as "Protestant." Over the years, there has been some debate about the effectiveness and need for separate schools, which in Northern Ireland are characterized by their religious identity. Proponents of faith schools posit that they provide both a moral and religious framework for young people to learn decision-making and social interaction (Hughes, 2011) and that political and social injustice is often the underlying factor of continued tensions (Grace, 2012). Supporters of separate schools maintain that the framework increases a youth's confidence in their identity, while also helping to teach respect for those with other values and belief systems. The evidence of the social impact in segregated societies, coupled with some research on separate schools suggests that there is a need to rethink the educational format for better peacebuilding initiatives in contexts of historical conflict. A report by the Runnymede Foundation (Berkeley, 2008) found that the effective dialogue in UK-based faith schools are single-vision focused more than shared-vision focused, the result of which limits young people's ability to engage in discussions about shared identity and differences between groups. This is a significant concern in Northern Ireland, where segregation pervades the social and spatial areas of life (Bettencourt et al., 2019; Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006). At the same time, and although the majority of schools in Northern Ireland are segregated, research on separate schools and the effects of social cohesion remains scarce. This is in part due to a reluctance on the part of the schools over the years to allow researchers through their doors. Yet, the information available to

us is indicative of a pervading of intergroup division among Catholic and Protestant youth and the consequences that follow it. Ethnographic work on one Protestant school and one Catholic school in the 1980s (Murray, 1985) suggested that separate schools contribute to community division and the reaffirming of stereotypes in Northern Ireland. More recently, in interviews with friendship groups in a predominantly Protestant school, located in a single-identity Protestant catchment area, demonstrates the impact of a lack of contact with the other community (Hughes, 2011). During these interviews, the Protestant students expressed fear and suspicion of Catholic youth, a reluctance to meet them, and a fear of cross-group friendship due to negative labels attached to Catholic community members and to anyone who interacted with them. With reference to political ideology and intergroup relations, the other group (Catholics) was considered "bad", and the ingroup members (that is, Protestants) were viewed as the "peacemakers." Students had little to no opportunities for contact with the other community, and this was perpetuated by the school through its strong interconnectedness with the local single identity Protestant community. Social identity was played down in the school and intergroup relations were relegated to a 'hidden' informal education, meaning that there was no obvious place for learning about or discussing Catholic-Protestant differences or relations. Teachers were reluctant to deal with issues of sectarianism or division when they did arise. Lastly, any possibility for the discussion of intergroup relations was only in the abstract (Hughes, 2011). The findings from this study are indicative of trends across Northern Ireland over the years, particularly when considered in the context of intergroup tensions in the years since the Good Friday Agreement (Bettencourt et al., 2019; Bryan & Gillespie, 2005; Muldoon & Trew, 2000).

The general education policy in Northern Ireland, which has attempted to address the issue of division, has tended to toward two basic models. One is social, recognizing the fact of division and separation, whereas the other is cultural, focusing on the politicized ethos of the hidden curriculum, such as history

subjects and cultural traditions (Hughes, 2011). Thus, addressing the division has taken two main routes in the past several decades: through integrated education and short-term cross-community programs (e.g., residentials). Concerned with the negative impact of division on society and the next generation, a group of parents received permission to open integrated schools starting in the early 1980s, during the Troubles. Integrated schools currently make up only 7% of schools in Northern Ireland. The benefits are that they provide opportunities for learning and relationship-building across community boundaries in a natural setting. Anecdotal evidence suggests that attending an integrated school affords opportunities for friendship-building across a wider community background, but any discussion about intergroup relations would be experientially outside school from cross-group friendships, if they exist. This was emphasized in a conversation that I had with a teacher from a Catholic background who attended, during her youth, an integrated secondary school. She shared that she learned about Protestants only "factually" at school. This included learning about Protestant religious practices, and Roman Catholicism (H. McErlane Walsh, personal communication, November 28, 2020).

Another approach to dealing with segregation and division during the Troubles was the organization of short-term cross-community programs (McKeown & Cairns, 2012). These were often similar to school outings for the day or weekend, where youths from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds would engage in a cross-community program outside of their schools and neighborhoods. Broadly, the aim was relationship-building across communities, increasing knowledge about the other community, and thus challenging negative stereotypes. Although these programs have shown promising results over the years, the benefits gained within the program are often only temporary (Trew, 1989), with programs often avoiding discussions about religious, national, and social-identity differences (Robinson & Brown, 1991). The relationships formed during the programs do not carry over into long-term friendships, often due to spatial segregation of Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods. The efforts

made by those pushing for integrated education and cross-community programs are nevertheless commendable, particularly as they were founded and first implemented during challenging times in the history of Northern Ireland. Yet, their benefits are still far from where social and inter-community relations should be 10 or even 15 years in post-Accord Northern Ireland.

Shared education

Recognizing the challenges and weaknesses observed within integrated education and cross-community programs, Professor Tony Gallagher developed and launched the Shared Education Program in 2007 as an alternative approach to the existing peace and reconciliation programs. According to the Northern Ireland Department of Education, the purpose of Shared Education is "to (a) deliver educational benefits to children and young persons; (b) promote the efficient and effective use of resources; (c) promote equality of opportunity; (d) promote good relations; and (e) promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion" (Northern Ireland Department of Education, n.d.). In this context, what is meant by shared is that students from different religious beliefs are educated together, including those who are from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, by providing two or more schools and their services to a group of pupils, the education of these children is made possible.

The approach of Shared Education is premised on the basis of existing separate schools voluntarily sharing certain subjects or classes and their respective campuses. From its onset, the program's benefits were recognized as having wide-reaching potential. It did not require considerable structural change because separate schools could continue to operate independently, while also sharing classes and subjects voluntarily with other schools. This was favored by parents who may have preferred to retain their children in their respective 'faith' schools. Hughes and Loader (2015) have noted that this feature is particularly important for highly segregated societies and those emerging from violent conflict. Conflict contexts are characterized by distrust and perceived threat from other groups

(Alon & Bar-Tal, 2016; Sagherian-Dickey, 2019), and these exacerbating factors do not evaporate magically in the aftermath of peace treaties.

The Shared Education Program has shown practical benefits as well. It is a curriculum-focused program with shared subjects such as Information Technology, languages, and the arts. Thus, the program offers the benefit of schools maximizing their strengths and resources as they share in the strengths and resources of the partnered school. More importantly, it allows for meaningful contact between the pupils (and their teachers) that is regular and consistent throughout the schoolyear. In addition, as an intervention for reconciliation and peacebuilding, the cross-community framework has shown positive outcomes in attitude and behavioral changes. The program has a peacebuilding potential that transcends the immediate effects on the pupils within a limited timeframe. Research on the effects, including a five-year longitudinal study, indicates that the Shared Education Program has a peacebuilding potential for students, teachers, parents, and the wider community (Hughes et al., 2020; Hughes & Loader, 2015). Much of this research is either still ongoing or the findings are just emerging (R. Loader, personal communication, February 25, 2021).

The Program fits the model of intergroup contact theory. Moreover, the program's framework is set up such that it potentially meets the optimal conditions proposed by Allport (1954) for effective contact in promoting peace and reconciliation. Schools share subjects and campuses, thus operating on an equal status basis. The shared aspect of the program requires cooperation between schools and teachers, as well as students within their classrooms. Common goals are clearly demarcated, mainly as academic achievements (General Certificate of Secondary Education or GCSE and A-level subjects, as well as some vocational training). The program has institutional support, first by the school leadership, thus directly creating an ethos of support for the students. But it also has institutional support at the systemic level nationally and internationally. The Shared Education Act in Northern Ireland

was implemented in 2016, with the aim of legislative provision relevant to shared education, by clearly defining Shared Education and establishing a duty on the Department of Education's part to facilitate and promote the program (Northern Ireland Department of Education, n.d.). A fund of 10.5 million GBP was externally invested (Hughes & Loader, 2015), with continued support in subsequent years ("Sharing Education," 2018). The program accommodated the Northern Ireland policy for good relations, which had set a target that each pupil in the country would have some form of contact experience by the year 2015 (OFMDFM, 2005; Together: Building a United Community, n.d.). This strategy remains a key goal within the Northern Ireland policy plans. One of the new goals is to increase the number of shared campuses across the country, as education facilities that are specially built with the intention of being shared by two (Catholic and Protestant) schools (Together: Building a United Community Strategy, 2019). The most recent report to the Northern Ireland Assembly (the country's devolved legislature) enumerates an agenda of cooperation between the Department of Education and key stakeholders to see the goals achieved in light of the delays brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic (Department of Education, 2022).

The program has already shown positive effects on intergroup relations among young people relevant to peacebuilding. In a matched quasi-experiment comparing pupils within the shared program to those from the same schools, who had not taken part, those who were part of the shared program showed a greater reduction in bias towards their own group (Hughes et al., 2012). These pupils also reported more outgroup trust, less intergroup anxiety, and more positive feelings when in the company of outgroup members. Finally, they also reported more positive actions tendencies such as a desire to interact with other outgroup members, while manifesting supportive behavior toward outgroup members (Hughes & Loader, 2015). The shared program has also demonstrated positive effects that extend beyond the walls of the school, such as increased friendships

across social groups which were sustained outside school (Duffy & Gallagher, 2015).

Future directions and conclusion

Education in Northern Ireland needs to continue to move toward a shared approach, which is one that proactively creates spaces and opportunities for the long-term development of friendships across community boundaries. The Shared Education Program has demonstrated longitudinal and ongoing evidence of promising effects that benefit the pupils and wider community ("Centre for Shared Education," n.d.).

It would be easy to assume that the Shared Education Program is the elixir to solving intergroup relations in Northern Ireland. However, as Hughes & Loader (2015) have noted, it is crucial to critically evaluate the program and to do so on a regular basis. Three observations on the basis of the case study are presented here.

First, in the post-accord period and within contexts of peacebuilding, it is not uncommon for the subject of intergroup differences or tensions between Catholics and Protestants to be viewed as a taboo subject. Unfortunately, this can cause pupils to be hesitant about discussing these tensions for fear of being labeled "sectarian" or prejudiced. There is some evidence that pupils have reported no differences whatsoever between Catholic and Protestant communities (Hughes & Loader, 2015). The literature on intergroup contact theory has demonstrated the positive and powerful effects of meaningful interaction with other groups, but it also risks being a route to complacency for disadvantaged minority group members (Dixon et al., 2005; Dixon et al., 2012; McKeown & Dixon, 2017). Evidence from some contact research suggests that although positive interaction may lead to reduced prejudice between social groups with a history of tensions, this effect is often stronger for the dominant group, particularly when there is no challenge to the status quo. Moreover, under the positive change in attitudes between social groups, the disadvantaged group may be less likely to engage in social action that would challenge structural inequalities (Dixon

et al., 2012). There is a risk of this happening in Northern Ireland as well, where the Catholic community has traditionally been disadvantaged socially and economically. Although the socioeconomic gap has been narrowed since the end of the Troubles, census data of unemployment rates indicate that the Catholic community remains in a slightly more disadvantaged position (Office for National Statistics, 2011, 2016). Shared Education in Northern Ireland must be self-evaluative in its efforts to build better intergroup relations, especially when there are crucial aspects of society where structural change has not yet been achieved.

Second, Northern Ireland is becoming a more diverse society. Thus, programs such as shared education need to adjust for this and move away from a binary approach. Peacebuilding initiatives for integration in diverse communities have already recognized the need for interventions that take into account micro-ecological behavior and every social network (McKeown et al., 2020; Wölfer et al., 2015). At the same time, this should not become an excuse that ignores the Catholic-Protestant community relations and need for healing. In focus group research with Catholic and Protestant participants in Northern Ireland, I have been told anecdotally that people do not care as much anymore about the binary Catholic-Protestant approach in community relations because there are other ethnic or religious identities now as well (Sagherian-Dickey et al., 2015). This statement may ring true, but it also harkens of a discursive strategy which intends to avoid engaging with intergroup differences.

Third, to my knowledge, the issue of religious education per se has remained somewhat absent from the discussion of the shared education framework. Religious education remains a required subject in the Northern Ireland education system up to age 14. It may be that this subject remains one covered within each school, rather than in the shared program. However, in some persons' efforts to create spaces for discussion and learning in order to challenge stereotypes and build trust, they avoid discussing Catholic-Protestant relations. This avoidance risks

creating a situation where tensions may continue to fester. It is an issue that affects pupils and teachers (Nelson, 2010), and should be addressed in the near future, although finding a solution may seem remote at best.

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FOSTERING THE EDUCATION FOR PEACE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Muhidin Mulalić

Abstract
Education for peace has been one of the effective tools for peacebuilding, reconciliation, security, cooperation, and state-building in post-conflict states. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the International Education for Peace Institute has administered education for peace in collaboration with international organizations, state institutions, institutes, high schools, and universities. Education for peace has aimed to teach, train, and empower students and teachers to contribute to multicultural understanding and the shaping of a peaceful and united Bosnian society. For this purpose, different activities seminars, training, and lectures were organized. A significant number of high schools, students, teachers, administrators, and parents participated in the education for peace activities. This chapter aims to review the literature on education for peace to assess how it has contributed toward interethnic dialogue, reconciliation, the culture of peace, and the potential for building a united, multicultural society. Furthermore, this chapter examines to what extent education for peace could enhance unity in diversity, social harmony, social solidarity, intercultural sensitivity, liberal, and democratic values, citizenship, and respect for a secular state. A critical and thematic discussion will indicate how education for peace could contribute to peace, reconciliation, and a dialogic culture.

Introduction

In the last few decades, intra-state conflicts and new wars, caused by ethnic and religious divisions, have increased worldwide. Because of intra-state conflicts, which at the same time involved

neighboring countries, ethnicity has become the dominant socio-political, constitutional, and educational determinant in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kaldor, 2012, 32-69). Thus, in order to counter post-war implications, especially ethno-nationalism, and alternatively to foster peace and reconciliation, international and local non-governmental organizations began to foster education for peace (Emkić, 2018, 37-45). After the war, peace activists, educators, and young participants, regardless of their ethnic background, were seen as agents for peace and transformation. They strongly advocated peacebuilding and reconciliation among ethnic and religious groups. These civic activities were aimed at rebuilding interethnic trust and understanding in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Belloni, 2001, 163-180; Kappler and Richmond, 263-265).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, education for peace mostly focuses on interethnic peace, coexistence, and security, whereby the ultimate objective is the prevention of the renewal of interethnic tensions, violence, and conflict, which is a minimum objective of education for peace. Formulated as mere conflict prevention, education for peace does not critically assess conflict, genocide, crimes against humanity, social inequalities, and discrimination. The primary goal is to establish peace and improve interethnic relations and mutual trust, while in a later stages education for peace may include and treat the above-mentioned socio-political issues and challenges. The maximum goal of education for peace is to examine "fears, [while] gaining knowledge about security systems, understanding violence, developing intercultural understanding, promoting social justice with peace, encouraging respect for living, and ending violence" (Harris, 2002, 15). Formulated as such, education for peace must be comprehensive, involving all actors who are willing to contribute to peace and reconciliation. Only in this way, it is possible to improve peace, stability, and security. Education for peace should continuously raise citizens' awareness to develop a culture of peace and dialogue. A culture of peace and dialogue would improve knowledge about Bosnian diversity. Political leaders, religious leaders, civil society activists, minority

representatives, intellectuals, educators, journalists, youth, and all marginalized groups and their representatives must work together to counter the culture of conflict and violence. Following this maximalist approach to education for peace, this chapter argues that education for peace must foster peace, reconciliation and a dialogic culture to prevent a possibility of the revival of violence and insecurity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Contextualizing education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In the early 1990s, when nationalism and intolerance prevailed, the former Yugoslavian Federation was engulfed in interethnic tensions and wars. The issue of the national and ethnic equality within the federation caused major upheavals in former Yugoslavia. These ethnic and nationalist aspirations were exported to Bosnia and Herzegovina, whereby the Serb and Croat political elites began to pose the question of a national identity, which was strongly rooted in ethnicity, religion, and language. Thus, the rise of nationalism and nationalistic hegemonic projects, coupled with economic and political crises, triggered the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia. Serbia and Croatia had historical animosities toward Bosnia and Herzegovina, whereby Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats started to be used as proxies for the achievement of Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia, respectively. It is important to mention that in the first multiparty elections in all former Yugoslavian republics ethno-nationalist political parties won the elections, primarily because of their articulation of idealistic national hegemonic projects. Following the examples of Slovenia and Croatia, in March 1992 Bosnia-Herzegovina called for a public referendum on independence. After that, the three-and-a-half-year war emerged, in which Serbia and Croatia contributed to the destruction of this multicultural and multiethnic country. After years of war and failed peace negotiations, in October 1995 a cease-fire was declared, and the conflicting sides signed the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA). According to the DPA, the country is divided into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republika Sprska, and the small district of Brčko, which is

governed in a decentralized way. Each entity has its own elected government, judicial system, police, and institutions. Some critics argued that the DPA ended the war and ensured the continuity of the peace, while legalizing the ethnic divisions that led to further socio-cultural polarization (Almond, 1994; Bose, 2002; Burg and Shoup, 1999; Chandler, 2000; Glenny, 1999; Lampe, 2000; and Ramet, 1996). This short overview clearly indicates complex historical and socio-cultural features, which continue to challenge the multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious foundations of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Against this backdrop, this chapter argues that education for peace must foster peace, reconciliation, and a dialogic culture to counter hegemonic nationalism and ethno-nationalism in order to prevent the recurrence of a new war, mass killings, expulsions, forced migrations, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

Although in pre-war Bosnia-Herzegovina there was an ethnic blending, the war and ethnic cleansing resulted in the creation of purely ethnic regions, which led to physical separation and inhibited relations between different ethnic groups (Mulalić, 2019, 57-81). Consequently, the educational system fragmented along ethnic lines. Serbs and Croats established their own educational systems that have been harmonized with the education systems in Serbia and Croatia, respectively (Perry and Keil, 2013, p. 832). After the war, the local ethno-nationalists have continued to promote intolerance and hatred by misusing the educational system and developing monolingual, mono-religious, and mono-cultural curricula, with an exclusive language, history, literature, poetry, and geography. Although religious education exists in the public schools, it is based on normative theology and is taught separately by each confession. Studies on religious textbooks indicate that such forms of religious education amplify division along ethnic lines and foster national indoctrination (See Veličković, 2015; Andrea Soldo et al., 2017).

It is hardly possible to facilitate reconciliation, peace, and dialogue without taking into consideration the pre-war and post-war context in former Yugoslavia. The conflicts had deep historical and socio-political roots, and were driven by ethnic

mobilization and hegemonic nationalistic projects according to which each ethnic group ultimately fought for its own ethnic state. During the 1990s, the Serbian and Croatian hegemonic leaders and politicians mostly propagated such projects. The war, mass killings, and ethnic cleansing resulted in the forced displacement of large segments of the population, greater ethnic polarization, and the creation of mono-ethnic homogenized spaces, cities, cantons, and entities. Within such a socio-political context, an exclusive and divisive ethno-national narrative has been used to keep the society polarized. Such physical segregation also increased ethnic mistrust, made reconciliation difficult, and poses a long-term threat to peace, stability, security, and progress (Torsti, 2003, 148; Hayden, 2011, 487-517; Mulalić, 2019, 57-81). There are but few multiethnic cities that have a long history of interethnic integration, like Tuzla, Sarajevo, and Mostar. In most other cities, interethnic interactions have been significantly decreased in comparison to the pre-war period.

Bosnian society has been historically exposed to violent ethno-national influences since the very beginning of the nation-states in the Balkans. These ethno-nationalistic narratives were the products of a series of violent conflicts that led to destruction, wars, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. After signing the DPA, all the ethnic groups felt the need to create a nation-state infrastructure and to develop the foundations for new institutions, such as police forces, judiciary and educational systems, as well as museums to foster their ethno-nationalist ideologies. Different ethnic groups were going through radical ethno-nationalistic organization and the development of an exclusive ethno-nationalist space, which could not integrate the others who did not identify themselves with the main ethnic groups like Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats (Lippman, 2019, 23-25). For instance, universities were purposefully used to create and propagate the ethno-nationalist ideology of a particular ethnic group. In this regard, three hegemonic ethno-nationalistic narratives were created, which continue to exist based on the exclusion and radical negation of the other ethnic groups on their territory (Plasto, 2019, 231-233; Pašalic-Kreso, 2008, 353-374).

