

Human Rights, values and religious belonging

A study among Christian, Muslim and non-religious Youth in Germany

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Citizenship education includes the awareness and acceptance of basic rights. The protection of basic rights can be understood as one of the most important cornerstones of a modern democratic society. Human rights claim to be the universal expression of basic rights. But these rights are fragile and need continuously support by people.

Human rights are related to values and express them as well, but they are not equivalent. We therefore ask which of the values are connected with what group of Human Rights. The paper applies the value theory of Shalom H. Schwartz. He differentiates between ‘self-transcendence/self-enhancement’ and ‘openness to change and conservation’. According to Schwartz values are based on the universal requirement (among others) as requisites of coordinated social interaction and requirements for the functioning and survival of groups. Values are guiding principles and they are valuable not only “as such”, but in “function for” – here in function for Human Rights. The assumption is that those values which express self-transcendence and openness are stronger predictors for a positive attitude on Rights than conservation. Self-enhancement values could be connected with civil rights, i.g. individual rights of freedoms.

Research has shown that there are only small differences in the value orientation of youth, but does their value orientation matter when values are related to Human Rights? What is the relevance of being Christian, Muslim or Non-Religious with regard to the connection of human rights and values? Is religious belonging a mediating factor when values are focused on human rights?

The paper is based on an empirical survey among youth in Germany (N=1785) that deals with human rights, values and religion. The conclusion will pay attention to further activities in citizenship education.