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the educational system is decentralized and there is no Ministry of Education at the state level. All educational policies are devised and implemented by the entities and cantons, which are governed by ethno-nationalist leaders. The educational system is segregated according to ethnic lines, and young people attend ethnically divided schools. Such an educational system is used for fostering ethno-nationalistic narratives, and often teachers, students, and parents are misled and manipulated to support such ideological and ethno-nationalistic narratives. Three ethno-nationalist parties still dominate politics and to a great extent influence three educational systems in order to promote their nationalistic, political, and ideological goals. These ethnic educational systems have started to create the perspective of "us" and "them," which has led to deeper divisions. Consequently, very small numbers of students have been exposed to interethnic interaction and communication with other ethnic groups. The interethnic interaction gap among the students has been filled with extracurricular activities and projects organized by international and local non-governmental organizations (Pašalić-Kreso, 2008, 356-357). A clear example of the politicization of education is the widespread "two schools under one roof" phenomenon. In cities with mixed population the Croat and Bosniak pupils attend one school which is physically divided into two parts and whose administration and curricula are different (Torsti, 2009, 65-82; Kapo 2012, 158-159). This practice violates international conventions as well as Bosnian laws. In addition to the state not resolving the problem of "two schools under one roof," recently there were attempts by ethno-nationalist authorities in the multiethnic and multicultural city of Jajce to divide the high school into Croat and Bosniak schools. However, the public, including the pupils, strongly opposed that idea.

In order to tackle ethnic segregation, attempts have been made to introduce a cluster of nationally standardized subjects for the benefit of ethnic minorities living within majorities. These national subjects include education in language, literature, geography, history, and religion. However, the implementation of

this project has many side effects because of obstacles and a lack of resources to implement the national group of subjects for minorities. For instance, in some villages a very small number of displaced people went back to their place of birth after the war. In some cases, there are only a few pupils from ethnic minority groups, which makes providing adequate teachers and national subjects impossible from the financial and human resources point of view (Tolomelli, 2015, 89-108). These attempts of introducing national subjects for minorities were made under international pressure and tutelage, but in practice the education system is based on ethno-centrism of the ethnic majority against ethnic minorities. The ethno-national separation of schools contravenes international documents on human rights. In this regard, Bosnia and Herzegovina has violated human rights laws by allowing school discrimination and especially the existence of "two schools under one roof." Besides, some educational practices contribute to ethnic polarization and impede the formation of students' democratic citizenship. Thus, many educational policies and practices are not in harmony with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Convention of the Right of the Child* and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (CERD). International institutions and courts have passed a number of rulings against Bosnia-Herzegovina due to violations of human rights (Bakić and Mujagić, 2021, 228-237).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the DPA and its political and constitutional framework inhibit a smooth transition to a functional democratic system of governance, which could ensure peace, security, equality, human rights, and freedom. This has led to an increased reaffirmation of the same ethno-national narratives which once contributed to intolerance, violence, and destruction. In addition, a lack of democratic values, a strong system of governance, and democratic citizenship have been exploited by ethno-nationalist leaders to promote social segregation, hate, discrimination, and divisiveness. Today Bosnia and Herzegovina is viewed as a hybrid democracy with a very high rate of corruption (Kapo, 2012, 143-145; Mujkić, 20212, 1-

24). In this regard, historical narratives are often misused to divide and polarize the society, which is often a precondition of renewal of conflict and war.

Bosnia-Herzegovina has experienced a terrible armed conflict, involving countries from the region, which resulted in significant human casualties, destruction, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. The war caused population displacements, migrations, and depopulation. The last census, which took place in 2013, indicated a significant decline of the population in the country. Schools are enrolling a smaller number of students. There is a strong disparity in terms of infrastructure of the schools, and very limited interaction beyond ethnic and cantonal lines. Demographic decline is coupled with a very high rate of unemployment and poverty. According to some reports, about 530,000 people migrated from Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2013 to 2019 (Mulalić, 2019, 57-81; Pobrić and Robinson, 2015, 23-43). Furthermore, young people are not politically engaged, and such disengagement is caused primarily by corruption, alienation, apathy, and the loss of hope that socio-political and economic changes are possible. There is a very high lack of trust toward government and state institutions.

The educational system is often based on a process of acculturation, whereby the education is used to "defend" the dominant ethnic group, nation, culture, religion, and language against the others. In this way, the educational system during the early years of schooling imprint in the young people fear of losing ethnicity, religion, culture, nationality, and language, which eventually lead to a sense of being threatened. As a result, different cultures, religions, customs, traditions, languages are experienced and perceived as threats, which was not the case prior to the war. A socio-political, cultural, and educational context is created in which there is a permanent need to defend one's ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, and language. This process has produced new generations of young people who feel the need to continuously *confront* others, which has created a strong sense of ethno-centrism, ethnic divisiveness, and

polarization (Mujkić, 20212, 1-24; Pašalić-Kreso, 2008, 356-357; Veličković, 2012, 8).

If education fosters ethnic ideologies, how can it contribute to reconciliation, peace, and dialogue? Also, how can such a discriminatory and ethno-nationalist educational system be integrated into the European education framework? In Bosnia-Herzegovina, ethno-nationalists view the educational system as a tool to construct and support existing dominant ethno-nationalist narratives and ideologies. This does not correspond with the purpose of education to transfer knowledge and values to younger generations. Education is important for the socialization, learning, and development of responsible cosmopolitan citizens. Considering current ethno-nationalistic predicaments, the educational system cannot facilitate peace, reconciliation, and dialogue. On the contrary, such an educational system contributes to further segregation, discrimination, and the construction of new socio-political and cultural realities devoid of past multicultural, multiethnic, and multi-religious elements. The predominantly ethnic educational system, through ethnic ideologies, strives to produce new generations of Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats who will hardly be able to share a common future.

Peace education as an alternative in Bosnia-Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, education for peace training programs were introduced after the end of the war by different European countries. At first, such programs were aimed at peace, reconciliation, the democratization process, and the building of a new post-war society. Indeed, these training programs and projects were significant for tackling the humanitarian and psycho-social traumas after the war. After the war, many people realized the significance of multicultural and multiethnic benefits that the Bosnian society had before the beginning of the war. Many survivors on different conflicting sides were longing for reunion with those who were on the other side during the war. Such people were involved in early education for peace programs and led the process of peace, reconciliation, and dialogue. Peace education programs had to deal with ethnic, cultural, and religious

barriers that were constructed during the war. In the very beginning, the education for peace programs mostly worked on the creation of awareness regarding the need for peace, reconciliation, and dialogue (Tinker, 2016, 38-39). The international organizations also fostered civic education to promote socio-political transformations and changes regarding human rights, freedom, citizenship, and equality. These were bottom-up approaches to the democratization process, which could foster peace, reconciliation, and dialogue. The political elites, who started the war, obstructed these attempts because ethnic polarization and ethnic tensions were effectively used to gain support from ethnic voters and win elections. Most contributions to and advocacy for peace, reconciliation, and dialogue were made by local and international non-governmental organizations. These local and international NGOs have addressed a broad set of reform needs such as technical support, teacher training, pedagogical reforms, legislation development, curriculum development, administrative, and management reforms. They also organized different activities and programs including peace camps and trips, youth clubs, film festivals, workshops, seminars, dialogues, and even online talk platforms. Although these activities were aimed at peace, reconciliation, and dialogue, they also involved various academic, scientific, sports, and social activities. Many peace leaders and educators like Jean Paul Leaderach, Marshall Rosenberg, Adam Seligman, Paula Green, and others supported peace, reconciliation and dialogue initiatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Emkić, 2018, 38-46; Fairey and Kerr, 2020, 142-164; Danes, 2010, 253-268).

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, UNICEF and the Education for Peace (EFP) initiated curriculum reforms and the integration of peace studies to foster a culture of tolerance, peace, and understanding. The education for peace project, implemented by the International Institute for Peace Education, has brought major changes like the incorporation of the peace curricula into a national cluster of subjects (Close, 2011, 269-281; Clarke-Habibi, 2005, 9-20). Education for peace achieved significant results whereby peace has been achieved and the Bosnian society has

lived in peace since 1996. Interethnic communities have come closer due to different socio-economic and cultural interests. People have become accustomed to education for peace, human rights education, and civic education. They are keen to engage in a dialogue and discussion, which was not the case immediately after the war. Different activities increased empathy and understanding, while preventing the recurrence of conflict as well as structural and physical violence (Fischer, 2006, 417-440). In this way, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a politically humorous phrase, "*samo nek' ne puca*" ("*as long as there is no shooting*"), as a reference to positive peace, became an excuse for not facing many other socio-political, economic and constitutional challenges.

Fostering education for peace is a precondition for improving interethnic relations and ultimate reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In this regard, it is significant to save a genuine psycho-social fabric of Bosnian society that is based on local history, culture, tradition, and religion. A healthy psycho-social fabric of that society, contrary to imported ethno-nationalism, shapes perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the people toward each other. By using the elements of education for peace, such as tolerance, love, and kindness, citizens may develop skills and knowledge of how to counter violence, manage interethnic relations and differences, promote respect for multicultural values, and enhance civic and human rights (Clarke-Habibi, 2011, 269-281).

Education is the process whereby learning itself significantly influences personal perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Education as a process enables people to understand the natural, social, and cultural world around them. As part of the educational system, a holistic framework for education for peace encompasses tackling the culture of war, fostering justice and compassion, promoting human rights, building intercultural relations, reconciliation and solidarity, and cultivating unity, inner peace, and social harmony (Toh, 2004, 7-22). Thus, values that produce peace are nonviolence, economic prosperity, social justice, ecological balance, participation, tolerance, fairness, and

respect for reason and truth. This is especially important in healing war trauma, rebuilding trust, promoting forgiveness, and sharing common values that may foster social union, cohesion and solidarity. Thus, education for peace could be a new response to the possible re-emergence of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Education for peace programs are important especially in schools because they help the youth acquire social competence, which could strengthen interpersonal communication and interaction among different ethnic groups. Therefore, the socialization process itself is significant as it enables the youth to relate to each other positively and to treat others in a good way. Moreover, in addition to social competence, education for peace programs could increase the youth's communication competence, which is important for critical, creative, and independent thinking. Dialogue is extremely important, as it involves listening, questioning, and communicative skills within the framework of peace and tolerance. Competence in communication and dialogue eventually enable youth to open their minds to other people and express their opinions in a peaceful way (Emkić, 2018, 54-65; Clarke-Habibi, 2018, 144-168). Therefore, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the goal of education for peace should be peace and the transformation of mindsets that promote ethnic exclusion and violence. For this purpose, education for peace could create critical awareness and transformation toward a culture of peace. Various programs and training sessions could enable students to become open to other cultures, respectful of cultural diversity, and develop the ability to resolve conflicts nonviolently (Kappler and Richmond, 2011, 261-278).

A dialogic culture of peace

According to postmodern thinkers, our society functions on the basis of risk and fragility (Beck 2020, 211-229). Emerging global challenges have contributed to more mistrust and increased cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic differences among the people. These differences are often misused, and they aggravate divisions and lead to conflict. Numerous conflicts across the

world challenge the very idea of a possibility of peace, and coexistence. This is coupled with state anarchism, terrorism, environmental problems, pandemics, security threats, and general human insecurity. Conflicts also emerge due to hatred, weak governance, and failures of the educational and social system, poverty, and pseudo-democratization processes. Therefore, we need education and training to develop a dialogic culture of peace. In this regard, there is a need to foster dialogue about knowledge, values, skills, and behaviors related to peace (Slatina, 2005, 89). The dialogic culture of peace could further enhance the culture of tolerance, understanding, kindness, empathy, social integration, and universal love, especially in multicultural and multiethnic post-war societies (Harmans, 2001, 24-28).

We all dream about an ideal society, of peace, harmony, security, and prosperity. We agree that such a society does not exist. However, alternatively shouldn't we work on such objectives by especially considering education and knowledge, which are prerequisites for the creation of a better society? In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is very important to consider ethnicity and religion through the dialogic culture, which significantly affects social cohesion and the functioning of the state as a whole. It is important to work continuously on social transformation, reconciliation, and dialogue by using the framework of the dialogic culture (Slatina, 2008, 111-132; Tinker, 2016, 38-39). The dialogic culture could be used to transform the relationships in a post-war society, thus building interethnic cooperation and understanding. Such approaches could enhance and facilitate an open and sincere dialogue by examining the negative effects of violence, conflict, and widespread discrimination. As such, they could lead to reconciliation, peace, and dialogue, especially among the youth. Dialogic culture could also lead to integration of interethnic communities and minorities that live together with majorities. Intercultural sensitivity is a dimension of a dialogue that leads to self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, and empathy. Then, dialogic culture may enhance teaching social harmony, inclusion, understanding, and tolerance through peace, human-

rights, and civic education. It is significant to develop such proactive approaches that could facilitate a dialogue in Bosnian society where the majority of the population had experienced mass violence, war, destruction, and genocide (Diaz and Karpava, 2015, 56-66; Slatina 2009, 38-40). Therefore, the educational system is important in shaping a dialogic culture before people start their active participation in political, social, religious, or intercultural dialogue at the age of maturity. Dialogue is especially important because it is the ultimate human need and a prerequisite for interdependent communication among peoples and nations. In addition, dialogue is important in states with cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. These differences are not obstacles and weaknesses, but they could be used as assets, strengths, and opportunities for individual, social, national, and global development and progress. In such societies, socialization and acculturation processes are very important. These processes would accommodate cultural, ethnic, religious, racial, and linguistic identities, which would inevitably lead to cultural pluralism.

Education for peace could implement cooperative learning and critical thinking critically, which enable students to work together in teams through dialogic culture. Critical thinking is important because students deal with and examine opposing views, whereby they manage their own motives, biases, assumptions, prejudices, and viewpoints (Adetoro, 2015, 325-330). There are also numerous examples of good practices regarding communication competencies. Some studies consider Paulo Freire's understanding of dialogue as an essential foundation for teaching and learning about peace (Roberts, 2003, 169-183). The dialogue refers to a quality of rational engagement and relationships. Thus, within an educational framework, dialogue refers to any speaking, thinking, and writing processes through which actors in a dialogue create and share meanings. Love and passion are fundamental concepts for genuine dialogue as well as participatory and dialogic democracy (Dobson, 2014, 109-139). Dialogue is the foundation of socio-cultural life. Every action and creative initiative must start with dialogue within the

self or with others. Dialogue is inevitable for post-conflict societies, as it may effectively counter racism, chauvinism, ethno-nationalism, discrimination, and xenophobia. It is especially the case when intercultural dialogue tackles human consciousness, experiences, minds, perceptions, and behaviors. A person who is skilled in such dialogue would live in harmony with himself, with society, and the environment. Such capacity requires learning and knowledge of how to live with oneself and in social and natural harmony. Dialogue is the highest form of realization whereby we learn from ourselves, others, and the environment. Dialogue, as such, has a strong basis in philosophical and religious traditions such as the works of Socrates, Confucius, and Lao-tzu. They all aimed at inner transformation, self-knowledge, self-control, and self-goodness. They formulated dialogic maxims whereby human beings must think, speak, and act well or correctly.

The dialogic culture leads to peaceful social relationships regardless of ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural differences in a society. It is important to mention that The Flower-Petal Model and Integrative Theory of Peace (ITP) relate primarily to a culture of peace. The Flower-Petal model has six categories: dismantling the culture of war, achieving environmental peace, encouraging education for justice and compassion, ensuring human rights education, cultivating intercultural solidarity, and encouraging and harnessing inner peace (Toh, 2006, 1-17). The ITP is based on the premise that peace is an all-encompassing phenomenon, including psychological, social, political, ethical, and spiritual dimensions (Danesh, 2010, 253-268). Both theories are suitable for the theoretical and conceptual study of the dialogic culture in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Peace is the most important category in any society, not only because of the importance of tranquil coexistence, but also because of sustainable development and progress. Thus, peace and unity among the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina must be a top priority. Education for peace and dialogic culture can certainly inculcate cultural norms, ethics, and values in young generations.

Conclusion

The twenty-first century is witnessing dynamic historical changes and challenges. The globalization process has created diversities of mixed cultures in the global village. Therefore, traditionalism, nationalism, racism, localism, and exclusivism must be tackled by education for peace. The existing educational system in Bosnia-Herzegovina requires further modernization and reformation to suit peace needs. It is necessary to improve the educational system to ensure that all ethnic groups have access to quality education, which must be free from political, religious, cultural, and other types of discrimination. Further enhancement of education for peace is vital for national unity and tolerance among various ethnic groups. In addition, education for peace meets the requirements of the twenty-first century and it is in conformity with current postmodern trends. Furthermore, education for peace can address the modes of instruction, contents of curricula and textbooks, and separation of educational systems along ethnic lines. This analytical chapter has highlighted the developments, challenges, responses, and additional recommendations regarding how education for peace can further enhance peace, reconciliation, and dialogic culture, which can strengthen peace and security, while preventing future violent conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Education should nourish human development, which could lead to peace, tolerance, and the rejection of violence, conflict, war and genocide. Education for peace can help prevent violent attitudes and behaviors as well as new conflicts and genocides.

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Religion, Education, and Peace in Myanmar: A Christian Perspective

Henry Siang Kung

Abstract
This chapter was written and presented during the first weeks of the military coup d'état in Myanmar, and the protests against it, in February and March 2021. The author argues that, if religion is properly understood, religious education is a force for liberation and peace. If, however, religion is misunderstood, religious education may lead to intolerant and oppressive behavior. The author describes the pluralistic political landscape of Myanmar and the oppressive role of extremist, anti-Islamic organizations like the Nine-Six-Nine Movement. The views of such organizations are based on a version of Buddhism that elevates giving (*dana*) to a level higher than morality, thereby opening the way for people to "purchase" *karma* and thus earn salvation (*nirvana*) regardless of their behavior. Religions, including churches, which are prophetic instead of traditionalist or modernizing can contribute to justice and peace. They can do this by promoting education for conscientization, in which learners are empowered and in which the oppressor-oppressed relationship is overcome. In this way, people are educated in such a way as to become peacemakers.

Religion

A Burmese saying goes, "*Tung tat hlin sae, ma tung tat hlin bae*." It means that if you use a thing properly it becomes a medicine, but if you use it improperly it becomes a poison. This is true for both religion and education. Religion can become one of the most wicked and ruinous forces in human experience. It is like water – it can refresh and cleanse or it can engulf and drown (Fosdick,

1961). So also is education. Like electricity, education may illumine and warm, or it may blast and kill.

According to sociologist Keith A. Roberts, all definitions of religion are usually one of two types: *substantive* definitions, which focus on the substance or essence of religion, or *functional* definitions, which focus on what religion does (Roberts, 1995). *Substantive* definitions usually emphasize a specific belief such as a belief in spiritual beings or in a supernatural realm, or they stress the distinction between the sacred and profane realms of experience. This approach affirms that life has religious and nonreligious dimensions. *Functional* definitions identify religion as that which provides a sense of ultimate meaning, a system of macrosymbols, and a set of core values for life.

Following the *substantive* definitions, all religions in the world can be categorized into two types: **theistic** and **atheistic.** *Theistic* religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism all have the monotheistic belief in a God, whereas polytheistic religions such as Hinduism hold a belief in many gods. *Atheistic* or *non-theistic* religions such as Buddhism, Taoism and Jainism have the attitudes characterized by the absence of belief in God or gods. Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar is a nontheistic religion although it focuses on spiritual liberation. Strictly speaking, there is no Deity, and no worship in Buddhism (Sar Maung Toh and U Han Htay, 1997). It is a religion without a savior God to whom humans can turn for salvation.

The situation of Myanmar

Today Myanmar is a changing and challenging society. It is in an age, during which the old standards and values have vanished or are vanishing. New values and standards, however, are not yet clearly defined. This creates an ideological vacuum. A democratic ferment is growing and a search for new policies and ideologies continues. What this means for most of us is that we have been driven from the reflective life to the reflexive life. There are groups of people who have "turned all nouns into verbs" (Woodard, n.d., 60). They are more concerned with doing what they can than with thinking what they ought to do. Everyone

can see something trying to be born. For the purpose of this paper, let us look at the things that make Myanmar known to the world.

Firstly, Myanmar is a Buddhistic country. I use the term Buddhistic because the people in Myanmar are under the influence of Buddhist values, concepts, cultures and traditions. For instance, civic education that is taught in schools is strongly based on Buddhist culture. In history, King Anawratha made Theravada Buddhism the national religion in the eleventh century AD (Maun Htin Aung, 1962). Eventually, although there are other religions, Buddhist culture and tradition became the heritage of the Myanmar majority. Some Burmese have even thought that Buddha was a Burman (Sarkisyanz, 1965). Therefore, it is not a surprise to hear that for the Burmese villager, "to be a Burman is to be a Buddhist" (Spiro, 1980, p. 19).

Secondly, Myanmar is ethnically and linguistically a pluralistic country. There are 135 ethnic groups which speak their own indigenous languages, of which the eight major ethnic groups are Burman, Kayin, Kachin, Chin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine and Shan (Seekins 2017).

Thirdly, Myanmar became a war-torn country after World War II. It has been suffering from ethnic conflicts since it became independent in 1948. The country was under a military regime from 1962 to 2010. In 2014 there were thirty-four ethnic armed groups (EAGs) (Seekins, 2017). Thousands of people were born and died in refugee camps. To them, to live means to fight. Their homes are refugee camps. Many organizations were founded and several movements appeared in order to make peace between ethnic groups and the military government. Only eight armed ethnic organizations signed Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and the peace process reached a stalemate.

Regretfully, Myanmar has experienced three military coups d'état: the first in 1962, the second in 1988, and the last one began on February 1, 2021. The news shocked all the citizens. On that day, I went to my office and prayed with the staff members. We did not even know how to pray. The Civil Disobedience Movement began on the following day. Since then, the internet connection was so limited that we could not run even online

classes anymore. The University made a statement on February 8, 2021. It says: "Chin Christian University strongly supports all non-violent movements which aim at promoting peace, justice and freedom in Myanmar."

Religion and peace

All major religions teach peace. As Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," Christians are called to be peacemakers as are Buddhists. It is said, "Buddhism can be proud of the fact that never has a single drop of blood been shed in the name of Buddhism. … If the Teaching of Buddhism will become still wider known, it will in itself lead to Peace eternal" (Sar Maung Toh and U Han Htay, 1997, p. 133). Buddhism is a religion of nonviolence. The Buddhist way of politics is to govern the country in a nonviolent way (Ashin Taw Bih Tah, 2020). For Muslims, Allah is the Only One, who cares for all things. He is the Lord, and he is the Merciful One (Van Ess, 1993).

No religion preaches violence and conflict or militancy. Every religion advocates and preaches peace and peaceful co-existence of all citizens. If it is so, what are the major reasons for the growth and spread of conflicts in Myanmar? In this volume, we consider the answers from a religious education point of view. One of the root causes of conflict is religious fundamentalism which is the outcome of the lack of proper religious education. In fact, fundamentalists are not merely religious conservatives but people willing to fight to defend their views. One of the characteristics of fundamentalism is exclusivism. At the heart of exclusivism, there is no room for people with other religious orientations. For a Christian, it may be easier to live in peace with a faithful and moderate Buddhist than to live with an extremist Christian. To speak for Myanmar, I would like to mention some religion-based groups known to people as conflict-makers in the country.

On 25 August 2017, Myanmar's Anti-Terrorism Central Committee declared that the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), which was founded in 2012, is a terrorist group. This happened because, in October 2016, ARSA attacked Myanmar

border posts along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, which left nine border officers and four soldiers dead. But ARSA rejected the allegations as baseless.

There is a Buddhist organization known by the Burmese language acronym Ma Ba Tha, the "Association for the Protection of Race and Religion," labelled by some as a Buddhist extremist group. It has pressured the government to enact measures that they claim will protect the Buddhist religion. The laws include the Interfaith Marriage Law, the Population Control Law, the Religious Conversion Law, and a bill outlawing polygamy (Seekins, 2017).

Similar to Ma Ba Tha, there is another Buddhist movement called the Nine-Six-Nine (969) movement. Nine-Six-Nine is an organization espousing extreme anti-Muslim views and the alleged need to defend the Buddhist religion in Myanmar from a growing Islamic threat. The name 969 may have been inspired by the negative example of the number "786" which in Myanmar is often attached to Muslim shops. The group 969 is believed to have had its origins around 2001 (Seekins, 2017). "969" stickers are often placed in the shops and stalls of Buddhist merchants. These two movements – Ma Ba Tha and 969 – reveal the Buddhist insurgence in Myanmar.

What is the root cause of such religious conflicts? It may be because of a wrong religious concept or education. Let me take *kammatic* Buddhism in Myanmar as an example. The main concern of *kammatic* Buddhism is the improvement of one's position on the Wheel of Rebirth (*samsara*) by improving one's *kamma* (*karma*). In *kammatic* Buddhism, charity or giving (*dana*) is the means, par excellence for acquiring merit. In fact, giving is more important than morality as a means for acquiring merit that leads to *nirvana*, a Buddhist salvation (Spiro, 1980). For instance, a person may kill innocent peoples and commit all sorts of crime, but, as long as he or she engages in giving (*dana*), all of his or her evil deeds have no effect upon his/her *kamma*. The more he/she gives, the more merits he/she obtains and finally enters into *nirvana*. The idea is that one can buy *nirvana*. Giving becomes a

ticket to heaven. It is somehow similar to Christian indulgence in the Middle Ages.

Religious education for peace

Peace is of paramount importance to any meaningful development, and religious teachings can provide the needed peaceful atmosphere if used in the right perspective. But the question is: How can we best educate people to think and act as peacebuilders in this world? I would like to introduce the theological and educational thoughts of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator.

Freire's major contribution to the field of peace education is his ecclesiology. He mentions the church under the tripartite rubrics of the traditional, the modernizing and the prophetic church.

By the traditionalist church, Freire means a church that places emphasis on otherworldly salvation. "Work is not, for them, the action of men and women in the world, transforming and re-creating, but rather the price that must be paid for being human" (Freire, 1985, p. 131). It is a fundamentalist church which believes that all peace action is attributed to God alone. Only God can bring peace. People do not need to bring this peace about, far less develop it. There is nothing to be added from the human side. There will be no peace until Jesus comes again. So, any teaching on peace before his coming again is heresy.

The modernizing church is a conservative church that attempts to adopt modern means of fostering religious life and managing religious organizations. This kind of modernizing religion cannot build peace between the two opposite groups, the oppressed and the oppressor. It may do social works, but not social action. To a modernizing church, peacemaking means to persuade the oppressed to be contented with what they are and what they have so that they may not do anything against their rulers.

The prophetic church is a place where leaders and people achieve critical consciousness. It does not separate worldliness from transcendence or salvation from liberation (Freire, 1985, p.

131). Rather it has knowledge of the reality of the world. It realizes what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "religionless Christianity." It can build peace between the oppressed and oppressors by making them free from fear. Where there is no fear, there is peace. To speak for other faiths, the nearest term for "prophetic theology" is "liberation theology." All religions, not only the Christian church, should be prophetic or liberating in order to build peace in the world.

Another major contribution of Freire to the field of peace education is his insight that education is, necessarily, a form of politics. He says, "Education is a means by which men can perceive, interpret, criticize, and finally transform the world about them" (Matthew, 1980). He insists that neutrality in education is impossible. All education is either for liberation or domestication. In education for domestication, teachers use banking education where teachers deposit knowledge to students. In liberation education, teachers use a conscientization method. Conscientization is the development and the awakening of critical awareness that must grow out of a critical educational effort based on favorable historical conditions (Freire, 1973). It is rooted in concrete situations, and its principal method is dialogical, which serves as the midwife of a liberating pedagogy. By means of conscientization, the learners bring to consciousness the reality of conflicts and find for themselves the themes and resources for changing it. The objective is not to reverse the oppressor-oppressed relationship but to overcome it entirely: this is a pedagogy for the emergence of a new humanity where people enjoy peace and justice.

Another important thing is that the **method** is as crucial as the **content**. Liberating education is a learning situation in which the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. Students and teachers become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. Authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the recognizable objects (Freire, 1970). Where there

is real freedom, there is peace. The solution is not to "integrate" the students into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become "being for themselves."

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is good to note that, religious leaders of Myanmar have played important roles in support of ceasefires and the peace process, both historically and with respect to current efforts. In our town, pastors are peacemakers between police and CDM supporters in order to prevent violence in the city. We believe that maintaining a nonviolent movement does not mean staying silent or surrendering. We believe that God makes people's power powerful. As Hans Küng said: "There will be no peace among the peoples of this world without peace among the world religions. There will be no peace among the world religions without peace among the Christian churches. The community of the Church is an integral part of the world community" (Küng, 1986, p. 443). To add to that, there will be no peace among the peoples of Myanmar until and unless they are theologically enlightened and educationally conscientized. Since the time of Greek city-states and the Roman Empire, education has been the most effective means of building democratic societies where peace and justice prevail.

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Religion in the U.S. Public Square: A Source of Peace or Protest

Mary Dana Hinton

Editorial Note:
This chapter reflects on the role of religion in the public sphere or square in the United States, emphasizing its political dimensions, especially its capacity to foster peace and justice. Historically, it is argued, the American public sphere has excluded certain disenfranchised groups. It was only in the twentieth century that the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which emerged from the black church, and, later, the Black Lives Matter Protests in the United States reoriented the public sphere toward equity and peace. In order for religion in the public sphere to be an instrument of justice and peace, agreement is required on the importance of truth-telling and neighborliness, understood as viewing each other as equals and recognizing each other's loss and pain. When such agreement is missing, religion may take on a destructive role in the public sphere, as was seen in the Capitol riots of January 2021 in Washington, DC. In the cases of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Lives Matter protests, however, religion fostered truth-telling, equality, justice, and peace in the public sphere. What follows here is a transcription of the address held by Dr Hinton during the online conference on religion, education, and peace.

Introduction

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with each of you about this timely and critically important topic of religion, education, and peace. I am especially grateful to the organizers at Haigazian University and the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning at Saint John's University. Please allow me to extend special greetings to President Paul Haidostian. I am also honored to greet

Dr John Merkle, the Director of the Jay Phillips Center, and Dr Jon Armajani, who are both dear friends and colleagues. It is a genuine honor to have this opportunity to talk about religion, education, and peace with colleagues and friends who share a global commitment to the common good and to the active building of positive peace.

Today I am eager to talk with you about the role of religion and religious movements as an educative source in the public sphere in the United States and its States. The central question I will focus on is whether religious movements in the United States have educated for positive peace and progress for the nation or if they have served to educate toward injustice. I find this to be a timely topic because, in my context in the United States of America, we continue to reel in the shadow of the January 6 insurrection and the many conflicting messages about who controls the public sphere, including whether that sphere is to be used for peacemaking and, importantly, who gets to determine what is and what is not peaceful in the public sphere.

I will share with you thoughts about what constitutes the public sphere in our context in the US; offer a concise history of how religion has utilized the public sphere as an educative source; and then conclude with two case studies of how religion has been used for what I would frame as injustice and for peace in the public sphere. I will try to leave time for questions at the end of my presentation.

The public sphere in the United States

So, what is the public sphere in the United States? According to Freudenthaler and Wessler (2018), "the public sphere is generally conceived as the social space in which different opinions are expressed, problems of general concern are discussed collectively, and solutions are developed communicatively. Thus, the public sphere is the central arena for societal communication. In large-scale societies, mass media, and, more recently, online network media support and sustain communication in the public sphere." Implied in this definition of the public sphere is that this space is an open and tolerant one wherein all can equally bring

their ideas to the public and have them shared, shaped, and appraised.

While declared a social space in this definition, I believe that the public sphere is less social than it is political, a space controlled by those in power, a space to which there is inequitable access. I would argue that the public sphere at times can reinforce inequity. In fact, the public sphere can become a tool to amplify and reinforce social inequities.

Allow me to explain what I mean. For example, in the United States historically and continuing through today, there has not been equality to either political speech or the public sphere. As I will articulate shortly, the public square and the public sphere had been marked by what many would label "traditional American values." While there is no intrinsic harm in this label, the American reality is that the public sphere has generally been a space framed by Judeo-Christian values, overlaid with American exceptionalism. Or, as pointed out in a recent Atlantic article, "the basic foundation of American political rhetoric has been a seamless, platitudinous blend of Christianity, rose-tinted history, and pop culture" (Graham, 2021).

While there is tremendous good in Judeo-Christian values, the racialization of US politics has, at times, transformed those values into weapons of aggression. Indeed, the overlay of our racial history with American exceptionalism and religious values have made the public sphere an exclusionary space, often drowning out the voices of those who lack power or were of minority or dissenting opinions.

As we begin to assess whether the public sphere can be an educative tool for peace, it is important to first recognize that the public sphere is not a space of equity. In fact, the public sphere has often served to exclude those groups that are invested in equity and peace and in reframing the public sphere.

Historical perspective on religion and education in the public sphere

So, allow me to share a brief history. In an overview of the public sphere in a religious context, several movements come to mind.

For example, in the second half of the eighteenth century Americans encountered the First Great Awakening and how the public sphere could be shaped by and shape religion. This widely studied movement situated religion as a cohesive force between Americans, and this religious phenomenon was partially responsible for the proliferation of American religion and the fashioning of religion as a central force in US culture. When the United States Constitution later explicitly separated the roles of government and religion and the rights afforded to each, it was followed by the Second Great Awakening. This extended religious movement, which one can argue was in direct reaction to the formal removal of religion from the nation's creed, recentered religion in the public sphere and helped religious practice to spread parallel to the new freedom of religion in the founding documents. For both of these Awakenings, the embedding of religion in the public square was clear. And for both of these movements there was a clear absence of the voices of the disenfranchised, at that time the enslaved and, for the most part, women.

These early movements in the public sphere have been repeated over time for those with power and influence. In fact, one can argue that it was not until the twentieth century that the disenfranchised in the United States were granted access to the public sphere. The Suffragette Movement of the early twentieth century could be argued as the first woman-centered access to the public sphere, though that too was not a racially or economically inclusive movement.

It was not until the mid-twentieth century that more inclusive American movements, movements targeted toward peace, made their way into the public sphere. The two major movements that utilized the public sphere in an effort to bring about equity and peace include the Civil Rights Movement of the fifties, sixties, and seventies and the Black Lives Matter Movement of the past half-decade.

These movements' explicit attempts to reorient the public sphere towards equity and positive peace started in a religious entity, the black church, and then migrated into the public sphere,

as opposed to being started and initially embraced by the public sphere. As such, historically we have seen the public sphere serve to reinforce inequity. In contrast, over the past fifty years we have begun to see the public sphere emerge as a location for justice and peace. I would argue that, done at its best, with equity, honesty, and a shared desire for change, the public sphere could serve as a galvanizing force in our communities to bring about positive peace.

Requirements for peace-making in the public sphere

But the question remains: what are the requirements for the public sphere to serve this peace-making function? Well, central to the power of the public sphere as a force for peace and justice is the need for a shared understanding of the role of the public sphere.

Here I turn to theologian and Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann. In a recent piece (2020), Brueggemann used Isaiah and Jeremiah to frame his thinking about the public sphere. From Isaiah 5:20 he points to: "Woe to you who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." And then he draws upon Jeremiah 5:1-3: "Search the squares and see if you can find one person who acts justly and seeks the truth, so that I may pardon Jerusalem. Although they say 'As the LORD lives,' yet they swear falsely. O LORD, do your eyes not look for truth?" Brueggemann's scriptural exegesis of these texts led him to write: "Truth-telling is designed to enhance the neighborhood. Falseness diminishes the neighborhood. The truth depends upon regard for the neighbor." He goes on to write: "We can now reconsider the world in which we live a world of so-called fake news and so-called alternative facts. The fake news is not just false because it misrepresents reality, it is fake because it violates neighborliness and willfully aims to set neighbor against neighbor and competition for scarce goods. Fake news is news that distorts the reality of generative neighborliness. Alternative facts are facts that fail to take into account the reality of the neighborhood, most centrally the reality of pain and loss. Thus, it is always a lie when

property and wealth are preferred to the well-being of the neighbors."

For the public sphere to serve a catalyzing function toward peace and justice, especially within a religious construct, it is essential that there is agreement about what is and what is not permitted within the public sphere. First, as Brueggemann points out, there must be an explicit agreement that the search for truth and the telling of truth is the central value of the public sphere. There must be a shared understanding of how we arrive at truth and the fact that the aim of truth is to support the building of community or, as Brueggemann names it, the neighborhood. To consider the public sphere as a neighborhood is to consider all those who comprise the sphere as our equal, as those to whom we have some responsibility. Our responsibility is not just to see and value the neighbor, to speak truth to the neighbor, but to also bear witness to the reality of pain and loss for the neighbor. This means that the public sphere should beckon us to the creation of positive peace for the neighborhood while also being true to the neighborhood and its members.

A negative case study: The January 6 insurrection

As I think about the evolution of the public sphere as imagined by Brueggemann, I immediately conjure up two contrasting case studies about how religion can function in this area. Allow me to start with what I think of as a negative case of how religion functions in the public sphere. At the outset of this talk I mentioned that this topic is especially timely for your US partners as we continue to reel in the face of the Capitol insurrection of January 6, 2021. As I was preparing this pending paper and topic at that time, I found myself seeking to understand how religion played a role in the public sphere on that day. Without a doubt many Americans on both sides of the political aisle will suggest that the support for former President Trump often took on a religious frenzy. There was often clear and compelling evidence that Trumpism, as it is called, became its own religion in the public sphere and was reminiscent of the fervor of the Great Awakenings and the exclusionary and exceptionalist ideas I

referenced earlier in this talk. The notion of exclusionary politics at the center of the public sphere was on full display on January 6. To quote the Washington Post, "While Trump may have incited the riots at the Capitol that led to his second impeachment, many of his followers already had all the encouragement they needed: they believed God wanted them to do this. We have also seen a shocking act of violence committed by Christians, an assault on a symbol of American democracy that left the halls of Congress strewn with shattered glass, one-hundred-forty-four police officers injured, and one officer and four others dead. Not only was this assault accompanied by Jesus-flags, Bible quotes and loudspeaker sermons, it was undertaken, according to many of the attackers themselves, in Christianity's name." Without equivocation January 6 was for some a religious experience, a call to a revival of the past four years, which were not marked by Brueggemann's truth-telling in the public sphere or shared community of pain and loss, but by distorted facts and self-interest.

This ideal of the public sphere as a tool for distortion and oppression has been previously noted. Recalling prior comments about whose voice is privileged in the public sphere and the historical confluence of race, religion, and exclusion in the US public sphere, in 2018 Mukherjee wrote: "The re-ethnicization of America and the galvanization of Trump's base around a white ideology may also be a response to a shift in the cultural and religious landscape of America." Mukherjee went on to write: "Enraged by the narrative of white Christian decline and traumatized by its generally perceived inevitability, many identify as a new breed of virulent Christian nationalists who collectively identify as ethnically homogenous 'Americans'. The rationale for Trumpism is not simply policy-based or economic. Rather, it is a white political ideology that is deployed in a new spiritual war for the soul of America and indeed the soul of the West."

In this example the public sphere utilizes, defines and re-emphasizes a white Christian ideology, an ideology that under these terms does not privilege the neighbor, nor positive peace.

Therefore, it is clear that the public sphere has tremendous power and can educate toward injustice.

Positive case studies: The Civil Rights Movement and the Black Lives Matter protest

But does the same power exist to be harnessed for peace? My short answer is, yes. I firmly believe that the public sphere has the potential to serve as an equalizing force, a tool of religion for peacemaking. My positive case example here is the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century.

Born in the historically black churches of the South, the Civil Rights Movement took over the public sphere and was a critical catalyst for the creation of policy and practices that began to bring about racial equality in the United States. In the historic black church we have found the spiritual, political and personal inextricably linked throughout its history. That connection gave voice to the creation of positive peace.

As I have written elsewhere, the historically black church was born into enslavement, yet its key focus since its creation has been on freedom and liberation for its people and community. This tension between enslavement and freedom requires that the leaders and the body of the church recognize the role enslavement, injustice and oppression held in creating the church or, as Brueggemann would say, the reality of pain and loss, while at the same time making clear that freedom and liberation have always been the central goal of the church.

The church was created to affirm the humanity of the enslaved yet at the same time the early teachings and theology of the church were squarely focused on transcending the individual in favor of the communal well-being. In fact, the church focused on the spirituality and well-being of the entire community or, as Brueggemann would suggest, the neighborhood.

Further, the church sought to negotiate an impenetrable spirit of hope with an echoing voice of protest. The church built and sustained hope among its people, yet this hope was not blind, and believers knew action was needed for their hope to be realized. Later in its evolution, the hopeful elements of the church

were accompanied by a spirit of protest and the demand for equality. Particularly during the Civil Rights Movement, hope and protest were in a taut balance and came to represent the theology and the people that comprised the black church.
In fact, a recent Pew Forum study found that, "nonetheless there is a broad consensus among black Americans of all faiths that predominantly black churches have played a valuable role in the struggle for racial equality in US society. Roughly three quarters of black adults surveyed say that black churches played at least some role in helping black people move toward equality, including thirty percent who say that black churches have done a great deal." This spirit of hope and protest is constitutive to the black church experience, constitutive to how we can view religion and education playing a fashioning role in creating peace.

The catalyzing energy between religiosity, the political, and the public sphere, while acknowledged in the black church, are woven together as part of the search for equality. The black church reflects in its founding and continued existence the positive role religion can play as a force for peace. According, again to the Pew Forum, "black Americans' views on other topics involving religion or religious groups differ from those of the general population. For example, black Americans are more likely than Americans over-all to view opposition to racism as essential to what it means to be a religiously faithful or moral person."

Again, religion can serve as a catalyzing function for peace in the public sphere. The public sphere as a source of peace, as a symbol of hope and protest was also clearly evident in the Black Lives Matter protest of the past half-decade and especially of the past twelve months. While the religious fervor of January sixth sought to destroy and use misinformation to undermine peace in the public sphere, the largely peaceful Black Lives Matter protest of the summer sought to educate and center the neighbor, the pain, the loss, and the hope of a peaceful future. They aimed their campaign to educate millions into a new equity-minded public sphere.

Concluding remarks

Without equivocation, there is a role for religion as an educative force in the public sphere. But many questions remain to be answered. What does a truly public sphere look like? What spaces are even public now and how has the pandemic changed that? How do we challenge people's conception of what the public sphere consists of? And how can we build a truth-telling public sphere that speaks to us all as opposed to only certain religious and racial groups? Even more, we must be intentional in framing what the guiding principles of the public sphere must include. Inclusive access, equitable leadership, a primary concern of caring for the neighbor, and truth-telling must be the pillars upon which we rely in order for the public sphere and religion to play an educative, peace-building function. Done well, the public square and the public sphere have the capacity to change our world for the better or, as President Haidostian called to us, to be an instrument of hope.

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Circles of Understanding and Restorative Justice: Muslims, Christians, and Beyond

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Abstract
This chapter describes circles of understanding (also known as circles of peace), and the effects they have had on relationships between Somalis (most of whom are Muslims), on the one hand, and non-Somalis and non-Muslims, who live in central Minnesota, USA, on the other. It discusses (1) the biases, which are directed against Somalis; (2) reasons for those biases; (3) migration to central Minnesota; (4) reasons Somalis came to that region; (5) the purpose and content of circles of understanding; (6) participants' responses to those circles; and (7) the relationships between circles of understanding, restorative justice, and truth-and-reconciliation commissions. The paper concludes by discussing principles which Muslims and Christians share, in that many circle participants in central Minnesota are members of those religions. This author uses first-person descriptions, when necessary, because his experiences provide relevant information.

Biases directed against Somalis in Minnesota

Because of Somalia's civil wars, since the 1980s thousands of Somali Muslims have come as immigrants or refugees to the part of the north central United States, where I live and work (Ibrahim, 2017). That American state is named Minnesota, and I live in a part of that state named central Minnesota. Until the Somalis settled in central Minnesota, that region was comprised almost

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exclusively of whites, virtually all of whom were of European ancestry and have been Roman Catholic or Protestant (Brinkman, 2017). While some in central Minnesota's white majority warmly welcomed the Somali Muslims, other whites have been hostile to the Somalis. Those hostile whites possess unfounded negative stereotypes against Somalis. They say that (1) many Somalis are unemployed and receive government benefits; (2) Somalis, who work, are taking jobs from whites; (3) Somalis perpetrate crimes; (4) Somalis want to impose Sharia (Islamic law) on everyone; (5) Somalis want to kill non-Somalis and non-Muslims because Islam is a violent, extremist ideology; (6) Somalis want to destroy the whites' culture and replace it with their own; and (7) Somali men are oppressive to Somali women and force them to wear hijabs, which are Islamic head coverings for women (Herndon, 2019).

Hostile acts against Somalis in Minnesota have included: (1) attacks against mosques and Somalis themselves; (2) non-Somalis attempting to remove Somali women's hijabs; (3) non-Somalis denying Somalis jobs; (4) non-Somali employers not giving Somali employees time to pray while at work; (5) non-Somalis subjecting Somalis to denigrating epithets; (6) non-Somalis refusing to rent apartments or houses to Somalis; and (7) non-Somali law-enforcement officers unjustifiably searching or harassing Somalis. While most Somalis live in peace in central Minnesota, some Somalis have experienced those kinds of hostility (Herndon, 2019).

According to a June 2019 *New York Times* article about Somalis in central Minnesota, Liz Baklaich, a member of Concerned Community Citizens, which opposes Somalis in Minnesota, stated, "If we [as whites] start changing our way of life to accommodate where [the Somalis] came from, guess what happens to our country? . . . . If our country becomes like Somalia, there is nowhere for us [as whites] to go" (Herndon, 2019). This quotation summarizes the viewpoints of some whites in central Minnesota who oppose the Somalis' presence there and in other parts of the United States. These whites believe that the presence of Somalis and other persons of non-European ancestry threaten

the existence of whites in central Minnesota and other parts of the United States.

Migrating to Minnesota

Yet, like many Americans, the whites of central Minnesota, some of whom embrace the Somalis and others of whom do not, are the descendants of persons who migrated to the United States (Brinkman, 2017). Many of the persons who came to central Minnesota in the 1800s were German and Irish, with the majority being German, most of whom were Roman Catholic. They engaged in farming and other forms of business, usually isolating themselves from the non-Germans and non-Catholics in Minnesota. The German Catholics of central Minnesota faced hostility from other ethnic groups because of their German ethnicity and Catholic faith. The frictions that existed in Europe between Germans and non-Germans, as well as Catholics and Protestants, were transferred to the United States where large non-German and Protestant populations harbored bias against the German Catholics (Atkins, 2014; Siegel & Silverman, 2017). Bias against German-Americans intensified during world wars I and II, and the interwar years, because the United States and Germany were adversaries (Merelli, 2017; MPR News Staff, 2017). For example, thousands of German-Americans were incarcerated in internment camps in the United States during World War I (Selig, 2002). Such hostilities reinforced central Minnesota's German Catholics' desire to remain insular.

The arrival of Somalis to central Minnesota threatened this insularity and forced the majority white Christian population to respond, positively or negatively, to the newcomers (Ibrahim, 2017). Somalis departed from their home country because of that country's civil war. At the same time, the Somalis, who came to Minnesota, did so, in part, because social service agencies in Minnesota and the United States' federal government enabled Somalis to settle there. While Minnesota appears an unlikely place for Somalis to settle, because of that state's cold winters and the cultural differences between Somalis and the majority of Minnesotans, it offers the Somalis several advantages. Those

advantages include well-established social service agencies, excellent educational institutions, strong job opportunities, low crime rates, and an affordable cost of living (Ibrahim, 2017). Yet, as Somalis settled in Minnesota, frictions emerged between the Somalis, who number in the tens of thousands in the state, and some in the majority population (Herndon, 2019).

Establishing understanding

Somalis and non-Somalis in Minnesota, who wanted to improve their relationships, attempted to establish understanding in many ways (Smith, 2019). Circles of understanding, also known as peace circles, have constituted one way of generating reconciliation between the groups (Hamlin, 2012). These circles of understanding are structured conversations among people, who may not otherwise meet, for the purpose of establishing trust and goodwill. There are at least two types of circles of understanding: (1) invitation-only circles, and (2) open circles. The organizers of invitation-only circles carefully select the persons, whom they invite to the circles, inviting persons who are different from each other, who may not have had any opportunities to interact, while also making sure that the invitees are willing to engage in constructive dialogue. In contrast to the invitation-only circles, the organizers of open circles of understanding publicize the dates, times, and locations of those circles to many people through several venues, while also inviting specific persons to attend (Author's observations 2018-2019; Williams et al., 2015).

Whether a set of circles are invitation-only or open depends on the organizers' preferences. Organizers of invitation-only circles are sometimes already acquainted with the diverse set of invitees and want to make sure that those specific, and very different, persons will engage in dialogue in the circles. Sometimes, organizers of invitation-only circles may invite people who live and work in the same town or neighborhood to attend those circles. Such individuals may attend mosques, churches, or educational institutions in the same town or neighborhood, yet have not had the opportunity to engage in conversations (Author's observations, 2017-2019).

Organizers of open circles want to create an environment where large, and in some cases random, groups of people, who are different from each other, gather for structured conversations. The total number of people in an invitation-only or open circle event can be from ten to one hundred persons. Each individual circle within the larger event will usually have approximately five to ten people. For example, if there are ten people at a circle-of-understanding event, those ten persons may form two different circles with five persons per circle, or only one circle with all ten persons. A circle-of-understanding event, which has a total of one hundred persons would probably have ten different circles with ten persons in each circle. In every case, one trained facilitator would lead the structured conversations in each individual small circle of understanding (Author's observations, 2017-2019).

Often, before the structured conversations in each individual circle begin, all the people, who are gathered, may have some food and beverages, while engaging in informal conversations. After people have finished eating, the organizers welcome them and remind them of the circles' goals, which involve fostering greater harmony among diverse persons. Then, people gather in their individual circles, and each facilitator explains the rules, while summarizing the discussion's topics. In explaining the rules, the facilitator describes the importance of the talking piece, which is an object, usually of personal significance to the facilitator, that each person holds while talking in the circle (Author's observations, 2017-2019). The person, holding the talking piece, is the only one who is permitted to speak. After that person finishes speaking, she or he gives the talking piece to the next person, who takes her or his turn to speak, who then passes the talking piece to the next person (Winters, n.d.). Some rules include being respectful and actively listening, while not using confrontational language (Pagnucco, 2019). The facilitator may allot approximately two to three minutes to each participant to respond to each prompt or question.

The structure of the conversation is roughly as follows. After the facilitator provides the instructions and responds to participants' questions about them, the facilitator provides the

participants with each question one-by-one. After the facilitator provides each question or prompt, each participant responds to the same question or prompt. After each participant has responded, the facilitator gives the group the next question or prompt, to which each participant responds. Consistent with this format, a circle usually lasts approximately one hour because that is the length of most participants' attention spans (Author's observations, 2017-2019).

While the questions and prompts for circles can vary depending on the facilitators' and participants' goals, I will share some prompts and questions, which I have used in several circles that I have facilitated. These prompts and questions, in each round, include the facilitator and participants introducing themselves and stating their reasons for participating in the circle, sharing two ethical values that are important to them; and responding to the following:

> "What do respect, listening and compassion look like to us?" and "How can we demonstrate these values to one another?"
>
> "What does diversity mean, and look like to you?" and "Which stories and ideas would you like to share about diversity?"
>
> "Share a situation where you stepped out of your comfort zone and embraced diversity or share a story about a time when you wished you would have stepped out of your comfort zone;"
>
> "How can our community embrace diversity and include everyone?" and "How can we communicate with one another in a positive way, and welcome new members to the community?"
>
> "What will I, as an individual, commit to doing in the next month to embrace diversity and foster inclusion?" (Ibrahim, 2019).

After the final round, the facilitator may thank the participants for their work, share some of the main ideas, which people in the circle discussed, and invite the participants to stay for informal conversations and food.

Responses

After the sessions, where I facilitated circles of understanding, the organizers gathered participants' written comments about the circles. The following are two sets of representative comments from participants in circles of understanding which took place in central Minnesota in September and November of 2019.

> "Our circle discussions were amazing. We answered questions about our values, why we decided to come [to the circles], what diversity means to us, how we can take what we learned in this circle out to our daily lives. It was so interesting because looking around the circle I saw such a diverse group of people. Old people, young people, Christians, Muslims, atheists, people from all over the world with different opinions and beliefs. Each person brought new insight into each question and allowed me to see the topic from many different angles and perspectives. . . . . Although there was no conflict between the members present, it was still important to bring each other together and hear from people that are different from me" (Respondent 1, September 2019).

> "[It was] very helpful to learn new information and [to] feel comfortable talking to each other. [It was] great to have a circle facilitator" (Respondent 2, September 2019).

> "[It was] an excellent program [and] well-organized. [It] offered a comfortable way to interact about culture, values, commonalities, and diversity" (Respondent 3, September 2019).

> "As I left and listened to what my friends had to say about the circles they were in, I noticed something different about my own. Although in general everyone said they wanted to be there to heal wounds and meet new people and it seemed like everyone's mind was open to everyone else there, it seemed like there was still a lot of fear and hesitation that caused people to stay at a surface level in our conversation. For instance, people would talk about fear and animosity, but they wouldn't clearly say what was going on. They would use really general language like 'the tensions between certain people' or 'I think people need to learn about things so that they can have an open mind' rather than explicitly referencing racism, Islamophobia, or other things that obviously exist and everyone was obviously referencing. . . I also think that the fact people were relieved about not delving into tense topics meant that there [are] still barriers there.

> "To be perfectly honest, I wasn't relieved, but rather disappointed that we

> weren't able to talk about the sensitive subjects. I think it's all well and good to say what our values are, but I think the conversation wouldn't have been terribly different if we had all been white Saint Cloud natives. We all said we valued family, were able to ask some polite questions or make kind comments about parenting or careers here and there, but at the end of the day, I don't feel like I know the people in my group as distinct from each other as much as I know them as a group of nice folks" (Respondent 1, November 2019).

This final response encapsulates critiques of circles of understanding from some persons who participate in them, and are committed to the circles' principles. The critiques of such persons include the ideas that (1) the circles attract like-minded facilitators and participants and, as a result, no one is transformed; (2) the conversations in the circles do not grapple with real problems and, as a result, the circles do not solve them; and (3) the questions, prompts, and conversations do not encourage people to discuss uncomfortable subjects (Author's observations, 2017-2019).

While these and similar critiques are valid, there are also contrasting instances within the circles where people have conversations with persons, whose religious and ethnic backgrounds are different from their own, where they learn much as a result. At the same time, the informal conversations, which occur after the circles, can provide opportunities to discuss deeper, and potentially more uncomfortable topics, that participants may not have discussed in the circles.

Circles of understanding and restorative justice

There are other contexts where circles of understanding can be effective. These two contexts are different from the situation of Somalis in Minnesota in that those two contexts involve injustices that were committed, whereas the Somalis who migrated to Minnesota and non-Somalis are involved in the circles of understanding that are described above, are involved in those circles not because of injustices that they may have committed. An additional context, where circles of understanding can be effective, is when one individual commits an offense against

another, such as stealing or vandalism. A second relates to truth and reconciliation commissions, in cases where government officials or others have violated human rights.

Circles of understanding are sometimes utilized in tandem with restorative justice, which is a non-retributive way of reconciling criminal offenders with their victims. With respect to perpetrators of crimes within communities, restorative justice is an approach to justice in which one of the responses to a crime is to organize a meeting between the victim and the offender, with one person as the mediator between the two. In this context, the victim and offender discuss their experiences of what happened, talk about who was harmed by the crime and how, and then establish an understanding for what the offender can do to repair the harm. This reparation may include the offender rectifying the offense (such as returning stolen property), an apology, and/or other actions to compensate those affected, and to prevent the offender from causing future harm (Sherman & Strang, 2007; Karp, 2019).

Restorative justice encourages offenders to take responsibility for their actions, understand the harm they have caused, give them an opportunity to rectify it, and discourage them from causing further harm (Sherman & Strang, 2007; Zehr, 2014). Restorative justice gives victims an active role in reconciliation and forgiveness, while reducing feelings of anxiety and powerlessness. Restorative justice is founded on an alternative theory to the traditional methods of justice, which often focus on retribution. At the same time, restorative justice programs can complement traditional methods. Mediators, offenders, and victims use principles from circles of understanding in restorative justice programs, particularly when all of them meet in order to address the harm, which the offender has caused, and then establish reconciliation (Sherman & Strang, 2007; Karp, 2019).

In terms of procedure, before the circle-of-understanding meeting between the offender and victim, the mediator meets individually with the offender, in order to describe to the offender the harm which she or he has caused the victim and to explain the

topics and procedures of the upcoming meeting with the victim, and some ways that the offender can rectify the offense. In like manner, the mediator meets individually with the victim in order to explain the topics and procedures of the upcoming meeting with the offender, and suggest ways that the offender may be willing to rectify the offense. The mediator may meet several times individually with the offender and victim before the common meeting in order to prepare them for it, and to seek an agreement on a resolution before that common circle-of-understanding meeting (Sherman & Strang, 2007; Baliga, 2016).

While scholars debate the effectiveness of restorative justice, there is strong evidence in the United States which indicates that restorative justice practices are beneficial to offenders, communities, and victims. Restorative justice has a high rate of success in reducing repeat offenses. When communities reintegrate their citizens after harm has been repaired, the likelihood of recidivism is greatly reduced (Community Justice Network of Vermont, n.d.; Bacon, 2015). Restorative justice practices save governments money by preventing individuals from becoming part of judicial processes for offenses that can be resolved at the local level with community and victim participation (Community Justice Network of Vermont, n.d.). When victims are offered the opportunity to have a safe and facilitated dialogue with the person who harmed them, they feel empowered and invested in the process (Community Justice Network of Vermont, n.d.). Restorative justice has a high rate of victim satisfaction. Many victims are able to recover what was taken from them, whether it be material possessions or their sense of security and peace of mind (Community Justice Network of Vermont, n.d.). Offenders have the opportunity to express remorse and apologize for their actions, benefiting themselves as well as their victims. Restorative justice has a high rate of compliance and completion. Within a voluntary process, offenders comply with agreements which they helped create (Community Justice Network of Vermont, n.d.).

Truth and reconciliation commissions

On the level of politics, there is significant overlap between the principles of circles of understanding, on the one hand, and truth and reconciliation commissions, on the other. Truth and reconciliation commissions have attempted to address harm in dozens of countries including South Africa, Germany, and Argentina (United States Institute of Peace, 2011). The injustices committed in these countries were much graver than cases of theft and vandalism, and, as a result, the work of the truth and justice commissions in South Africa, Germany, and Argentina are in a different category. After Apartheid in South Africa ended, for example, the truth and reconciliation commission created procedures that encouraged white Afrikaners, who were members of the South African police or military and had committed wrongful acts, to publicly confess those acts and receive amnesty from punishment for doing so (United States Institute of Peace, 1995b). Truth and reconciliation commissions in Germany were established to address human rights violations in the former East Germany (United States Institute of Peace, 1995a), while a truth and reconciliation commission in Argentina attempted to address problems related to Argentinians who had disappeared through the policies of that country's government (1983). In those countries, reparations were recommended to address the needs of victims and their families. In all these cases, principles related to circles of understanding and restorative justice were crucial in the truth and reconciliation commissions' work.

Conclusion

When circles of understanding and truth-and-reconciliation commissions are implemented, the people implementing them must be attentive to the specific aspects of the cultures. For example, Middle Easterners emphasize honor and shame, whereas westerners emphasize innocence and guilt. The emphasis on honor and shame in the Middle East makes it difficult for some persons to publicly acknowledge their biases or crimes which they may have committed. These are examples of some cultural factors that facilitators of circles of understanding, as well as truth

and reconciliation commissions, should consider as they adapt their work to specific cultural contexts. Could principles related to circles of understanding and restorative justice be relevant to a variety of contexts which include Muslims and Christians, such as in western and Middle Eastern countries, for example? Potentially. For instance, in my view, circles of understanding have proven significant in central Minnesota, in that they have enabled persons of different backgrounds to share ideas with one other while, in some cases, forming friendships. These positive experiences provide reason to believe that circles of understanding may be significant in other contexts also.

In this vein, Islam and Christianity teach the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation, while Muslims and Christians attempt to lead their daily lives in accordance with those ideals. Indeed, both religions emphasize peace. The Quran states, "As for those who believe and do good works, God will guide them through their faith. Rivers will run beneath their feet in the Gardens of Bliss. Their prayer will be 'Glory to You, Lord!' and their greeting to one another, 'Peace!'" (Quran 10:9-10). Similarly, according to John's Gospel in the Christian Bible, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). While there are no magic solutions, it is better for people to converse constructively than to not converse at all.

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VIEWS OF RELIGION AND PEACEBUILDING AMONG LEBANESE EDUCATORS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTS

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Abstract

This chapter reports on a research project that was conducted at six faith-based Islamic and Christian private schools in Lebanon during the academic year 2020-2021. From an educational perspective, the project aimed at exploring and mapping students', educators' and parents' views regarding the interplay between religion, conflict, and peacebuilding. The chapter presents a concise and focused review of a relevant body of literature to justify the purpose and significance of the research project. In relation to the adopted rationale and associated research questions, the chapter proceeds to explain the qualitative multi-case design customized for the research project while elaborating on the adopted ethical and trustworthy procedures used for sampling, focus group data collection, and thematic data analysis. The chapter ends with a tabulated summary of preliminary findings and an outline of future directions and milestones of this research project.

Introduction

This chapter partially documents a research project that was part of the conference Religion, Education, and Peace on March 4 and 5, 2021. The conference was online, and jointly organized by Haigazian University (Beirut, Lebanon) and the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning at Saint John's University (Minnesota, USA).

The research project, which adopted a qualitative methodology, aimed at shedding light on views of religion, conflict, and peacebuilding among high school students and their

educators and parents in the context of privately-owned faith-based secondary schools in Lebanon. The project was designed and supervised by two assistant professors in the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Haigazian University and implemented by a research team which was composed of three former Haigazian students, two of them holding a Master of Arts degree. Six schools with different religious backgrounds participated in this project. In the selection process, the mission statements and policy documents of the schools were considered as they state the school's vision and mission on religion and peacebuilding.

In relation to the conceptual underpinnings of the Religion, Education, and Peace Conference, the unique and relevant contribution of this research project lies in the educational perspective informing an interfaith and interdisciplinary approach to issues of conflict, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. Conducting the project in the Lebanese context is of special importance because the country has experienced sectarian conflicts throughout its history. Expectedly, the project will generate significant curricular implications for integrating religion and peacebuilding in Lebanese formal and informal educational milieus.

It is worth noting that this chapter has an in-progress nature as it shares the preliminary findings of the data collected from all six schools. The chapter briefly encompasses the theoretical foundation and a summary of the literature that provide the framework and guidelines for this research project. It also provides a synopsis of the purpose, significance, methodology of the research project along with the preliminary findings that were presented in the conference on religion, education, and peace. The chapter ends with outlining the future trajectory for this project.

Literature review

The literature review in this section provides an integrated overview of recent and reliable research studies that are tightly related to the current study's research questions. This review is

not meant to be an in-depth and extensive report of previous research findings pertaining to the research topic. Rather, essential theoretical and research-based aspects as well as selected representative studies are included to justify the purpose and significance of our research project. In accordance with Ary et al.'s (2014) argument, reviewing the literature in a qualitative study is an ongoing and interactive process that evolves progressively with analysis and interpretation of findings; accordingly, new literature will be progressively explored and appropriately incorporated throughout the development of the research report from the current in-progress stage to the intended accomplished stage.

Religion, peace, and conflict

Through the lens of conflict and peace, religion might be described as a dichotomous phenomenon. Schwarz (2018) claims that, in recent years, scholars observe that religion is re-occurring in world-wide politics and is consequently taking part in international conflict. Schwarz (2018) also differentiates between the views regarding religion as either driving conflict or peace. More specifically, scholars, who view religion as a contributor to conflict, look at religious values as rigid entities and definitions within a religious belief system and argue that these values are contradictory across religions. On the other side, some scholars highlight interpretations of sacred texts that support the view of religion as a driver of peace, and they look at religious establishments as organizations that may reinforce peace.

Alternatively, other scholars look at religion in a more contextual way as dynamic and complex rather than static. Schwarz (2018) emphasizes the need for a critical approach to religion in which religion is not seen through the dichotomous lens that views religious values as fixed. This view of religion as a dynamic, complex phenomenon is better able to account for a diversity of views on the relation between religion and peacebuilding. This critical approach defines religion as socially constructed, lived, and dependent on a context (Schwarz, 2018).

Religion also has implications on society as a whole rather than only on individuals and students. This has been observed even in contexts where atheism was imposed by governments. Zhao (2018) conducted a study of the perceptions of university students of religion, religious beliefs, and their relation to the Marxist-dominated educational system in China. Data were collected by interviewing 64 university students who identified themselves as religious believers: Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, and Daoist. Consequently, Zhao (2018) concluded that, in the views of these students, religion has an impact beyond personal spiritual development. It affects the society as a whole in its social and political dimensions.

With the noticeable increase in religiously plural and diverse societies, peace has been studied through the lens of religious and interfaith interactions. In contexts where sectarian violence has been taking place, scholars (e.g., Szocik, 2016, Tebay, 2007) explored and construed these interactions in different significant ways. Using an analytical scheme involving philosophical/historical and scientific research approaches, Szocik (2016) studied religion and religious beliefs in the western world. He concluded that religion does not directly cause hostility and conflicts; however, in times of war and violent conflicts, religious beliefs may be employed to fuel aggressive attitudes and reinforce solidarity and self-sacrifice in concerned communities. Tebay (2007) explored the peace (conceptions, activities) and interfaith commitments in West Papua, a territory that has been the scene of violent conflict throughout its history. This exploration resulted in a number of implications, the most significant of which are: (a) successful interfaith collaboration for peace is plausible even in the middle of violent conflicts and (b) peace and peace education in each religion ought to be addressed to reinforce a collective commitment to peace at times of conflict.

Religion and education

An existing body of research supports the teaching of religion at schools as long as it is introduced in a manner that welcomes diversity. Abel et al. (2021) use the term neutrality to indicate a

form of teaching religion that is open to diversity. This mode of teaching aims to guard children at schools from negative freedom which can be manifested in inclinations to impose a specific belief system. According to this study, students regard neutrality as positive freedom through which diverse religions and religious histories are understood. Abel et al. (2021) further argue that pedagogical methods ought to be deliberately adapted to reinforce positive freedom in the classrooms, and they particularly recommend the Socratic Method, which is built around both the behavioral and cognitive approaches. Neutrality and making room for religious diversity are alternatives to secularism inside the classroom (Abel et al., 2021).

Furthermore, a number of researchers highlight the role of faith-based schools in initiating peace and reform. Abu-Nimer and Nasser (2017) examined educational reform in the Muslim world while focusing on the possibility of establishing peace in Islamic countries and schools; they concluded that reforms that do not purposely observe cultural contexts are often unsuccessful, whereas reform projects and interventions emerging from local contexts are more promising. Abu-Nimer and Nasser (2017) argue that religion and peacebuilding can coincide at schools that are faith-based, and teachers in such schools play a significant role in peace education. Based on systematic research studies addressing Islamic schools, the aforementioned researchers maintain that teachers ought to be empowered to embody peace values existing in the curricula and Islamic texts (e.g. justice, forgiveness, solidarity, equality) in student-centered learning experiences.

Educators' views of religion and professional practices

Educators view religion in different ways, and definitions vary among teachers of faith-based schools. Liljestrand and Olson (2016) conducted a study with nine religious education teachers in Swedish schools. Teachers in this study viewed religion as either an individual way of sense-making, a form of ethical guidance, or a socio-cultural system for thinking. To elaborate, some teachers viewed religion as a means to make sense of the

world. It is a search for the meaning of life and death. Other teachers viewed religion as a set of ethics and values such as respect, which offer guidance. Finally, other interviewed teachers viewed religion as a "cultural system for thinking" that they defined with reference to the social and cultural dimensions of religion (Liljestrand & Olson, 2016).

Markus et al. (2021) analyzed religious beliefs held by religion teachers in conservative Protestant schools in the Netherlands. Referring to the Bible, these teachers indicated that there is only "one God" and His "qualities" such as "grace, love and the possibility of having a relationship with Him" cannot be applied to "other gods." The strongest belief of teachers was that "Jesus is the Savior and people must acknowledge it." Nevertheless, there were few moments when teachers showed "reluctance and a change of beliefs," mentioning that, in the past, they believed that the church had a high importance but now they have discovered that one's personal relationship with God is the most important. In addition, reluctance was observed when teachers brought up the example of "holy wars in Christian history" such as "the Crusades," which they regarded as similar to the "violent attacks by Muslim extremists" (Markus et al., 2021). With regard to "God as the third party," teachers considered themselves as "belonging" and "connected" to God.

Educators also have varied views on peace, conflict, and reconciliation with respect to education. Guided by their reflective question "How can peace education reconcile students if their teachers remain divided?" Kuppens and Langer (2016) studied the role of teachers in the curricula of peacebuilding, where 984 secondary teachers in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire constituted the sample of the study. Teachers responded to a set of items regarding peace and reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire, and results showed that teachers had contrasting views regarding conflict and reconciliation in the country. Kuppens and Langer (2016) concluded that the results of the study challenge the notion that teachers are neutral peace educators. The authors also emphasized the need to analyze teachers' views and perceptions,

considering their agency, and training them prior to teaching peace and applying curricular reform.

As we have already noted, studies have shown that many teachers hold nuanced views of the relation between religion and conflict and peace. Instead of viewing religion in a one-dimensional way as a driver of either peace or conflict, religion is viewed by some teachers as a reality that integrates components of conflict and peace; positive and negative ones. These educators view religion not as a static but as a rich and dynamic phenomenon, and consequently they advocate a critical instructional approach in the classroom. Schwarz (2018) uses this critical approach to religion within university classes as he invites students to challenge their own presuppositions first, and then to approach religions critically through using sociological and ethic-based procedures. Schwarz (2018) uses the "critical concept (de)formation" as students examine their own suppositions and invites them to analyze religion and its components, within the context of society, politics, history, and power. Through this approach, students reexamine the factors connected to peace and conflict.

The relation between educators' personal beliefs and their professional educational practices is another field of study that is relevant to our research. Inevitably, teachers' personal beliefs influence their professional practices. Khasawneh and Mitib Altakhaineh (2020) conducted a study that aimed to examine middle school and high school Egyptian science teachers' views on religion and science. Results revealed that the teachers' beliefs regarding the nature and aim of science are informed by their own Islamic-religious beliefs. In a comparable previous study, Mansour (2011) collected data from 45 middle school teachers and 30 high school science teachers through an open-ended questionnaire and interviews. Results showed the teachers explained conflict between science and religion as "science conflicts with religion" rather than the other way around. Participating teachers used references to religion and religious texts to resolve any conflicts arising in their relationship with science and religion. Mansour (2011) concluded that the teachers'

perspective of social-scientific issues related to religion such as cloning might be impacted by their personal beliefs. He elaborated that a science teacher with religious beliefs is more prone to impose a religious explanation, while noticing that teachers' views on the aim of science instruction and learning might be affected too.

Fortunately, some teachers attempt to find the balance when controversies occur between the professional content and their personal beliefs. Billingsley et al. (2014) conducted a study in which they interviewed 16 religion education and science teachers at high schools in England in which religion and science are taught through two different curricular programs that are isolated from one another. However, all 8 science teachers reported that their practices of teaching certain topics were affected by an awareness of religion. In certain controversial topics, there seemed to be room for students to draw connections between science and religion, but science teachers tried to balance their instructional role, personal views, and rapport with parents and students. Billingsley et al. (2014) noticed that there could be a lack of awareness by both science and religion teachers that students' misconceptions related to religion and other viewpoints can affect their reaction to science teaching.

The way educators approach interreligious dynamics also varies. According to a study conducted by McGah (2019), high school religion teachers deem that the more favorable instructional practices encompass discussion, real-life situations, application to student's life, questioning, group work, and detecting likenesses and variances. Receiving clear instructions, student engagement, learner-centered approaches, and collaborative work are all in favor of students in religion classes (McGah, 2019). The need for discussion and a learner-centered approach is heightened when the student body is religiously diverse or when teachers are introducing the "other religion." Markus et al. (2021) define "religious others" as "everyone who, from the participants' perspective, has a different worldview from theirs." As for the teachers' beliefs about religious others, Markus et al. (2021) were able to divide the teachers' answers into three

categories: "distinction, identification, and recognition." Regarding "distinction," some teachers looked at religious others with "anxiety and caution." Others emphasized the notion that there is a difference between the Christian faith and the religious other, while mentioning that this difference should not hinder the "love for the other" nor imply not accepting their beliefs that might result in "rejecting them as people". Furthermore, some teachers emphasized their responsibility to "spread the Biblical message of salvation" and reflect their beliefs "in words and deeds." As for the "identification," teachers were able to connect with the religious other, since they had similar "norms", "values" and status within the society. In respect of "recognition," teachers' beliefs were divided into subcategories, including "beliefs about freedom, beliefs about God seeing the heart, beliefs about human value, and beliefs about love" (Markus et al., 2021).

The "other" is another definition that teachers view in diverse ways. Markus et al. (2021) discovered that there were teachers who barely had contact with religious others due to their place of residence or work atmosphere. Among the ones who had interactions, some found it enjoyable as they were able to share their ideas, gather new information about the other religion, and have an opportunity to think more about their own beliefs. On the other hand, some found interacting with religious others quite difficult.

Students' views of religion and peace education

Students are at the center of education. They are the ones receiving both formal and informal education and are consequently influenced by their parents, peers, teachers, and other components of the society. Hence, it is essential to study the way students view this influence in relation to religion and peace.

In a study conducted by Minnaar-Kuiper and Bertram-Troost (2020), participating students in the Netherlands deemed that their parents play a prominent role in forming their worldview; more specifically, students emphasized parents' role in terms of parents' rearing style involving spending intensive time with and gaining trust of their children. In addition, many

students voiced that their peers also have an influence on their worldviews because of friends' shared experiences, but a limited number of students claimed that school has an influence on their worldviews while attributing this influence to time spent at school. Virtually all students participating in the study tended to agree that a course in which they had enrolled entitled Religion and World View impacted their views; they disagreed on the level of the impact (Minnaar-Kuiper & Bertram-Troost, 2020).

Students themselves have different views with respect to religion and education. Zhao's study (2018), to which we referred to earlier, discussed religious views of students in accordance with three patterns of though, namely "grounding in religious conviction," "negotiation through lived experience," and "deconstruction of Marxist thought from an academic perspective." Following these patterns, the study involved a discussion of the "interface between religion and different forms of knowledge in religious students' school experiences." While negotiating the students' lived experiences, one of the informants mentioned that he considered "religious beliefs" key for self-cultivation as a "good person." He said: "To believe or not does not matter. The most important thing is to be a good person and act morally. But it is difficult to become a good person in modern society without being a believer. Maybe somebody can, because they are just naturally kind and not influenced by their environment…. But actually few do that, and that is the reason for the necessity of Jesus." Another informant discussed the need to study more about other religions, to deepen one's faith within their religion (As cited in Zhao, 2018).

Some students' views highlight the fact that students are individuals who assimilate knowledge and create their own understanding of religion. Consequently, they can be viewed as agents in their own learning journey when it comes to religion. Minnaar-Kuiper and Bertram-Troost (2020) conducted an in-depth qualitative study to understand how high school Dutch students (ages 14-16 years old) realize how their world view is molded. Results showed that students believe that they are in control of their views and that religious education affects their

views solely if they can find a way to connect its content to their lives. Minnaar-Kuiper & Bertram-Troost's (2020) study also revealed that students presume that they can make informed choices regarding their world views as they utilize their reasoning skills to evaluate ideas and opinions from different resources (Minnaar-Kuiper & Bertram-Troost, 2020). This process continues after secondary education. Kuburić (2010) asserts that university students think rigorously about religious matters. As those students think about the meaning of life, they look for answers about religion; moreover, they value religion in their lives, but they question the occasions in which religious leaders do support young individuals. Kuburić (2010) argues that students particularly criticize religious leaders' unethical use of positions, dishonesty, fraud, and intolerance rather than being role models who offer religious education and support.

The interplay between teachers and students

Miller and McKenna (2011) conducted a qualitative study in the United Kingdom to add to the literature on religion, dialogue, and conflict in schools from the perspective of secondary level teachers and students. The sample included 27 15-year-old students from both Christian and Muslim affiliations as well as 10 teachers of different backgrounds. The authors used qualitative methods including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, written submissions, published documentation, and a qualitative questionnaire. To analyze the data, the authors looked for patterns, consistencies, and differences pertaining to notions of "God" and "religion." Miller and McKenna (2011) concluded that "belief" was the most common term in students' descriptions of religion with noticeable references to "peace" and "commitment," while teachers' descriptions of religion were factual as they frequently cited "faith" and "church." The study also showed that teachers made negative judgments by referring to conflict, inflexibility, war, and extremism; when it comes to God, students and teachers used words that are connected to beliefs and practices such as "creator," "faith," and "power."

Regarding the importance of religion in life, Miller and McKenna (2011) noticed that students referred to their lifestyle and religious practices as a way to provide a thorough clarification of the reason religion is prominent, but teachers gave examples of religion's impact in the past and shared a strong longing to "respect religion." As for the social dimension of religion, students shared that they had interesting religion-related discussions with their classmates about moral problems, holidays and celebrations, and negative topics like racism and stereotypes. Teachers reported that they deem religion as a personal matter, and they rarely talk about it with friends and deemed it as personal to them; however, they often engage in conversations about charity, creating justice, comparison of belief systems and faith, what makes a good person, as well as politics and conflict. With respect to religious pluralism, Miller and McKenna (2011) concluded that teachers and students acknowledge the possibility of living in a diverse society, provided that respect and tolerance are available. Miller and McKenna's (2011) study also affirmed that religious education should be about religions and belief systems with emphasis on diversity rather than teaching religion and "preaching."

Parents: religion and education

In many countries, parents continue to enroll their children in schools that are faith-based. Darmody and Smyth (2018) studied primary schools in Ireland and concluded that religion still impacts school choice. The topic of religion and education is a controversial one, as different schools of thought and educators look at the connection between society and religion from different perspectives. This implies that parents' views impact students' views through the choice of schooling (Darmody & Smyth, 2018). Likewise, in the context of India, Ramakrishnan et al. (2018) argue that religion and spirituality education that is chosen by parents for their children has a favorable influence on children's social and emotional wellbeing. Parents also assume indirect influence on their children through enrolling them in faith-based schools. Parents who emphasize religion in the

upbringing of their children value the role that religious education plays.

Hagesæther and Sandsmark (2006) reviewed religious education in Norway with respect to human rights and concluded that for such an education not to violate parents' and children's rights, it should be presented in a framework that parents would accept. The authors discuss that "one subject for all" does not support the rights of all parents and students. Alternatively, when it comes to religious education, there are multiple possible solutions such as withdrawal from religion classes, teaching cultural rather than religious heritage, neutral education, teaching the major religion of the community, or teaching in different groups based on different backgrounds. These researchers note that religious education is not an easy task for educators if they keep in mind and respect the human rights of parents (Hagesæther & Sandsmark, 2006).

Furthermore, parents have an immediate influence on their children not only through the choices and decisions with respect to schooling but mainly through their parenting style and dialogue at home. According to Godina (2014), parenting is to a high extent shaped by religious beliefs. Kitching (2013) states that parents in Ireland expect younger children to comply with the religious views of the family. Parents provide the baseline for children and older children might disagree with their parents' views, but eventually children end up with an adapted version of their parents' views (Kitching, 2013). Similarly, Petro et al. (2018) argue beliefs of religious parents have an influence on parenting and that parents who value religious belief are likely to impart this to their children. Besides, parents influence the child's behavior and views through modeling their religious views. Petro et al. (2018) reviewed relevant data and concluded that adolescence is a critical time for individuals during which they undergo several changes. Parents continue to play a role at this time of the child's life. However, the role that friends and other social networks play in the adolescent's religious views cannot be overlooked. Petro et al. (2018) stated that fathers in a focus group discussion referred to the influence their parents had on their

current parenting style with their own children. This implies that family, parents, and social networks shape students' religious views.

Based on the above discussed premises and literature review, the topic of religion seems to be examined by scholars through different lenses and is regarded as either fixed or dynamic. Research suggests that reform, intervention, and advanced methods can help schools present religion for peacebuilding rather than religion being an agent for conflict. In doing so, the role of teacher agency is highlighted. However, research shows that the views of teachers converge and diverge at multiple points: the fixed or flexible nature of religion, religion as an agent of peace and/or conflict, the relation with the religious other, and teaching methods in religion classes. Also, teachers are individuals who have personal beliefs, professional duties, and instructional approaches. This adds further complexity to the topic of religion and education. According to the body of literature, students are at the core as they receive the influence of school, teachers, parents, and society. However, solid research emphasizes that students are agents of their own learning and views. Consequently, students' view of religion, peace, conflict, the other, diversity do not always coincide with that of teachers. Moreover, parents' views also matter given the fact that parents choose to enroll their children in faith-based schools. Parents also pass on their religious views through parenting. This chapter aims to answer questions with the purpose of adding to the existing body of literature on issues related to religion, peace, and education in the context of faith-based secondary schools.

Rationale of the study

Based on the above discussed premises and literature review, the current chapter focuses on students', educators', and parents' views of religion, conflict and peacebuilding in the context of privately-owned faith-based secondary schools in Lebanon. To the best of our knowledge and based on the literature reviewed, most of the previous related studies were conducted with teachers of religion and science. The current project, on the other hand,

broadens the scope by examining views of high school students together with their educators and parents as constituents of schools' communities. Besides, the project offers an investigation in Lebanon that can inspire further studies and bridge the gap in and enrich relevant literature. Furthermore, the literature reviewed highlights the need for a change in the approach toward religion in education and suggests corresponding alternative pedagogical methods. McGah (2019), for instance, emphasizes the need for a religion-related pedagogy involving cooperative learning, questioning, and discussions. Accordingly, and from an educational angle, this research project aims to function as a basis for any conceptual and practical changes in the views and approach to religion and peace at religion-based schools.

In addition, this project is expected to plant the seeds for realistic implications in which the findings provide evidence for local policy making and curriculum design. This is in line with Abu-Nimer and Nasser's (2017) suggestion that education is the drive to establish peace from within. Hence, intervention in religious schools that comes from within and takes the cultural context into consideration rather than adopting a "one-size fits all" approach (Abu-Nimer & Nasser, 2017). Thus, this research project offers a structure for change that is sensitive to the uniqueness of the Lebanese cultural context. Besides, as per Minnaar-Kuiper and Bertram-Troost's (2020) recommendations, religious education needs to be relevant to the lives of adolescents and children if it is to leave an impact.

Reasonably, teacher pre-service and in-service preparation ought to be observed within the study's scope of implications. McGah (2019) recommends continuous professional development for religion teachers in collaborative learning experiences, while Khasawneh and Mitib Altakhaineh (2020) argue that presenting teacher education programs from an Islamic perspective provides teachers with skills and strategies to be effective role models. Mansour (2011) contends that to offset the confusion of science teachers on topics of science and religion, teacher preparation programs need to prepare them in disciplines of science, religion, and discourse. Again, this

research project is expected to provide at least some insightful ideas for incorporating the interplay between religion, conflict, and peacebuilding in curricular frameworks and schemes of teachers' pre-service and in-service programs.

Research questions

The research project was guided by the following research questions:

For students	For educators	For parents
What are Lebanese high school students' views regarding the role of religion in developing their values, attitudes, and behaviors?	What are Lebanese educators' regarding the role of religion in developing people's values, attitudes, and behaviors?	What are Lebanese parents' views regarding the role of religion in developing people's values, attitudes, and behaviors?
What are Lebanese high school students' views regarding the past, present, and future role of religion in violent conflicts, reconciliation, and/or peacebuilding in the Lebanese context?	What are Lebanese educators' views regarding the past, present, and future role of religion in violent conflicts, reconciliation, and/or peacebuilding?	What are Lebanese parents' views regarding the past, present, and future role of religion in violent conflicts, reconciliation, and/or peacebuilding?
How do high school students evaluate the influence of their families and schools on their religion-related views?	How do Lebanese educators represent their religion-related views in their professional schemes and practices?	How do Lebanese parents represent their religion-related views in raising their children?

Methodology

Research design

To achieve the purpose of the project, a qualitative research design was employed. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), qualitative research "is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 38). The aim of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth, intricate, and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Cohen et al., 2018). In alignment with this aim, the project's qualitative traits were manifested in an exploratory and interpretative line of investigation.

This qualitative research adopted the case study design, "an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2018; p. 45). More specifically, a multiple-case study design was customized to explore students', educators' and parents' views regarding the interplay between religion, conflict, and peacebuilding. The research project rested on the assumption that a triangular relationship connecting students, educators, and parents plays a vital role in education, and there should be promising implications for exploring this relationship while addressing the interaction between religion, conflict and peace building in a scholastic context. Based on Stake's (2005) characterization of a multiple-case study design, students, educators, and parents were respectively regarded (despite the triangular relationship) as cases with distinctive views to be collectively investigated towards gaining a thorough and contextual conceptualization of the research topic (Yin, 2018).

Focus group interviews were the sole sources of data in the project. Krueger and Casey (2015) define a focus group interview as "a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive,

nonthreatening environment" (p. 26). More specifically, different groups of participants are interviewed at the same time with an opportunity to interact with each other rather than merely responding to the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018). Krueger and Casey (2015) suggest that focus group interviews should be considered when: (1) the researcher is looking for the range of opinions, perceptions, ideas, or feelings that people have about something; (2) the purpose of the study is to uncover factors that influence opinions, behavior, or motivation; (3) the researcher is trying to understand differences in perspectives among groups or categories of people; and (4) the researcher wants ideas to emerge from the group. In accordance with these considerations, focus group interviews were deemed most appropriate for facilitating the emergence of students', educators', and parents' views pertaining to the interplay between religion, conflict, and peacebuilding.

It is worth reiterating that this research project was context-bound, where only focus-group interviews were used to collect data from a certain number of participants. Accordingly, factors such as school culture, school climate, and classroom environment have been excluded, and this could be a limitation of the project (Cohen et al., 2018).

Study participants

The sample comprised students, educators, and parents from Lebanese private religiously-affiliated high schools. Six faith-based private schools, located in Beirut, Metn, Chouf, and Bekaa, were contacted to be part of this research project. These schools were chosen on availability basis to represent different confessional groups in Lebanon: Catholic, Shiite, Druze, Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Protestant. The Sunni tradition was not represented as schools of this category that were contacted for the project declined for various reasons such as time constraints and Covid-19-related restrictions.

Data collection

Protocols. Three interview protocols (English, Arabic, and Armenian versions) were developed in relation to the project's research questions for conducting students', educators', and parents' focus groups. Based on the recommendations of Krueger and Casey (2015), "Good Questions," accompanied by adequate prompts (Appendix A), were formulated satisfying eight qualities: (1) evoking conversation; (2) using words participants would use when talking about the issue; (3) easy to say; (4) clear; (5) short; (6) open-ended requiring explanations, descriptions, or illustrations; (7) one-dimensional avoiding grouping things that may be perceived as different; and (8) including clear directions. Moreover, the questions were categorized as (a) introductory questions introducing the topic of discussion and getting participants to start thinking about their connection with the topic; (b) transition questions to move the conversation into the key questions that drive the study; (c) key questions driving the study in relation to the research questions; and (d) ending questions to bring closure to the discussion, to enable participants to reflect back on previous comments, and to facilitate critical analysis. The protocols were piloted with volunteers acquiring relevant profiles and refined based on the piloting outcomes.

Procedure. Schools were contacted for Focus Group Interview implementation. Then, an administrator of each participating school facilitated the recruitment of students (one focus group), educators (second focus group), and parents (third focus group) belonging to the school's community. Seventeen online and 1 face-to-face interview took place with an average of 90 minutes for each focus group. More specifically, between 7 & 12 students, 6 & 11 educators, and 3 & 10 parents participated in student, educator, and parent interviews respectively. Because data collection took place between November 2020 and March 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic, most interviews were over Zoom with cameras on as schools were working remotely and the country was under a lockdown.

In agreement with Krueger and Casey's (2015) suggestions, the three members of the research team cooperated,

through alternating roles, in the processes of facilitation, assistance, and note-taking in each of the focus group interviews. Members of the research team used a note-taking form (Appendix B) that attended to the participants' key ideas and nonverbal activities along with challenges that occurred during the interview. To satisfy trustworthiness necessities, participants' key ideas were recorded accurately and extensively by including word-for-word quotations; the presence of three research members during the interview allowed for maintaining precision in note-taking. Additionally, non-verbal activity was widely reported when the behavior was repetitive and obvious. After each interview, the team member assuming the role of the facilitator met with the two other members assuming the roles of assistant facilitator and note-taker for debriefing to highlight possible themes and helpful quotes. All members also reflected on how a current focus group was different from the previous ones and discussed possible improvements for next focus groups.

Importantly, the research design and implementation adhered to a set of ethical considerations. Prior to the project administration, an Approval for Research Study Form was completed and submitted by the researchers. Next, school administrators were contacted, and informed consents were provided to and signed by participating students, educators, and parents. The consent form explained the purpose of the study (also communicated at the beginning of each focus group interview) and included a statement that participation in the research project was voluntary and that participants were free to withdraw at any time. Moreover, participants were informed through the form (also at the beginning of each interview) that all information shared will remain confidential. It was also accentuated that the data and interview recordings obtained will be encrypted and retained for three years for research purposes.

Data Analysis

Scheme. In alignment with Krueger and Casey's (2015) suggestions for analyzing a focus group data, the study adopted a rigorous analytical scheme that was meant to be "systematic,

verifiable, sequential, and consequential." (p. 321). The plan was to harness different sources including the note-taking forms and verbatim transcriptions of interviews, while following a systematic analytical process involving the following steps: (a) establishing units of data analysis, indicating how they compare and contrast; (b) assembling items and units into related clusters, themes, and patterns based on reasonable and identifiable factors; (c) generating provisional inferences, as well as setting temporary and working hypotheses; (d) seeking negative and discrepant cases; and (g) generating a contextual theory (Cohen et al., 2018). However, for sharing preliminary data in the conference on religion, education, and peace, an urgent note-based analytical scheme was employed by relying mainly on the data from the note-taking forms. This urgent scheme was deemed sufficient as it helped in prompt in-process reporting of a representative sample of research findings that were conveniently communicable to the audience at the conference on religion, education, and peace.

Procedure. The research team selected a representative Islamic School and a representative Christian school, and each team member analyzed either the students', educators', or parents' note-taking forms in both schools. In analyzing the notes, the team members (a) identified and organized key ideas in participants' responses to interview questions, (b) regrouped the key ideas based on their relevance to the foci of the interview questions, and (c) compiled identifiable features by looking for concepts that were frequently mentioned in a focus group interview and extensively mentioned by multiple participants. Finally, the team examined how much intensity and passion, specificity and details, internal consistency, and importance were associated with that occurring concept. On a regular basis, all three team members met during the analysis process and shared their reflections in order to generate reliable and valuable findings.

Sample of Preliminary Findings

The following sample of preliminary findings (tables 1, 2 & 3) emerging from the urgent analytical scheme was presented in the conference on religion, education, and peace in terms of three aspects: Definitions, positives and negatives attributed to religion, and the role of religion.

Table 1: Findings from students

	School A [Christian affiliation]	School B [Islamic affiliation]
Definitions	*Definitions* Conflict: Differing traditions and views Reconciliation: Understanding through communication Peacebuilding: Reaching peace through reconciliation and communication *Sources* Personal experiences & media	*Definitions* Conflict: Fanaticism and extremism Peacebuilding: Inner peace achieved through knowing and accommodating religion *Sources* Islamic Holy Book Religious meetings Personal life experiences
Positives and negatives attributed to religion	*Positives* National Achievements (e.g. Patriarch's efforts to establish Greater Lebanon) Religious Miracles (e.g. Saint Charbel & Saint Rita's miracles) Uniqueness of Lebanese context (e.g., Coexistence between religious groups in Lebanon versus religion-based alliances among other countries) *Negatives* War and destruction (e.g., Crusades religious wars, Hagia Sophia controversy)	*Positives* Conflict resolution and peacebuilding (e.g., role of Lebanese religious associations' in maintaining peace) Humanitarian activities (e.g. Mother Teresa's work with the poor and efforts for peace) *Negatives* Using religion in wars (e.g. Lebanese civil war, Crusades)

	Religion-based discrimination (e.g. Intolerance against Christians in some Arab countries, Bullying by Muslims in some western Countries)	
Role of religion	*Religion as a driver to peacebuilding* Fundamentals of the Christian faith promote peace and love Resolving conflicts within and between different countries *Religion as a driver of violent conflict* Religion-based political regimes use religion to seek power and dominance Fanaticism and intolerance can lead to war *Religion in the past, present, and future* Past repeats itself Change depends on reconciliation	*Religion as a driver to peacebuilding* No religion claims for violence Religion calls for peace and love *Religion as a driver to violent conflict* Any violence should be attributed to human nature Misunderstanding religion leads to conflicts Politicized religion and power-seeking cause conflicts *Religion in the past, present, and future* The mission of religion is sustainable Religion is source of hope

Table 2: Findings from educators

	School A [Christian affiliation]	School B [Islamic affiliation]
Definitions	*Definitions* Conflict: Government's role in sectarian countries Peacebuilding: Happiness associated with Jesus and Christianity	*Definitions* Conflict: Internal conflict within the self; Fanaticism Reconciliation: Resolving the inner conflicts within ourselves Peacebuilding: The true image of religion (love, positivity, respect)

Positives and negatives attributed to religion	*Positives* Peacebuilding and forgiveness (e.g. Pope visiting Israel forgiving Jews, Apologies by the Church) *Negatives* Erroneous association between religion and war Confusing human behavior (Christians) with genuine religious beliefs (Church)	*Positives* Peace and Love represent the core of religion (e.g., Prophets' spread love and peace, Mother Teresa as a role model for peace, Pope's visit to Mecca) *Negatives* Using Religion as a façade (e.g., conflicts in the Middle East, terrorism, Crusades not truly backed by religion) Negatives associated with extremists not with religion and true believers.
Role of religion	*Religion as a driver to peacebuilding* True religion is directed to faith and God and calls for peace *Religion as a driver to violent conflict* Perception of religion (e.g. non-developmental perception leads to conflicts)	*Religion as a driver to peacebuilding* All religions are drivers of peace There are always examples and figures from each religion who give a positive image of the other religion. *Religion as a driver to violent conflict* Politicizing religion and seeking predominance and power

Table 3: Findings from parents

	School A [Christian affiliation]	School B [Islamic affiliation]
Definitions	*Definitions* Violent Conflict: Differing points of view and backgrounds Reconciliation and peace building: Establishing compromises and respecting others' views	*Definitions* Peace building: Inner peace within the self-enhances tolerance and acceptance of 'others'

	Sources Religious Holy Books (e.g., the Bible) Educational background and personal life experiences	
Positives and negatives attributed to Religion	*Positives* Developing empathy (e.g., accepting and respecting others) Initiatives for peacebuilding (e.g., Pope's visits to different countries like Sudan) *Negatives* Fanaticism (e.g., visa applications asking for religion) Differentiation (e.g., President Trump's actions against Muslims) Wars (e.g., Crusades, Ottoman Empire, Lebanese civil war)	*Positives* Peacebuilding (e.g., Pope's call for peace building) *Negatives* Political conflicts falsely attributed to religion (e.g., terrorism around the world, conflicts in the Lebanese context, religious figures playing a political role)
Role of religion	*Religion as a driver to violent conflict* Wars and conflicts (e.g., Crusades, Ottoman Empire, Lebanese civil war) Conflicts within the same religion (e.g., Christian and Islamic sects) Fanaticism (e.g., ISIS) Human natures (e.g., people's convictions and choices) *Religion as a driver to reconciliation and peacebuilding* Love, peace, and reconciliation as Christians' mission and responsibility No religion claims for violence	*Religion as a driver to violent conflict* Politicizing & misusing religion (e.g., Crusades, Conflicts between Islamic sects, terrorism, political role of religious figures) *Religion as a driver to reconciliation and peacebuilding* Essential virtues of religion: Peace, love, reconciliation between God, human beings, and environment

	Past, present, and the future No change because conflict is part of the human nature and it is continuously evolving Hope for change and parents have an important role to play	

Further Directions

First, one essential direction is to collect more data through contacting other schools, especially ones of religious affiliations that have not been represented in the previous stage of this research project such as schools of the Sunni faith. This will help in advancing the comprehensiveness and meaningfulness of the research outcomes. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, for the purpose of the conference and to report on preliminary findings, a note-based urgent scheme was adopted to compile preliminary findings for two schools only. The rigorous analytical scheme will be utilized to construct the final research report.

In order to engender a generalizable perspective regarding students', educators', and parents' views on the research topic, a future direction is to design and implement a quantitative study involving larger samples and appropriate statistical treatments.

Finally, the findings of the study need to be communicated to schools and shareholders to initiate the discussion on plausible ways for making all significant findings and implications useful constituents of curricular reforms and school development endeavors.

Appendix A: Focus group interview questions

Questions for students

Type of question	Main questions	Going further prompts
Introductory [Setting the stage; triggering prior experiences]	Have you been recently involved in any religion-related discussions? In what context? What were the discussions focused on? Do you feel comfortable with such discussions? Why?	2a. What about the relationship between religion and peace and/or conflicts?
Transition [Shifting the focus towards the study's essential ideas]	In your opinion, what is religion and what are its distinctive features? Do you think that people, in general, choose a religion for themselves or simply follow their ancestors' religion? Religion is commonly associated violent conflict or to reconciliation & peace building. How would you define violent conflict', 'reconciliation', and 'peace building'?	2a. Why and how does that happen? 2b. Do you see any positive and/or negative consequences to this trend? 3a. What is (are) the source(s) of your definitions?
Key Questions [directly and rigorously associated with the research questions]	Do you think that religion, in the way you characterize it, has a role in developing an individual's patterns of thinking, judging, and behaving? In your opinion what positive and negative things in the world (e.g., events, concepts, and changes) can be merely or	1a. Has that been the case in the past and the present? 1b. Will that continue to be the case in the future? 2a. How do you judge that religion has been responsible these positive and negative things? 3a. Has that been the case in the past and the present? 3b. Will that continue to be the case in the future?

	predominantly attributed to religion? Do you see religion as a driver to violent conflict or to reconciliation & peace building? To what extent has your family played a role in shaping and developing the religion-related views you shared in this interview? To what extent has your school played a role in shaping and developing the religion-related views you shared in this interview?	4a. Could you please evaluate, with justification, the level of your family's influence? You may wish to use adjectives like strong, moderate, weak, or nonexistent in your elaboration. 4b. Could you please provide some further specific details about the mechanism of this influence and the people involved? Situations, occurrences, contexts, discussions Mother, father, sisters/brothers, grandparents, uncles, aunts 5a. Could you please evaluate, with justification, the level of your school's influence? You may wish to use adjectives like strong, moderate, weak, or nonexistent in your elaboration. 5b. Could you please provide some further details about the mechanism of this influence and the persons involved? Subject matter, classroom activities & discussions, projects, field trips, celebrations, clubs, sports, extracurricular activities Teachers, administrators, peers
Ending questions	Would anybody like to summarize the key ideas raised in our meeting today? Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't?	

Questions for educators

Type of question	Main questions	Going further prompts
Introductory [Setting the stage; triggering prior experiences]	How often do you engage in religion- related discussions? In what contexts would such discussions commonly take place? What are the discussions usually focused on? Do you feel comfortable with such discussions? Why?	3a. What about the relationship between religion and peace and/or conflicts?
Transition [Shifting the focus towards the study's essential ideas]	In your opinion, what is religion and what are its distinctive features? Do you think that people, in general, choose a religion for themselves or simply follow their ancestors' religion? It is quite common to associate religion with either violent conflicts or reconciliation & peace building How would you define violent conflict', 'reconciliation', and 'peace building'?	2a. Why and how does that happen? 2b. Do you see any positive and/or negative consequences to this trend? 3a. What is (are) the source(s) of your definitions?
Key Questions [directly and rigorously associated with the research questions]	Do you think that religion, in the way you characterize it, has a role in developing an individual's patterns of thinking, judging and behaving? In your opinion what positive and negative things in the world (e.g. events, concepts, and changes) can be merely or	2a. How do you judge that religion has been responsible for these positive and negative things? 3a. Has that been the case in the past and the present? 3b. Will that continue to be the case in the future? 4a. Claim: Views not represented in any way

	predominantly attributed to religion? Do you see religion as a driver to violent conflict or to reconciliation & peace building? To what extent, do you represent your religion-related views in your professional schemes and practices?	Do you intentionally prevent your religion-related views from interfering with your professional schemes and practices? Why? How do you make sure that these views are not represented in any aspect of your work? 4b. Claim: Views unwittingly represented What particular religion-related views unwittingly interfere with your professional plans and/or practices? When and how does that happen? Based on your experience, what advantages and/or disadvantages (if any) may be associated with this unplanned interference? 4c. Claim: Views wittingly represented What particular views do you deliberately represent in your work? When, how, and why do you do that? Please share specific examples of criteria, considerations, activities, academic tasks, resources… Do you purposefully address any aspect(s) of the 'other religion' in your work-related activities? Please elaborate. Based on your experience, what advantages and/or challenges (if any) may be associated with making religion-related views part of educators' professional endeavors?
Ending questions	Would anybody like to summarize the key ideas raised in our meeting today?	

	Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't?	

Questions for parents

Type of question	Main questions	Going further prompts
Introductory [Setting the stage; triggering prior experiences]	To what extent do you feel comfortable with religion-related discussions? Why? How do you describe the role of religion in your family life and parenting? What kind of religion-related discourse (if any) takes place at your home with your family?	3a. What is this discourse commonly focused on? 3b. To what extent do your children get involved in this discourse? 3c. Have you ever tackled the relationship between religion and peace and/or conflicts? We really appreciate specific details.
Transition [Shifting the focus towards the study's essential ideas]	In your opinion, what is religion and what are its distinctive features? Do you think that people, in general, choose a religion for themselves or simply follow their ancestors' religion? It is quite common to associate religion with either violent conflicts or reconciliation & peace building How would you define violent conflict', 'reconciliation', and 'peace building'?	2a. Why and how does that happen? 2b. Do you see any positive and/or negative consequences to this trend? 3a. What is (are) the source(s) of your definitions?

Key Questions [directly and rigorously associated with the research questions]	Do you think that religion, in the way you characterize it, has a role in developing an individual's patterns of thinking, judging and behaving? In your opinion what positive and negative things in the world (e.g. events, concepts, and changes) can be merely or predominantly attributed to religion? Do you see religion as a driver to violent conflict or to reconciliation & peace building? To what extent, do you represent your religion-related views in the way you raise your children?	2a. How do you judge that religion has been responsible for these positive and negative things? 3a. Has that been the case in the past and the present? 3b. Will that continue to be the case in the future? 4a. Claim: Views not represented in any way Do you intentionally prevent your religion-related views from interfering with your parenting style? Why? How do you make sure that these views do not interfere in the way you raise your children? 4b. Claim: Views unwittingly represented What particular religion-related views unwittingly interfere with your parenting style? When and how does that happen? Based on your experience, what advantages and/or disadvantages (if any) may be associated with this unplanned interference? 4c. Claim: Views wittingly represented What particular views do you deliberately represent in the way you raise your children? When, how, and why do you do that? Please share specific examples of criteria, considerations, activities, academic tasks, resources… How does the 'other religion' look like in your parenting style?
Ending questions	Would anybody like to summarize the key ideas raised in our meeting today?	

	Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't?	

Appendix B: Focus group note taking form

Participants

Institution: ……

Group: □ Educators □ Parents □ Students

Number: ……

Date: ……

Time: ……

Location/Platform:
……

Focus group record

Interview questions	Participants' key ideas (1)	Participants' nonverbal activity (2)	Challenging occurrences (3)

Debriefing (4)

(1) Participants' key ideas [Essentially based on Krueger & Casey, 2015] Record – as accurately and extensively as possible – the key ideas emphasized by each participant Emphasize, when appropriate and possible, well-said quotes: Capture word-for-word as much of the statement as possible - Listen for sentences or phrases that are particularly enlightening or eloquently express a particular point of view - Place quotation marks around the statement or phrase and indicate name of speaker - Place your opinions, thoughts, or ideas in parenthesis to keep them separate from participant comments - If a question occurs to you that you would like to ask at the end of the discussion, write it down in a circle or box.
(2) Participants' nonverbal activity [Essentially based on Krueger & Casey, 2015] Record – as descriptively and thoroughly as possible – any salient observations of nonverbal behavior Watch for the obvious, frequent, and intense such as: Head nods - Physical excitement - Hands movement - Facial expressions - Eye contact between certain participants - Other clues that would indicate level of agreement, support, interest, or engagement
(3) Challenging occurrences Briefly describe the nature of the challenging occurrences and the way they were handled Use the following preliminary scheme to identify the challenging occurrences Occurrences related to interview questions: Any difficulty that may be attributed to content and/or structure of the questions Occurrences associated with participants' behaviors. Examples include: [Check pp. 20-23 in Toolkit for Conducting Focus Groups]: Someone is dominating the conversation - Men are speaking up more than women or vice versa - No one responds to a certain question - Group begins to talk about topics that are not relevant to the research - People are having side conversations - A participant skips ahead, providing information relevant to, or even completely answering, a question that you haven't gotten to - A number of participants say that they do not feel comfortable answering one or more questions - Participants begin leaving
(4) Debriefing Immediately after the session, the facilitator is highly recommended to debrief with the other research team and record the debriefing. Some questions that you might consider when conducting the debriefing: What were the themes? - What are the most important points that we've learned from this group? - What was surprising or unexpected? - What quotes were particularly helpful? - How was this group similar to or different from earlier groups? - Does anything need to be changed before the next group?

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Faith and Peacebuilding in Private Faith-Based Schools: Theological Perspectives from Lebanon

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Abstract
This chapter considers religious education and peacebuilding in faith-based secondary schools in Lebanon. The data were collected in seven interviews with administrators and educators who represented different religious groups in Lebanon: Sunni, Shia, Druze, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. The data were analyzed with the help of three theories. First, they were viewed with the help of a well-known typology for the theology of religions, which distinguishes between exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist views. It was observed that educators at faith-based schools in Lebanon generally hold inclusivist or pluralist views of other religions. Second, the peacebuilding praxis of the schools was analyzed in light of a theory for religious education based on revelation through events, persons, and propositions, which led to the conclusion that the schools make peacebuilding efforts on the level of propositions, discourse, and personal encounters, but less so on the level of common celebrations of religious events, holidays, and festivals. Third, through the lens of specific pedagogies for religious education, it was demonstrated that Lebanese faith-based schools pay much attention to curriculum development, but that social engagement and advocacy work are problematic in the Lebanese context, and that the schools are only beginning to work on peacebuilding in more creative ways, in collaboration with artists, musicians, storytellers, and the like.

Introduction

Religious education is not a neutral, innocent enterprise. The representation of the divine, the religious other and the life of faith

can foster peace or promote violence. In societies that have experienced violent sectarian conflict in their recent history, religious education may be a source of reconciliation or help rekindle religiously sanctioned violence.

Lebanon is a society with a fresh memory of sectarian conflict. Sectarianism or confessionalism in Lebanon can be traced back to modernizations in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, when the Christian communities were granted equal rights as Muslim communities which failed. Lebanese-American historian Ussama Makdisi (2000) has argued that foreign interference in the mid-nineteenth century was a crucial factor in shaping what he calls a "culture of sectarianism." This disruption of the intercommunal power balance soon led to a bloody conflict between Christians and Druze in Lebanon in 1860. The division of society along sectarian lines was further accentuated amidst regional and international tensions at various stages of the twentieth century, especially the creation of Greater Lebanon under the leadership of the Maronites (1920), the French Mandate (1923-1945), the establishment of the State of Israel (1948), and the turbulent first decades of the independent Lebanese Republic, which coincided with the beginning of the Cold War. Even though the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) was a complex series of conflicts and cannot simplistically be described as a sectarian conflict, we can nevertheless say that in it sectarian violence reached a sad climax. Many militias had an explicitly religious affiliation and character and perceived themselves as defenders of a religious community.

The mid-nineteenth century was also the era in which private, faith-based schools began to emerge, at first Protestant and Catholic and, as Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi (1965) has demonstrated, these were soon followed by Islamic schools, which were established by Muslims who were concerned about the growing Christian influence on education. These faith-based schools consolidated themselves during the twentieth century, often with the help of foreign staff or support. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, new schools with an Islamic character were established. Today most privately owned schools

in Lebanon have a religious affiliation and character. By virtue of their history and their character, they are part and parcel of the entrenched confessional system.

One may wonder if their religious belonging disqualifies these schools from promoting peace and understanding in a deeply sectarian society. Scholars have indeed proposed educational systems that rely much less on institutional religious affiliation, focus more on general citizenship education, and thereby transcend the confessional system (Shuayb, 2012). However, the reality is that many schools continue to be operated by school boards with strong ties to religious groups. The religious authorities, under which these schools resort, certainly believe that they can contribute to peacebuilding. In fact, they argue that their faith-based schools have a critical mission of peacebuilding in contemporary Lebanon. It is the aim of this paper to explore the role of peace in their theologies and educational philosophies. We are primarily interested in the views of the religiously affiliated administrators of the schools, and in their visions for representation of their theologies and philosophies in the day-to-day life of the schools. According to statistics from the World Bank (2021), almost two-thirds of schools in Lebanon are privately owned and 60 percent of students attend private schools. The vast majority of these private schools have religious affiliations. In light of this, a study of their theologies and educational philosophies is relevant on many levels, including that of conflict and peacebuilding, which we are investigating here.

In order to construct an image of peacebuilding in theologies and educational philosophies in the private educational sector, we have interviewed seven representatives of different confessional traditions in Lebanon: Shia, Sunni, Druze, Maronite-Catholic, Greek (Antiochian) Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, and Protestant. Some of the interviewees were clergy; some were school administrators; and some were educators. All represented in some way the "owners" of the faith-based schools, be they churches or religious organizations. We realized that they were but one voice within their denominations and their schools, but

we viewed their opinions as dependable expressions of their respective faith traditions.

The interview questions focused on three areas: resources for peacebuilding within the various religious traditions; religious diversity and views of the religious other; and the place of violent sectarian conflict and reconciliation in religious education. We analyzed the interviews with the help of three tools: an often-used typology for theology of religions; a model for religious education based on the nature of revelation; and a model for faith-based peace education. We realize that our study is a mere probe or sounding in a vast field that is, in our view, as yet underexplored. We nevertheless trust that it sheds light on views that guide many schools that practice faith-based education in Lebanon.

This text is structured in such a way as to reflect the inductive method we have followed in our study. First, a summary is presented of the seven interviews which formed the basis of this study. This summary is followed by an explanation of the theological typologies and models for religious education, which we consider especially relevant to the Lebanese context, and their application in analyzing the views of the interviewees. In our conclusion, we return to the question whether faith-based education can contribute to peace in a sectarian society which has experienced violent conflict and, if so, how.

Summary of the interviews

Before offering our theological analysis, we briefly summarize the interviews that we conducted with four Christian and three Muslim educators. In an awareness that this reduces their religious, theological, and professional diversity, we simply refer to our interlocutors as Christian Educators CE1, CE2, CE3 and CE4, and Muslim Educators ME1, ME2 and ME3. While not all were professional theologians or religious scholars, they were all asked to present their theological and religious views of religious education and the role of peacebuilding in it. We highlight key ideas that these educators expressed concerning the three areas of our specific interest: resources for peacebuilding in the respective

religious traditions; religious diversity and the image of the other in religious education; and the place of violent conflict in faith-based education. This summary will put us in a position to apply conceptual, analytical tools.

Resources for peacebuilding in the religious traditions

We began our interviews with the seemingly obvious question as to whether religion is a source of peace or conflict. Without exception, the educators pointed out that religion in itself is a source of peace. The Muslim educators characterized religion as "a path to goodness, love and peace… which is the real mission [as to] why the prophets were sent." CE4 used the image of the bridge that connects people. Most of the educators, however, went on to say that religion has often been misinterpreted and instrumentalized for conflict and violence. This is due to the ambiguous nature of religion; CE3 said: "religion is a two-edged sword."

The educators adduced an abundance of resources for peacebuilding in their respective traditions. The peaceful words and actions of Jesus Christ were cited, especially the beatitude "blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." CE3 identified the Letter to the Ephesians as an especially important document for a theology of peacebuilding. According to the Muslim educators, the Quran and Hadith also contain numerous exhortations to live a peaceful life, such as "A Muslim is the one who will not harm anyone either by his hand or his tongue." ME1 provided a reminder that Muslim prayer starts and finishes by calling for peace. ME3 stated that "our religion is the essence of peace." All four Christian educators claimed that the word peace plays an essential role in Christian liturgies, especially the eucharistic ones. Two among them associated peace with reconciliation.

All educators agreed that religious believers should not be mere recipients but also active advocates of peace. ME1 explained that, in their view, "religion is the source of universal peace for all believers," so this should be the aim of religious education. ME3 said: "If you are a Muslim, you should have this

inner peace and you should be a source of peace to all people and to the environment around you." CE2 concurred: "religious education should not only be a matter of providing education, but rather an awareness that faith and religion should be sources of peace, joy, reconciliation and consolation." CE4 explained that "for us peace is not only deeply rooted in our faith, it is a goal as such."

Religious education, pluralism, and the religious other

Religious education was the chief reason for the foundation of many faith-based schools in Lebanon. Ever since their establishment, their objective has been to maintain and reinforce the cultural and religious heritage of their respective religious traditions. This means that each school is primarily concerned with socialization into one specific faith tradition. In most cases, however, the student bodies of the schools are diverse. This raises the question of how the educators viewed other faiths and the presence of adherents of these faiths in their schools.

All the Christian and Muslim educators showed an awareness of the opportunities for encounter that Lebanon's religiously diverse society affords. In this compact country, the schools are unique platforms where students from different backgrounds interact on a daily basis. CE2 explained that Lebanon has a long tradition of religiously mixed student bodies, not only in public schools but also in faith-based private schools. In CE2's view, this means that the schools can serve as bridges between the different faith communities. "We have a pluralistic society within our schools, where the students are not isolated." For ME1, "religious diversity, if well understood, is a real source of richness. We are in a country [that is] extremely rich in its religious diversity... this requires enlightened mentalities mainly from religious leaders." In ME1's view, "unfortunately the enlightened mentalities are still weak."

In spite of this awareness of diversity, the transmission of the group's specific faith-tradition is important. As a result, other faith traditions may remain unknown or even feared. CE1 commented that "fear of the other is what prevails… and this is

among the biggest challenges that we are working on and that we need to confront in our schools". CE4, whose schools are located in relatively homogenous neighborhoods, admitted that they often fall short of a instilling a vision for Lebanese society as a whole, but rather focus on the faith tradition and culture of their own group.

All educators expressed that the private, faith-based schools have a twofold role: to represent and preserve their own specific religious tradition and to contribute to Lebanon's religiously plural society. According to ME2, the two tasks should not be played off against each other. "No one can give up their proper religious identity… but it is also true that religious identity should never be an obstacle for national belonging and affiliation." For ME2 the solution lies in a unitarian orientation: "Religious education in schools must reconcile spiritual, social, and national affiliations and belongings, by focusing on the goal of religions, on the foundations of each one's faith, moral, social, and human values, and on the importance of religion in building a righteous society and a just national system and human fraternity".

We asked the question of how religious diversity within the schools is addressed and translated in the educational programs, especially in religious education. All educators agreed that, over the years, the schools have acquired a recognition of the diverse and pluralistic Lebanese society and the need to maintain and promote this aspect within their educational programs. ME2 expressed that religious education in schools must be assumed with respect for the spiritual, social, and national affiliations and belongings without ignoring the goal of religion. CE2 explained that the religion classes are not mandatory for non-Christians or even Christians from other denominations. The alternative that is offered is "civic education, which is also prepared by our [religion] department, where the Christian values are taught without hurting their religious sensitivities… We definitely respect their religious identity and feelings. But we also try to communicate to them the values of the Gospel and the values of the church, which we believe can be very edifying for their lives."

Ideally, according to CE3, religious education is "a way to create a culture of openness, forgiveness, peacebuilding, and peacemaking." CE3 continued to say that "the purpose behind all these Christian education classes is not to change the minds of children who come from other religions, and to change them to our religion, but rather to help them see the commonality between religions and the common values that exist between the various religious communities." CE3 added that "we live in diverse communities, and we are in diverse contexts; therefore, when it comes to religious education, we had to implement a strategy for each and every school depending on its unique local context." CE3 contrasts the current approach of this denomination with the past when the aim of Christian education was to convert the pupils. Today, CE3 explains, "we understand mission as sharing and living Christ with the other with respect to the diverse character of the other…. In places that are predominantly Muslim, we have substituted Christian education with classes on ethics."

ME2, ME3 and CE1 identified concrete initiatives such as workshops and occasional interfaith encounters with schools representing other traditions, for example during the Feast of the Annunciation.

Historical conflict and religious education

Exactly because of its sectarian nature, the interpretation of Lebanon's recent history is a bone of contention. In none of the schools that the interviewed educators oversee are recent conflicts part of the curriculum. All educators expressed their regret about this and agreed that there is a need for a generally agreed-upon, common history textbook, in which Lebanon's recent history, including the civil war, is narrated. They all expressed their concern about the absence of such a book. This concern among educators and students has been observed by other scholars (Chrabieh, 2015; Ghosn, 2010).

In the view of the educators, the recent history is not merely a concern for history classes, but also for religious education. CE2 advocated "collaboration for religious education in Lebanon." This could be done in the form of "a platform of

collaboration between faith-based schools in Lebanon. We should have the courage to deal with these hot issues… There is a kind of Lebanese diplomacy in which everything is good, we love each other. Yes, but there are also wounds. We don't need to accuse each other". In CE2's view, such forms of cooperation may help build a common narrative and contribute to "healing these wounds of the war, of our society, and our historical conflicts." CE3 expressed a similar view: "We need to revisit the past to learn from its lessons. We have not done that as a nation, as a society, as institutions… Unfortunately, we are unable to objectively revisit our past. Perhaps we need more time. Perhaps we need better strategies of how the past can be revisited".

CE1 observed that the students in the schools "are interested in understanding what happened during the war." Students and parents alike need, in CE1's view, educational input, affected as they are by the traumas of the repeated wars and the incomplete representation of the religious other. CE1's hope is that this may help make Lebanon once more "a 'message' of fraternal coexistence among people from different religious communities." In CE1's view, this cannot be achieved exclusively through religious education, but needs to be addressed through the general curriculum.

ME2 suggested that historical conflicts and religious education need to be addressed within the school through "sharing success stories and messages of peace and coexistence during periods of wars and conflicts." In ME2's view, this approach is better "than digging deeply into the historical details of conflicts." Historical knowledge of the causes of conflict is not enough to promote peace, argued ME2. Religious education has the potential to go beyond that, as it contributes to "spreading the true message of religion through promoting the true faith in the hearts of the students and spreading the virtues in the souls, the first of which is honesty with God, with oneself and with others, common brotherhood that is indispensable regardless of the expansion of sciences and knowledge. So that these virtues are accompanying the learners wherever they go in the present and in the future."

Theologies of religions and peacebuilding

The educators' understanding of education and peacebuilding was averse to any form of triumphalism, exclusivism or absolutism. All used concepts that reflected an inclusive or pluralistic theology of religions. Signal words and phrases in the interviews were: "diverse communities" (CE3), "national identity" (ME2), "reconciliation and consolation" (CE2), "identities are respected" (CE2), "similar values" (ME3), "culture of openness" (CE3), "understanding" (CE3), "commonality between religions" (CE3), the "other is accepted" (CE3), "live together in peace" (ME3), "universal brotherhood" (CE1), "sharing" (ME2), "kindness" (ME3), "acceptance" (CE4), "promote diversity" (ME2), "diversity is a real source of richness" (ME1; ME2; and others), "authentic religious understanding" (ME1), and "loving the other" (CE1).

As has been noted, the theologians envisioned a twofold task for the schools: service to the Lebanese pluralistic nation, on the one hand, and preservation and revival of their own religious tradition and cultural heritage, on the other. Reflecting on the theology of religions, South African mission scholar David Bosch (1991, p. 476) wrote, "the revival of religion is not only a Christian phenomenon." The aim of all schools from our study was undoubtedly, in Bosch's term, religious "revitalization". The schools balanced this with a respect for the religious other. The Lebanese mosaic of religious coexistence prompted these faith-based schools to reject any form of exclusivism. We define exclusivism here as an attitude in which dialogue with others is understood as an "instrument in working for the conversion of these peoples" (Knitter, 1995, p. 27). CE3 explicitly rejected exclusivism and committed to pluralism, in claiming that the schools do not try "to change the minds of children who come from other religions, and to change them to our religion". CE2 also embraced pluralism: "what really helps us in our schools is the presence of people with different identities."

In our observations, the local contexts of the schools constituted an important factor in shaping these pluralistic theologies and philosophies of education. Some denominations

have schools throughout the country, both in religiously homogenous and religiously mixed localities. In some cases, they run schools in areas where their denomination has no presence. Working out a form of religious education in such contexts can only be done on the basis of inclusivist and pluralist views. It is relevant to remember that the curriculum is generally delivered to the students through a team of teachers who belong to the faith tradition of the school. Where the local context was different from that of the school, the teams were often more diverse, resulting in a more pluralistic outlook. In our view, this theological pluralism-in-action in the schools served peace and understanding between the religious groups. It was a theological pluralism at work in everyday encounters, not a pluralism from a distance.

Among Lebanese educators, this has led to a view that is well expressed by Bosch: "the reality to which the various religions refer is the same… all just use different names for it," without denying that "the answers differ" (Bosch, 1991, p. 481). The American Catholic theologian Paul Knitter, likewise, expressed that, according to this view, religions are "more complementary than contradictory" (Knitter, 1985, p. 220). However, the theological pluralism of the faith-based schools did not fall into the category that Knitter called "unitive pluralism" (Knitter, 1985, p. 9), which promotes "one world religion." On the contrary, the schools served as open, pluralistic platforms that retained their specific religious identities, while welcoming diversity, teaching civics and including peacebuilding principles in the curriculum.

The theologies and philosophies of education also echoed some of the inclusivist theology of religions that was embraced by the Second Vatican Council. The Council viewed religions as expressions of God's universal salvific will, quoting, in Lumen Gentium, 1 Timothy 2:4, which states that God "desires everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." In the Council's view, God's "plan of salvation" was at work in all those who "acknowledge the Creator" (LG 16). Vatican II's Declaration on the Relation of the Church with the Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate (NA), elaborated further the

commonalities between believers from different religions. It regarded religions as answers to life's unsolved questions: "the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what is sin?" (NA, 1). Religious inclusivism is also expressed in Islamic theologies, in which Judaism and Christianity are viewed as legitimate expressions of faith. Traces of an inclusivist theology of religions were found in several interviews, both among the Christian and Muslim interviewees.

In the views of the Christian educators, we also discerned a focus on Christology rather than ecclesiology, Christ rather than the institutional church. This reflected a development in Christian theology in the second half of the twentieth century, which can be seen in Vatican II documents such as NA, the work of the German Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner, and the embrace of missio Dei theology by many Protestants.

Again, the local context was important. In an area where the school represented the predominant religious affiliation, an inclusivist rather than a pluralist theology seemed to be at work. The theological view of the religious other that was expressed in several interviews may be characterized with reference to Rahner's idea of supernatural elements of grace that are found in other religions. This inclusivist way of looking at the religious other was identified as a basis for peacebuilding. ME2 expressed this: "religion is a doctrine and a way of living, and in both cases the believer must aspire for peace and desire to achieve it."

Revelation and religious pedagogy

In addition to the exclusivism-inclusivism-pluralism spectrum, we analyzed the interviews with the help of a model for religious education that was proposed by the American practical theologian Gerhard Bussmann (1977). Bussmann developed this model for Christian education, but we applied it more generally to the monotheistic religions. According to Bussmann, religious education should be based on the nature of revelation. In the monotheistic religions, revelation occurs through (1) events (such

as the exodus, the cross and resurrection, and the hijra); (2) persons (such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and the Prophet Mohammad); and (3) truths, propositions and teachings (i.e., the Holy Scriptures). This threefold understanding of revelation provides an epistemological basis for religious pedagogy.

In line with this understanding of revelation, religious education has three avenues of expression. First, the learners are involved in the celebration or commemoration of religious events, for example through partaking in prayer, pilgrimage, or religious festivals. Bussmann emphasized the importance of exposure to specific food, music, rituals and symbolic objects. Second, if revelation is personal, then religious education facilitates personal encounter or fellowship related to religious involvement. According to Bussmann, this begins on the level of the family and extends to the teacher-learner relationship. It requires an openness and transparency on the part of parents, guardians, and teachers about their religious customs. We suggest that this personal avenue of religious education could also include facilitating personal encounters between learners and exemplary religious figures. The third avenue is cognitive and discursive engagement with the Holy Scriptures and theological tradition, "knowing God with the mind," as Bussmann called it.

As we explored peacemaking in religious education, we were especially interested in seeing whether this threefold religious pedagogy was applied to interfaith engagement by the faith-based schools in Lebanon. All educators indicated that respect and appreciation for the religious other was part of the instruction in the schools, which falls under the third pedagogical avenue. CE4, for instance, emphasized that religious education should unmask media-fed stereotypes and avoid generalizations about the other. The second avenue, personal encounter and fellowship, was emphasized with respect to the religious tradition of the school, but less so in an interfaith context. As we mentioned in the summary of the interviews, CE1 explained that the school organized visits to schools of a different faith backgrounds. ME1 and ME3 made mention of common workshops. ME2 stressed the need for "common brotherhood" but did not give concrete

examples of personal encounters. CE2 and CE4 observed that the lockdown measures to curb the Covid-19 pandemic were detrimental to religious education for peace because of the lack of personal encounter.

Religious education through celebration and commemoration was very important for most schools as far as their own religious tradition was concerned. The learners participated in the prayers, chapels, and religious festivals of their own tradition. However, celebration and commemoration were hardly mentioned in connection with interfaith settings. One of the interfaith encounters for learners that was mentioned by CE1 and ME3 took place on the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25). Ziad Fahed (2020) has demonstrated that the Annunciation of Mary is utilized as a unique platform for interreligious encounter and solidarity in Lebanon. While we have reason to believe that special food (such as seasonal pastries), symbolic objects (such as Christmas trees), and seasonal religious music are represented in the schools, these important pedagogical expressions were hardly part of the discourse of the educators. A study by Swedish historian Maria Småberg (2006) about Anglican schools in Palestine during the interwar period (1918-1939) has demonstrated how interfaith activities organized by faith-based schools may contribute to peacebuilding in a tense political situation.

The Lebanese scholar Christelle Naddaf has researched the representation of religious diversity in Lebanese schools. Her sample included schools from all major religious traditions in Lebanon, as well as secular schools. She concluded that, while the goals and policies of the religiously-affiliated schools include the promoting of religious tolerance, this is not reflected in the same proportions in the practices of the schools (Naddaf, 2014, pp. 113-115). Our research confirms that the goals and policies, which are formulated by school administrators and religious authorities, affirm the importance of a recognition of religious diversity and appreciation of other religious traditions, but that the practices of the schools do not reflect the same level of commitment. As we mentioned, in the theologies and

philosophies of education of the educators we interviewed, we observed an appreciation for religious diversity. Based on our analysis in light of Bussmann's threefold model, we conclude that, at least on the discursive level (third avenue) and the level of personal encounter (second avenue), some efforts to engage with diversity were in fact made by the faith-based schools. However, in and between the schools interfaith learning rarely takes place on the level of religious events such as rituals, travel to religious sites, and partaking in religious holidays or eating special food, which is the first avenue of religious education based on revelation, according to Bussmann.

Religious education and peace education

Having analyzed their theologies and pedagogies of religion, we finally consider specific pedagogical methods for religious education and peace. We address the question in what concrete ways religious education contributes to peace education, according to our interviewees and the faith-based schools they represent.

American scholar Baratte (2009) distinguished three aspects of the relation between peace education and religious education. First, she pointed out the importance of inclusion of religious resources for peacebuilding in curriculums for religious education. She argued that mining their respective religious traditions for narratives, principles, and precepts that promote peace was a theological task for each religious community. As we have tried to demonstrate in the summary of our interviews, the educators we interviewed were aware of this task and in fact participated in it. As far as religious education was concerned, these theological insights were given space in the curriculum, implicitly in civics and more explicitly in religious education that focused on the specific faith tradition of the school.

Baratte's second specific pedagogical suggestion was that religious education should be explicitly connected with collaborative and public advocacy work, so that peacebuilding does not remain a theoretical exercise. This was not mentioned by any of the educators. The absence of the advocacy perspective

was not surprising given Lebanon's confessional, sectarian nature. Faith-based advocacy may easily be misconstrued as sectarian partisanship. This became painfully clear during the popular protests in 2019 and 2020. After an initial stage of unified public outcry against corruption and public mismanagement, the old sectarian fault lines quickly re-emerged, rendering the protests vulnerable to political exploitation. The protests soon appeared to fan the flames of sectarianism rather than expose flawed systems of governance. In our view, religious education for peace in Lebanon may be combined with advocacy work only in a collaborative, interreligious way in order to avoid such sectarian misconstruction.

Lastly, Baratte recommended the forging of partnerships for peace between religious educators and others, such as counselors, artists, cinematographers, authors, and storytellers, and liberationist movements such as feminism. Baratte points out that these partners may serve as exemplars and thereby fulfill a pedagogical role. This is a promising and as yet insufficiently tapped pedagogical way forward in Lebanon, as the country's war past has been extensively addressed in various forms of art. In order to form such partnerships, educators in faith-based schools and their potential partners in such conversations might need to overcome some reservations. Faith-based schools may hesitate to surrender some of their control over religious education by allowing such actors to get involved. Artists, authors, cinematographers, and the like may be reluctant to engage themselves in religious education for fear of encouraging sectarianism. One way to bring the two sides together is by identifying "key figures known for renouncing violence and spreading peace in our society" (ME2). In other words, where are the non-sectarian religious heroes of peacebuilding, the Lebanese Mahatma Gandhis and Martin Luther Kings? Ziad Fahed (2020) has explored the importance of such "human books" for the teaching of spiritual solidarity in the Lebanese context and has argued that this approach is respectful of the richness and authenticity of each spiritual tradition, while at the same time fostering interconnectedness.

Conclusion

Educators, administrators, and clergy who are involved in religious education in Lebanese faith-based schools have a high commitment to peacebuilding through their schools. They base this commitment on their core religious beliefs, theological systems, and pedagogies. In their theologies of religions, they avoid religious exclusivism. The religious mosaic of the country appears much more conducive to inclusivist and pluralist theologies of religions, even after a Civil War that antagonized religious groups.

Through the lens of a pedagogical model based on revelation, it becomes clear that the faith-based schools teach respect for other faiths in discursive ways (through curriculums and classroom interaction) and, to a certain extent, facilitated personal encounters between learners from different backgrounds (through school trips and visits of other schools). According to the educators whom we interviewed, the schools are, however, not focused on interfaith celebrations and commemorations, which represent the event-aspect of revelation. The joint celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation, in which several of the schools from our research participated, came closest to this common experience of religious events.

On the level of applied pedagogical methods, we observe that the peace resources of each religious tradition are an important factor in the theologies and philosophies of education and are integrated in the curriculums in civics and religion classes. In the context of the Lebanese sectarian system, the combination of religious education with practical advocacy is problematic as it may easily be misconstrued as promoting sectarianism. Learning from "human books," possibly with the help of artists, cinematographers, authors, and storytellers, may be a safer and more promising direction in religious education in the Lebanese context. Even within the Lebanese "culture of sectarianism," there are, thus, opportunities for peacebuilding. Faith-based schools successfully exploit some of these opportunities, such as joint workshops and, on rare occasions common religious events.

We conclude our contribution with the following future-oriented questions. Will the faith-based schools achieve their mission of peace and be able to translate their theological convictions in practical and visible forms that will involve both students and educators? Will the schools be able to find within their own religious traditions more spaces for sharing and celebrating the "divine hospitality" which they profess to believe? Will the Lebanese pluralistic inclusive curriculum be able to partner with the different stakeholders to remove taboos from Lebanon's recent history and thereby promote peacebuilding?

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The Interfaith Programs at the Adyan Foundation: An Interview with Dr Nayla Tabbara, President of the Adyan Foundation

Interviewers: Wilbert van Saane & Arda Ekmekji

Editorial Note: The Adyan Foundation is the leading Lebanese non-governmental organization for promoting cultural and religious diversity. It was established in 2006 and has since developed a number of programs that foster interreligious and intercultural sensitivity and encounter. Dr Nayla Tabbara is a scholar with expertise in religious studies in general and Islamic studies in particular. She is a co-founder of the Adyan Foundation and currently serves as its President. During the conference on religion, education, and peace she was interviewed by Wilbert van Saane and Arda Ekmekji. This text is a rendering of Nayla Tabbara's responses to the interview questions.

Can you share a highlight from your journey in interfaith work?
I have spent many years in interfaith and peace work, and there have been many highlights. To link it to education, a highlight for me is when a person participating in one of our programs changes their attitude and behavior. This could happen on the level of theology. Someone who has an exclusivist theology of other religions could shift to a more pluralist or inclusivist view of other religions. There could also be a change on a more practical level when someone discovers that religiosity is not to be lived on the level of identitarianism, but on the level of working together in the name of our different faiths for the common good. These are examples that move me; they are highlights that inspire me when I am tired. This work takes a long breath. Seeing a change happening in someone's life gives new energy and is very inspiring.

In your view, what are the greatest challenges when it comes to religion, education, and peacebuilding in Lebanon?

In Lebanon we have public schools and private schools. The private schools may be religious or non-religious. In fact, the majority of the schools have a religious background and a religious program that they run in the school. A Christian school will have a Christian program; a Muslim school will have a Muslim program. Very rare are the schools that offer a mixed, multifaith program. This is where we come in, and I will talk about this later.

Generally, when you have a school that teaches religious education based on its own religion, students of other faiths will go to the library, have other activities, or time off. So, although this system permits religious communities to educate students according to their religion in accordance with the Lebanese constitution, we see a segregation of students at the time of religious instruction. A second problem is that the private schools have their own religious and ideological programs and nobody oversees that. The Ministry of Education does not oversee their religion programs.

As for the public schools, religious instruction depends on the regions where they are located. It is up to the religious leaders of the majority religion in a certain region to send someone to provide religious education in the public schools of that area. For example, in regions where 90 percent of the population is Sunnite, it is up to Dar el Fatwa, the highest Sunni religious authority in the country, to send Sunni teachers for religious education to the public schools. In regions where the religious demography is half-half, you would have one Christian and one Muslim teacher in a public school. In public schools you may find that students get educated in a religion that is not their own, and you may find that students are divided according to their religion and get instruction in their own religion. Religious education is thus not part of the curriculum overseen by the Ministry of Education.

Can you shed light on Lebanese curricula for religious education and the work Adyan has done in this field?

The general curriculum for Lebanese schools dates back to 1997. We at Adyan tried to work with the Ministry of Education and with the Center for Education, Research and Development (CERD) to upgrade and update this curriculum by working on an "auxiliary curriculum," which sets aims for the books and manuals per grade with regards to diversity and citizenship.

We based this on a study of the current curriculum and the textbooks for civic education, history and the like. We analyzed to what extent diversity was portrayed. We realized that it was barely portrayed! The textbooks and the curricula were produced right after the war. The philosophy behind the curricula and textbooks was: We don't talk about diversity, so as not to create problems. Although the Lebanese constitution talks about diversity and we are a country that prides itself in its diversity, the curricula do not talk about diversity out of fear, because of what we lived during the war and all the fear that it left.

We observed a politique de l'autruche [burying one's head in the sand]; the eyes were closed to diversity and it was not dealt with. Also, our curricula do not deal with recent history. This is where it helps to compare notes with countries like Northern Ireland. How to deal with recent history and different perspectives of it? So we tried to include both diversity and history in the auxiliary curriculum with the Ministry of Education. This auxiliary curriculum was adopted. Based on it, we should now develop new manuals that will take diversity and history into consideration. We do not know if this will materialize. We have also created specific curricula for civic education, philosophy, and civilizations but these have not been adopted yet. They are still in the drawers, awaiting consideration.

What has Adyan done to defuse tensions and build peace at the grassroots level?

Besides our work in formal and non-formal education, we work through local networks to reach the grassroots. We have networks of youth, in Lebanon and in Iraq, who are quite active. We also

have a network of religious leaders, male and female, who promote the values of inclusive citizenship among their constituencies, or through media. They have called their network the "Forum for Religious Social Responsibility," and it gathers a pool of religious leaders and faith-based actors from all over Lebanon who have taken courses with us on political literacy, citizenship, human rights, and interreligious relations.

There is a lot of talk about dialogue but we need to have an actual agenda, a transformative agenda for dialogue. If we only talk about harmony and dialogue, it does not change anything. We need to join the forces of people from different religious backgrounds for the sake of the common good, for changing things in real life, in the lives of people, to defend the rights of the most marginalized. This is one aspect of the work being done on the ground.

We were happy to see that people who participated in those networks were not "the converted." When we started offering the courses on political literacy for religious leaders, we were really shocked. We had people from Salafi backgrounds, people who were quite fundamentalist in their perspective and who had problems with the ideas we promoted. Nevertheless, they were interested in the content of the courses we were providing, because they realized that nobody else provided political literacy for religious leaders. This allowed us to have a very diverse network of religious leaders and representatives of faith-based actors.

The second way in which we have reached out to the grassroots is through media. Four years ago, we started a platform in Arabic for the Arab world called *taadudiyah* (pluralism). This platform features articles and short films that educate on diversity. Today media is considered an educational tool, and small films can be very educational. Two film series have reached millions of people in Arab countries. The first one is called *fina nehki din* ("we can speak about religion"). Here we try to demystify questions pertaining to religion, correct stereotypes, and engage in dialogue about questions related to religion and freedoms, feminism, revolution, etc. The other film series is called *shu*

ustak? (what is your story?). It showcases stories of regular people, in their everyday life, who have done something special: showing solidarity with the other, working for human rights, or bringing people together.

One of these videos is called Christmas in Najaf, Najaf being the Shiite center of pilgrimage in Iraq. Christians are marginalized there and all the religious symbols in Najaf are Shiite in nature. A young man there decided that it would be good to make Christianity more visible by setting up a Christmas tree in the middle of Najaf. He proposed to have a Christmas celebration. With his friends this young man took this initiative. Our videos highlight such small initiatives that give people a sense that each one can do something for inclusive citizenship and human rights.

In the *fina nehki din* series the first film featured a Sunni sheikh and a Shiite sheikh. The Sunni was Sheikh Mohammad Abu Zeid, who is also part of this conference. This episode got many views, about three million, because these sheikhs were using a discourse of mutual respect. They did not ask the other to change anything about their beliefs. There was simply mutual respect between them.

The spread of the film prompted an extremist sheikh from Syria to make a ten-minute film to talk against our film. This shows that such videos can shake the people we do not usually reach with our projects. It prompts them to think and/or react, and this is a good thing, for it breaks through the wall of people who carry extremist thoughts. There is a lot of engagement on *taadudiyah*, some very positive, but some very negative. We find this very positive in terms of mediatic mission, even if the response is negative. This allows us to test whom we are reaching in terms of audience that is not on the same wavelength.

May we invite to share some reflections about religion and peacebuilding in the older generations of Lebanese, who have lived through the Civil War, in comparison to the younger generations, who have not had this experience?

One of the most moving experiences occurred in the context of our long-running project *Alwan* [Colors]. We have run this program for more than eleven years now. We have started clubs in high schools all over Lebanon, in which students learn about the other, about active and inclusive citizenship. We also tackle the issue of history and memory with them. Then, they meet with students from different backgrounds. They discover Lebanon together. They discover each other. And they do community service together. The Alwan program usually reaches about a thousand students a year. Last year the program had to be moved online. The young people who participate in this program become very well formed and these ideas become engrained in them.

Moving moments of change within that program are witnessed by the teachers who are implementing it in more than forty schools around Lebanon. And we, at Adyan, while forming the teachers, witness also moving moments. I remember once the response of the teachers when we were training them to implement the program, saying, "we need this work. Please spend time with us, because we have so much trauma. There were so many obstacles for us to be able to teach this material." The teacher training sessions for the Alwan program include very emotional moments. Sometimes teachers break down crying. We try to take into consideration that they have built-up emotion. Many of the participating teachers have lost someone during the war. It could be a loved one who died or disappeared and is still missing, or the very traumatic experience of being abducted. Their preparation is, therefore, not only conceptual but takes into consideration all the emotions and the trauma.

That, I think, is the main difference between this generation, my generation, and the generation of today's children. Of course, there are people in the younger generation who are fanatic and who want to be very identitarian. But there is a thirst in the new generation for spaces where they can interact with others, spaces where they can think freely, where they can analyze, where they are not theologized and where they can reflect profoundly together. This is what we see in the groups that

participate in the Adyan programs and in the youth networks of Adyan.

We also offer a program called Alwan Junior. We started this a couple of years ago in a few private schools. Its aim is to teach about religious diversity to children of nine years and up. This program teaches them about world religions through games. It also teaches them how to define themselves, not religiously, but rather to be able to reflect on who they are as individuals. It is not about who I am as part of a group, but who I am as a person. It then focuses on the ability to listen to the other, and recognize their own feelings and the feelings of the other. The hoped-for result is that the students avoid any form of discrimination or bullying, and know how to engage in positive communication with others from other religions.

In the past, I taught a multifaith program in one of the Lebanese schools, the Collège Protestant Français [French Protestant School] in Beirut. A student asked me a very interesting question: "Nayla, is it possible for me to like another religion without committing treason to my own faith?" I think this is a very legitimate question that not only kids but also grownups ask. The whole point of this program is to get the kids to be at ease with their own belonging, whatever it may be, and at ease also with the other faith, and so be able to recognize what is beautiful and good in a different faith, while being at the same time at ease in their own belief.

With [the] coronavirus pandemic, we have transformed the material into online material, that can be taught through Zoom or even through WhatsApp. The program is working very well. The students adore the classes. They wait for it. It is the first time that students in religiously mixed schools are not divided at the time of religious education. They stay together and they are able to say: "In my religion we do this," and "In my religion we do that." It is a place where they can share, a safe space, where they can talk about religion in a positive way. It is our dream to implement this program in all schools. It does not have to replace the regular religious education. It can function alongside it. It is simply education on religious diversity.

What are your dreams and hopes when it comes to religion, education, and peacebuilding?

At Adyan we have also worked on including public life values in religious education. We have done this in cooperation with all the relevant religious authorities in Lebanon, such as the Middle East Council of Churches representing the churches, the Sunni, the Shiite, and the Druze highest religious authorities. This project focuses on religion classes taught from within the religion, either Christianity or Islam. It promotes values that we call values of public life: acceptance of the other, justice, the common good, human dignity. These values, according to us, should be taught in the religion classes, so that students do not become closed in on themselves but are given the opportunity to become active and positive citizens, open to diversity, and do that in accordance with their own faith. My dreams for schools that offer religious education is that they will include both education from a faith-based perspective that promotes these values and education on diversity for all the students.

There is definitely more work to be done in civic education, for example to make it more interactive. We have worked with the Ministry of Education to create a unit for community service: sixty hours of community service that allows students to be active citizens. We try to promote partnership between the schools from different regions, different areas and different social classes, to work together for community service.

While this work is important, we also observe a lot of ignorance about religions. There is ignorance about what others believe in and do as part of their religion. If I see a woman wearing a clerical collar, what does that mean? Some people simply don't know these things and need to learn them, and vice versa for the other religion. Students really need to have more knowledge. In the program that we developed for children, we actually drew the "faith actors" from the different communities, so that they would recognize a monk, a priest, a sheikh, a nun. We also include information on how to address these religious

figures. Such knowledge helps people to know each other and live together in a diverse society.

At Adyan, we try to create spaces where people also share the narratives of their community, be it in course settings or reflection groups. We all have different narratives, that are passed on from generation to generation. Even non-believers carry the narratives of war of the sect that their parents belong to. This happens because the history of recent and problematic events is not taught in schools, and people end up learning about it only from their own community and media outlets related to their community or political camp. Therefore, we need to create spaces where people from different communities can share different narratives.

With the different narratives they also share their different fears because all of those narratives are based on fears. In Lebanon, we have this race toward who is the most victimized. We need to listen to the fears of the other, we need to hear their feelings. We need to get them out, bit by bit, and recognize them, so that we can move them out of the way.

The totally secular approach in education, in which there is no space for talk of religious diversity, is not helpful. When we are talking about management of diversity, the French secular model is disastrous. Today many in France do not know how to deal with Islam and with symbols of religion. Even the Christian symbols are unknown. A few years ago, a test was conducted in France. They asked a group of children "What is the Trinity?" The answer was: "It is a metro station." There was so much ignorance, because these things were not taught in the schools. The very harsh secular, laïque [French secularist] way of dealing with diversity is not the solution. When we don't talk about diversity and when we don't talk about the different perspectives, these fester within each group and then they create problems.

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This volume contains the proceedings of the international online conference entitled Religion, Education, and Peace, which was organized by Haigazian University in Beirut, Lebanon, and the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning at Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, USA, and was co-sponsored by the Peace Studies Department at the College of Saint Benedict / Saint John's University in Minnesota.

The conference took place on March 4 and 2021 ,5. The chapters in this volume analyze religion, education, and peace in various parts of the world in a variety of settings including secondary schools, colleges, universities, governmental agencies, and nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations. This book's unique contributions involve its interfaith and interdisciplinary approaches to topics related to peace and religion in educational settings and local communities.

RELIGION, EDUCATION, AND PEACE

Edited by Jon Armajani and Wilbert van Saane

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